

ISRAEL

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Wells Stabler	1944-1950	Vice Consul, Jerusalem
	1950-1953	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
	1957-1960	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
William C. Burdett	1948-1950	Vice Consul, Jerusalem
Bilha Bryant	1949-1959	Israeli Citizen, Haifa
Daniel Oliver Newberry	1949-1951	Vice Consul, Jerusalem
Harry Fleischman	1950	Jewish Labor Committee
Edward Warren Holmes	1950-1952	Consular/Political Officer, Tel Aviv
Wilbur P. Chase	1951-1955	Principal Officer, Haifa
Richard B. Parker	1951-1953	Consul General, Jerusalem
	1957-1959	Desk Officer for Jordan, Israel, and Iraq, Washington, DC
Harry I. Odell	1952-1954	Consular Officer, Haifa
Margaret V. Taylor	1953	Information Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Margaret L. Plunkett	1953-1954	Labor Adviser, Technical Aid Mission, Tel Aviv
Slator Clay Blackiston, Jr.	1953-1956	Political Officer, Jerusalem
	1956-1957	Desk Officer for Jordan and Israel, Washington, DC
Eugene H. Bird	1955	Israel-Jordan Desk, Washington, DC
	1956-1958	Vice Consul, Jerusalem
Harriet Curry	1956-1958	Secretary to the Ambassador, Tel Aviv

Joseph Walter Neubert	1956-1958	Political Officer, Tel Aviv
Alfred H. Moses	1956-1980	Lawyer, Covington & Burling, Washington, DC
Victor Skiles	1958-1959	Deputy Mission Director, USAID, Tel Aviv
Michael H. Newlin	1958-1963	United Nations Affairs, IO, Washington, DC
Murat Williams	1959-1961	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
Bilha Bryant	1960-1963	Israeli Cultural Attaché, The Hague
Andrew I. Killgore	1961-1965	Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Stephen E. Palmer, Jr.	1963-1966	Chief, Political Section, Tel Aviv
George Lambrakis	1963-1966	Political Officer, Tel Aviv
Thomas L. Hughes	1963-1969	Director, Bureau of Intelligence & Research, Washington, DC
Michael E. Sterner	1964-1966	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
William N. Dale	1964-1968	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
James H. Bahti	1964-1970	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
Mark C. Lissfelt	1965-1967	Staff Aide/Commercial Officer, Tel Aviv
Arthur J. Goldberg	1965-1968	Ambassador, United Nations, New York
Anthony J. Perna	1965-1969	Air Attaché, Tel Aviv
David A. Korn	1965-1967	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
	1967-1971	Political Officer, Tel Aviv
	1972-1975	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
	1978-1982	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC

Arnold Schifferdecker	1966-1968	Staff Aide, Tel Aviv
Edward Gibson Lanpher	1967-1969	Rotation Officer, Tel Aviv
Kenneth A. Stammerman	1967-1969	Rotation Officer, Tel Aviv
Teresita C. Schaffer	1967-1969	Rotation Officer, Tel Aviv
Margaret L. Plunkett	1967-1972	Labor Attaché, Tel Aviv
Miles S. Pendleton Jr.	1968-1970	Consular Office, Staff Assistant, Tel Aviv
Terrence Catherman	1968-1970	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Margaret J. Barnhart	1968-1970	Consular Officer, Jerusalem
Wat T. Cluverius, IV	1969-1971	Econ-AID Officer, Tel Aviv
Richard McCoy	1969-1971	Consular Officer, Tel Aviv
Mark C. Lissfelt	1969-1971	Israeli Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Thomas B. Killeen	1970-1971	Consular Officer, Tel Aviv
Walter B. Smith, II	1970	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
	1971-1974	Chief, Political Section, Tel Aviv
	1974-1978	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
Cliff Forster	1971-1973	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Aubrey Hooks	1971-1973	Rotation Officer, Tel Aviv
John H. Adams	1971-1976	Consular Officer, Tel Aviv
Arthur R. Day	1972-1975	Consul General, Jerusalem
Edward G. Abington	1972-1975	Political Officer, Tel Aviv
Betty Jane Jones	1973-1976	Deputy Consul General, Jerusalem
Nicholas A. Veliotis	1973-1975	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
	1977-1978	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC

Dean Rust	1974-1976	Staff Assistant to Director Fred Ikle, ACDA, Washington, DC
Malcolm Toon	1975-1976	Ambassador, Israel
Thomas J. Dunnigan	1975-1977	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
Edward G. Abington	1975-1977	Staff Aide to Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC
George E. Lichtblau	1975-1978	Labor Attaché, Tel Aviv
Edmund James Hull	1975-1979	Political Officer, Jerusalem
Michael Newlin	1975-1980	Consul General, Jerusalem
Michael G. Newlin	1976-1978	Israeli-Arab Affairs, Washington, DC
Owen W. Roberts	1976-1979	Sinai Field Mission, Sinai
Michael E. Sterner	1976-1979	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
Donald A. Kruse	1976-1980	Deputy Principal Officer, Jerusalem
C. William Kontos	1976-1980	Director, Sinai Support Mission, Washington, DC
Gilbert D. Kulick	1976-1978	Israeli Desk, Office of Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs, Washington, DC
	1978-1981	Deputy Political Counselor, Tel Aviv
	1981-1982	Sinai Planning Group, Washington, DC
Arthur A. Houghton III	1977-1978	Deputy Director, Office of Arab-Israel Affairs, Washington, DC
Samuel F. Hart	1977-1980	Economic and Commercial Counselor, Tel Aviv
David I. Hitchcock, Jr.	1977-1981	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Richard N. Viets	1977-1979	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
	1981-1984	Ambassador, Jordan
Samuel W. Lewis	1977-1984	Ambassador, Israel

James H. Bahti	1978-1979	Sinai Field Mission, Sinai
Kenton W. Keith	1978-1980	Special Assistant to Deputy Director, USIA, Washington, DC
Sally Grooms Cowal	1978-1982	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Leon Weintraub	1979-1980	Hebrew Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC
	1980-1982	Consular Officer, Tel Aviv
William Jeffras Dieterich	1979-1982	Press Attaché, USIS, Tel Aviv
William Andreas Brown	1979-1982	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
Robert W. Duemling	1980-1982	Sinai Field Mission, Sinai
David N. Greenlee	1980-1982	Political Officer, Tel Aviv
Thomas Macklin, Jr.	1980-1982	Personnel Officer, Tel Aviv
Brandon Grove	1980-1983	Consul General, Jerusalem
Dennis C. Jett	1980-1983	Science Attaché, Tel Aviv
Maurice E. Lee	1981-1988	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Richard M. Fairbanks, III	1982-1983	Special Negotiator for the Middle East, Washington, DC
Arthur S. Berger	1982-1986	Embassy Spokesman, Tel Aviv
David M. Evans	1982-1986	Political Advisor to Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe, London, England
Robert B. Petersen	1982-1986	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Wat T. Cluverius, IV	1983-1985	Consul General, Jerusalem
Sally Grooms Cowal	1983-1985	USUN, Deputy Political Counselor, New York City
Kenton W. Keith	1983-1985	USIA, Deputy Director for Near East and South Asia, Washington, DC

Douglas R. Keene	1983-1986	Deputy Principal Officer; Jerusalem
Joseph G. Sullivan	1984-1988	Deputy Political Counselor, Tel Aviv
James E. Taylor	1984-1988	Political/Military Officer, Tel Aviv
Louise Taylor	1984-1988	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Wayne Leininger	1984-1988	Consul General, Tel Aviv
Morris Draper	1986-1988	Consul General, Jerusalem
Paul H. Tyson	1985-1986	Sinai Multi-National Force & Observer Mission, El Gorah, Sinai
Roger G. Harrison	1985-1987	Political Counselor, Tel Aviv
Leon Weintraub	1986-1988	Israeli Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Arthur H. Hughes	1986-1989	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
William A. Pierce	1987-1989	Deputy Public Affairs Officer, NEA Bureau, Washington, DC
Aubrey Hooks	1988-1991	Economic Counselor, Tel Aviv
Phillip C. Wilcox, Jr.	1988-1991	Consul General, Jerusalem
William Andreas Brown	1988-1992	Ambassador, Israel
Philippe Du Chateau	1988-1992	Chief, American Cultural Center, USIS, Tel Aviv
Richard T. McCormack	1989-1991	Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, Washington, DC
Charlotte Roe	1989-1991	Labor Attaché, Tel Aviv
Henry L. Clarke	1989-1992	Economic Counselor, Tel Aviv
David Winn	1989-1992	Deputy Consul General, Jerusalem
Mike Metrisko	1989-1993	Consul General, Tel Aviv

William C. Harrop	1992-1993	Ambassador, Israel
James A. Larocco	1993-1996	Deputy Chief of Mission/Chargé d'Affaires, Tel Avia
Joseph G. Sullivan	1997-1998	Co-Chairman, Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group, Washington, DC

FRASER WILKINS
Recognition of Israel

Ambassador Wilkins was born and raised in Nebraska and educated at Yale University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1940, where he became a specialist in Middle East Affairs. His overseas posts include Halifax, Baghdad, Tangier, New Delhi and Teheran, where he served as Minister/Counselor. In his several assignments in the Department of State in Washington, Mr. Wilkins dealt with Middle East matters. He also served on the Policy Planning Staff and as Inspector General of the Department. In 1960 he was appointed Ambassador to Cyprus, where he served until 1964. Ambassador Wilkins was interviewed by Peter Jessup in 1988.

Q: You were saying that – which raises a point which we might get to when we talk about Palestine – that a political appointee quite often has the ear of the President, or certainly the White House. That brings up the question of who spoke to the President last? And in your experience on the Palestine business, and the recognition of the independence of Israel, wouldn't you say that who spoke to the President last- - such as Clark Clifford, and so forth, with President Truman – that had a bigger impact than people who didn't have that access?

WILKINS: There's a simple answer to that, and it's yes! I will explain if you want me to. It's a rather long story.

Q: We're wandering around and I did have the opportunity to read some of your excellent work you did with the MacKenzie – of the Truman Library. After studying that it raised certain questions. One of which is: you were asked what could have been done that was different? And your answer was that we could have been more closely in touch with the British, in the days before independence of Israel.

WILKINS: Before they referred it to the U.N. in 1947?

Q: Yes. Could you amplify on that?

WILKINS: Well, I would amplify this way. After the Anglo-American Committee Report. I only returned to the Department in December 1946, when Secretary Burns was in charge, and he left shortly thereafter. As I recall, he had not been on good relations with Prime Minister Bevin, in

London. Ibis was all during that very active period, you know, when there were troubles Iran in 1946 – in Azerbaijan – and the British were facing difficult political and military situations in Greece and Turkey.

I think what I had in mind when I made that remark earlier, was that we I have been working more closely with the British, and encouraging them to more moves toward compromise between the Jews in Palestine, the Arabs and the Arab States. Sort of taking steps leading up to a compromise solution between the parties.

Q: You implied we just considered it a British headache, to a certain extent.

WILKINS: Well, the British treated it that way. The British, in effect, left the baby at the doorstep of the U.N. They said that they were not going to go on trying to keep peace in Palestine merely because the Arabs and Jews couldn't reach agreement. And unless they reached agreement they intended to withdraw.

But meanwhile, they wished the United Nations would convene a special mission and decide what to do about the problem. In other words, the British just evaded their responsibilities under the Mandate, by turning it over to the United Nations, in frustration of the years of the internecine warfare within the Palestine Mandate itself.

Q: And on that business of 11 minutes after Israel became independent, Truman recognized the state of Israel. General Marshall's opinion, according to you-Secretary of State Marshall – was that you shouldn't recognize a state until it's been established, until you know whether it's going to continue to exist. Was he as surprised as the people in New York, that when Truman made the announcement, that it would come so rapidly?

WILKINS: I don't think so, because after the May 12th meeting, Mr. Lovett and the Secretary were in constant touch with Mr. Clifford and the White House. My comments now would be an extension of the May 12th meeting at the White House, in which Secretary Marshall, Mr. Lovett, Mr. Clifford, David Niles, Matthew Townley, Bob McClintock, and I were present. I think that's pretty well recorded in the foreign relations of the United States.

At the conclusion of that meeting, it was my clear impression that the President had postponed a recognition of the state of Israel, prior to May 14-15, as recommended by Clifford and company. They thought that we ought to beat the Russians to the punch. You see, the Russians had also supported the Partition Plan, as we had. They thought that this would be a coup against the United States. It would please the Israelis, and perhaps settle down the situation if a big country like the United States recognized Israel before its independence, on May 14th.

Anyway, we left the meeting – I did anyway – thinking that it had been put off for the time being. And when I went back to the Department I told Mr. Henderson – who had not attended the meeting – that this was what I thought. And we were quite surprised, frankly, within the Department. Maybe it was because I was fairly low on the totem pole.

The President did recognize Israel within 11 minutes. And what had happened, apparently, was

that between May 12th and May 15th, at midnight when Ben Gurion stood up in Tel Aviv and declared the independence of the state, was all sorts of pressures had been brought to bear on the President. Dr. Weizmann was here, and Mr. Jacobson, his former partner in Missouri – they all spoke with him. And great pressure was brought in many other ways, I'm sure, on the White House. Even if he couldn't recognize Israel beforehand, at least to recognize it immediately on independence. That's what happened, according to the general information that was available at that time.

Q: General Hilidring's remark that the State Department had the pieces to pick up was quite prophetic, wasn't it?

WILKINS: It surely was. You can see what's happening today. You have the grandsons of Arab refugees throwing rocks at Israeli tanks. Because the hostility has existed since 1948, when most of the refugees fled from Palestine, when Israel became an independent state; after the massacre at Dir Yassin. These children in the camps are the descendants of the people who fled in '48, and here it is 40 years later. Those people, by in large, have not been assimilated into any of the Arab states: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan. Of course, Saudi Arabia is out of the picture, or Egypt, in the sense of the Gaza Strip. The refugees have probably increased from around 600,000 to between 2 or 3 million, and they are all in the camps.

Q: Would you say that it unfair, or pro-Israeli, to say that the Jews did the best they could to take care of their own refugees after the Holocaust, and to apportion them wherever they could, with all the H.L.A.S, and all their structure, to help? But that the Arabs did very little to absorb any of those? Was that a fair question?

WILKINS: That's quite correct. But I'd like to make three comments, amusing comments in a way. One is, there is a colony of so-called black Jews in Cochin, India. I know this because I was political counselor in India, from 1950 to 1953, and traveled widely in that area. These black Jews were really Indians, but they'd been taken on as servants by the Jews that came to India after the death of our Lord, under Saint Thomas. Saint Thomas was killed in Madras, you know, with his spear. He's buried there, actually.

But these Indian servants – of Jews from Palestine settled in India way back – were very cliquish. They had their own synagogue, with Dutch tiles. They would not allow their daughters to walk in the streets, unless they married Indians and could pass from roof to roof, by night and so forth.

Of course, when Israel became independent many of them decided to go back to the homeland. But after they were there a while, they didn't like it and returned to India.

The other thing is that the Oriental Jews – so called, say from the Morocco area – when they came to Israel they didn't like it. Or rather, putting it the other way around, the Israelis didn't like them, because they were so backward.

There was a third point I wanted to make. Prime Minister Ben Gurion was distressed that immigration, in those years, among American Jews was very small. Very few, in fact, wanted to

go to the new state.

Q: Except as tourists.

WILKINS: That's right.

Q: But now, of course, the Sephardic Jews – the ones from the orbit of North Africa, and the other countries of the Middle East – they outnumber the Ashkenazi – the ones originally from Eastern Europe.

WILKINS: That's interesting. I really didn't realize that.

Q: That's why those are the people who were behind Begin and Shamir. And they are the ones who are more intensely opposed to the Arabs.

WILKINS: As a matter of fact, I know many Sephardic Jews, because I served in Tangier, Morocco from 1944 to 1946. My banker there was Moses Abensur, from Moses Barriente. The Jewish bankers in Morocco were very influential ever since the days they were forced out of Spain. I don't know what the situation is in North Africa now.

With respect to the Ashkenazi coming from Eastern Europe, you know the story, of course, or the two theories about the Jews of the immigration? I heard this from Fans El Khoury, the one-time Prime Minister of Syria, when he came to the United Nations in 1957. He said that in the 8th or 9th century A.D. there was a kingdom named Kiev in Western Russia, with a very enlightened monarch. He summoned all the wise men and philosophers of his day to court, and said, "What is the best religion?"

They considered the matter and declared for Judaism. And he converted his people, willy-filly, to Judaism – as kings could do in those days. Well, eventually the kingdom collapsed and many of what were Ashkenazi Jews fled westward, and settled in Eastern Europe. Later on, when Hitler rose to power and having taken over Eastern Germany and Austria and so on – most of the Jews that went to Palestine were originally descendants of people from the Kingdom of Kiev, and were not, according to the Arabs, really entitled to go back to Palestine.

The other theory is this: During the declining days of the Roman Empire, the Roman legions were running out of manpower. And so they were drafted from the mandate area into the Roman Army. Then after the Roman Army broke up, in 5 or 600 A.D., those troops of Semitic Jews remained behind, having intermarried locally. It was their descendants – according to the Arabs – who were immigrating. So you see the two opposite theories on the subject. You can take your money and take your choice. I'm inclined to think it was the latter, because it seems unlikely that there could have been a complete conversion of all the people of the Kingdom of Kiev.

Q: That sounds a bit legendary.

WILKINS: There's no doubt in my mind that they were, actually, the Jews of Eastern Europe. But their origin may have been genuine, you know. The Arab theory is that they are all

descendants of the mixed blood – maybe it was a combination of both.

Q: Now, during the time when you were in Washington, and the creation of Israel, Truman actually did make the remark that the State Department was anti-Semitic, or there were anti-Semites in the State Department. You know what he meant. And McKenzie, I believe asked you about that, and you said that really wasn't true. Do you still feel that way?

WILKINS: Yes, of course, I do. I never saw any evidence of anti-Semitism in practice, for fact. I do know that several officers resigned about the time of partition and independence. For instance, Colonel Eddy, who had been American Minister in Saudi Arabia, and my boss at the Department Gordon Merrill – although, he retired for reasons of health, being very hard of hearing, Of course, Eddy was a very prominent man. He'd served in Saudi Arabia. He was present with President Roosevelt when he saw Ibn Saud, aboard the deck of USS Quincy – at Bitter Lakes – after the Yalta Conference. President Roosevelt made his famous, semi-commitment to that he would – in the form of a memorandum – take no action with respect to the Arabs and Jews, regarding the British Mandate in Palestine, without first consulting both parties.

Q: Well I think maybe some of the origin of this reverse prejudice – so stated by President Truman – is based on, possibly, there were quite a few Foreign Service officers who married, or were the sons, or connected closely with missionaries and missionary families in the Middle East. And they were naturally more closely attuned to Arab ways, and Arab culture. It was believed unfriendly to the insertion of Israel, and America's heavy leaning on Israel is that possible?

WILKINS: I must say that in my experience, having served in Iran, Iraq, in effect in Palestine, in Cyprus, and in Morocco, I never saw any evidence of this. I don't want to talk in clichés, but it seems to me the attitude of the average American Foreign Service officer is that he's an American first; he's pro-American in effect. He's neither pro-where he is, or for example, when I was in Cyprus, I never considered myself as either pro-Greek or pro-Turkey. I think the same thing is true of most people. Because you have to look at it from the point of view of the interests of the United States. As you know, in the Middle East we had tremendous interests out there: in oil, in communications, in transport, in religion, and so on. So it's wrong to take a biased point of view. In a situation like that you have to think of what is good for us.

As I said at the outset, I don't want to put it in terms of clichés, but I think that's the approach most American Foreign Service officers take.

Q: That's an interesting point. Shall we continue?

WILKINS: Yes, please.

Q: I might ask you about your experience of Americans serving in the U.N. For instance, at the time of the independence of Israel, Ralph Bunche was up there at the U.N. I think you quoted him as saying he had to do a lot of work for the Arabs, because they didn't do their own homework very well.

WILKINS: That's correct.

Q: Did the Department of State, or the administrations that you served with, have any role in assigning Americans to the United Nations, and seeing that better people got there? For instance, the Russians ignored the UN for quite a while, and then sometime in the '50s they decided this was a wonderful place to put key people, wield influence, maybe fill some KGB slots, and so forth like that. What was the attitude of the Department about Americans serving in the UN? Because McCarthy was very angry at some of the Americans who were working at the UN, figuring they were leftists, and so forth.

WILKINS: I think that's completely wrong. I think the United States government was interested in proper staffing at the United Nations from the outset, in 1945.

Q: But, could the State Department send people up there to apply? Or how did it work?

WILKINS: Of course, people would even leave the State Department and join the staff of the United Nations; or go up there on special assignments. I don't know the details of Bunche's early career, but he was a United States government officer – not only in State, but perhaps elsewhere. Anyway, he was well known here in Washington, and he was on the staff at the United Nations. I think he's a living example of the attitude of the Department of State, with regard to the quality of people we wanted at the United Nations.

Later on, as you know, he took the place of Count Bernadotte in his dual role as conciliator and mediator. That was when I had that conversation with him. I was, at that point, serving as his advisor to the American representative in the Palestine Conciliation Commission; and made a trip from Beirut to Rhodes to find out how he was progressing in his truce arrangements with the Arab states of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. He considered himself in a very embarrassing position because the Arabs, in their usual matter, didn't really prepare themselves very well for meetings. To have a fair truce agreement, he would be forced to take their side. And of course, the Israelis complained about that.

One other thing about Bunche: you know, later on he was offered the job – showing another example of his quality – of Assistant Secretary State, for Near Eastern Affairs. But he declined. He felt that he could not afford to live in Washington and raise his family here, being black. And his salary would be taxable, whereas by serving at the United Nations his salary was non-taxable. So for two reasons it was more desirable for him to be in New York, in the high position that he was – not only after [inaudible], but later on at the U.N. itself. So I think all of this is testimony to the type of man the State Department wanted in the U.N.

Q: But I still don't understand – most of the staff positions in the U.N., that were held by Americans, were not Foreign Service officers; they were people of other origin.

WILKINS: Well, I'm not up on that.

Q: One thing – since we're skipping around – in a previous conversation we had, not recorded,

you talked about the difference of style of Secretary Marshall, and Secretary Dulles – in dealing with assistants and staff people. Could you point out the differences? How Marshall would want you beside him, and I think you said Dulles [inaudible]

WILKINS: Well, they were certainly different types of secretaries. But, at the same time, they had many characteristics in common. I'll describe a couple of incidents with respect to each, if you like.

Q: I think that would be interesting to the people in the future.

WILKINS: This may take a little time. With respect to Secretary Marshall: shortly before Israel became independent on May 14-15, 1948, Marshall was having one of his weekly press conferences in the State Department. Carl Humelsine was Chief of Staff at that point, and he called me up. Marshall never called me. Marshall, they always said, when he wanted one of his aides and couldn't remember his name, he would say, "Send me that general with the pint eyes."

I said to Carl Humelsine, on the phone, "What does the boss want?" He said, "He just wants to talk to you about his upcoming press conference."

So I went up to the 7th floor and went into Carl's office, and he said, "Go right on in." I went in, and Secretary Marshall was sitting there in his red leather chair, at his desk. At the two opposite corners of the desk were Mike McDermott (the press secretary) and Chip Bohlen, who at that point was counselor to the Department. They were obviously preparing for the press conference. There were many subjects that could come up, and I suppose that's why Bohlen was there also.

Anyway, Marshall said to me, "Well, sit down in that chair in the corner and I'll be with you in a minute." I felt like a dunce in school. But I sat down in the chair, Marshall continued, and then he told them they could go in a very abrupt sort of way. I thought it was a funny way to treat Bohlen, who after all in '48 he'd been the confidant of President Roosevelt at Yalta. He was one of the ablest officers in the Department.

Anyway, when they left, Marshall said, "Now, tell me what I should say at my press conference," very abruptly, as though I were a school boy. So I took the chair beside his desk. He said, "There are 150 newspaper men waiting down there, and they want to know what the United States is going to do."

You see, at that point we had not recognized Israel; this was before that day. So I told him what the present military situation was in the Mandate, and around Jerusalem. And we had had no word, either from Israel or from the White House as to what they planned to do. Obviously, the decision by the President – to recognize Israel – had not yet been made. I said, "It seems to me [we should] tell the President, because of the fluidity of the situation, it's impossible to predict at this moment what will happen – whether the Arabs will continue fighting with the Israelis, and what the White House intends. Anyway, Israel has still not declared its independence."

So, he said, "Good, you can go." Now Dulles, on the other hand, he treated his *staff* like assistants in a big New York law office. He came originally, and used to be associated, with

Sullivan and Cromwell. This was his method of operation. I wish I could think of the name of his one officer that was very close to him. He later went to Johns Hopkins.

Anyway, as far as I was concerned, he used to call me up practically every morning around 8:00, 8:30, so I'd have to get into the office around 7:00 or 7:30 and read the telegrams. You see, the action copies of telegrams would come to the desk officer – or me, being Director of Near Eastern Affairs – first, for action. The Secretary, of course, would have a copy. He would want to know, “What are you going to suggest we answer this one?”

WELLS STABLER
Vice Consul
Jerusalem (1944-1950)

Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1950-1953)

Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1957-1960)

Ambassador Wells Stabler was born in Massachusetts on October 31, 1919. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1941 and entered the Foreign Service in the same year. His career included positions in Israel, Jordan, Italy, France, and Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Spain. Ambassador Stabler was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: So you went to Jerusalem in late 1944. How did you get there?

STABLER: That is a long, long story. I was visiting the family of a close friend of mine, who is actually my brother-in-law, who had gone overseas with OSS. I had gone up to Coopertown to visit his family and while I was there I telephoned Personnel and was told that I was going to be vice consul in Jerusalem. Obviously one knew about Palestine and Jerusalem, but I really had to go look up a map because I hadn't had it in mind at all, except in the Biblical sense. Although I had, when we lived in Venezuela, I was down there one summer, met (my father and mother were great friends of the British Minister and his wife) Field Marshal Lord Allenby who had liberated Jerusalem from the Turks in the First World War and was visiting Caracas. A very nice man. Little did I think at that time that one day I would be walking the streets of Jerusalem.

I left in early November, 1944. I took a Portuguese freighter from Philadelphia. We spent two weeks crossing the Atlantic, flying the Portuguese flag with a big spotlight over it at night hoping that the German U-boats would see the flag of neutral Portugal and leave us alone. We crossed without incident stopping briefly at the Azores, but we were not allowed ashore. We finally got into Lisbon two weeks after leaving.

At that particular time, in order to go on...there was a flight once a week, I think, from Lisbon to

Gibraltar. I could have gone on that plane the day after I arrived, but the Chargé d'Affaires in Lisbon was an old friend of mine from the days I worked in American Republic Affairs, Newby Walmsley [his wife Theresa and he are now both long dead] and he wanted me to stay for a visit. So I accepted their kind invitation and stayed for a week in Lisbon by which time there were no more planes for Gibraltar. So I had to go by Portuguese Airline via Tangier and Casablanca from which one went to Cairo.

When I got to Casablanca I stayed at the famous Anfa Hotel where the Casablanca Conference had taken place. It was under US military control. They informed me that there was no way I could possibly get out of Casablanca under a week. So I had a week in Casablanca and made a visit to Rabat. I flew up to Algiers in a US plane. Spent three days there. Then took a Royal South African Air Force plane which was a cargo plane full of Christmas packages and had no seats, so I sat on some of the packages. We finally got into Cairo shortly before Christmas of 1944. At that time the US Minister was Pinkney Tuck. His number two was an old friend as well from my days in Latin American affairs, Cecil Lyon. I telephoned the Consulate General in Jerusalem to inform them that I had at least gotten as far as Cairo because the last they had heard of me was sometime in early November. They said, "Oh, we are glad you have gotten this far, but don't you dare come near Jerusalem until after Christmas because no one can do anything about you."

Q: Even towards the end of the war there were still people coming in there...pilgrims and that sort...

STABLER: Absolutely. And of course there were enormous numbers of US troops that ploughed into Palestine, particularly for the Christmas period, Christmas services in Bethlehem. So, the YMCA, which was the one place one could stay was completely crowded and booked. So I was told to stay out of Jerusalem. I stayed in Cairo for another week and had a wonderful time. I had never been in the Near East and did some sightseeing. I think it was the 27th of December that I finally got a British Royal Air Force plane that took me to Jerusalem, to Lydda, the airport.

I thought I would not wire ahead but just arrive in Jerusalem and go up to the Consulate and present myself. I got to Lydda and the first person I saw was Field Marshal Lord Gort who at that point was the High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan. He was just on his way out for good. I wondered how I would get to Jerusalem. At that point a very nice British Army officer who saw me sort of stranded said he was going to Jerusalem and offered me a ride. I rode in his car through beautiful country. The orange blossoms were out. It was a beautiful day, cold, but beautiful. We drove on up into the hills and arrived at the Consulate where I presented myself.

They said they would have met me if I had let them know. Well, I didn't want to bother anybody. I reported to Lowell Pinkerton, who was then the Consul General and Christian Steeger, who was the number two. I set myself up in the YMCA and there began almost five years between Jerusalem and Amman.

Q: What was the situation in early 1945 in Jerusalem as you saw it?

STABLER: The war was still on. The US had camps in Palestine. Of course the British had

substantial forces there, although the war had by that time passed on. The Middle East was no longer a theater of operations as such. There was a Middle East theater but no war operations. It had all shifted basically to Europe.

The Jews and the Arabs were in an uneasy truce during the war. Most of the terrorism and the civil disorder that existed prior to the war had come to an end. There were incidents. The Jews were bringing in illegal immigrants which was annoying the British and, of course, the Arabs. The Arabs had resented the British efforts even to let some of the Jews in legally and they felt the British were being unfair to the Arabs. The result of that was that there was a certain number of Palestinian Arabs who openly declared themselves for the Nazis.

[The grand mufti of Jerusalem] had indeed thrown his lot in publicly by going to Berlin. He was regarded by the British as a war criminal although he was never brought to trial.

In spite of these things the terrorist operations against the British that had been seen in Palestine in the years preceding the war had pretty much come to a halt. Jews and Arabs alike had participated in the war effort. As a matter of fact, just as a matter of interest, there was in Jerusalem a thing called the Middle East Center of Arab Studies which had been set up by the British Foreign Office for purposes of teaching Arabic to British officers who would either stay on in some civil administrative capacity or go in to the Foreign Service. It was run by Colonel Bertram Thomas who had quite a background in the Arabian desert. He was a bit of a four-flusher, but nonetheless he was there. One of the main assistants who spoke absolutely perfect Arabic was a gentleman who was a British Army major, Major Aubrey Eban, who later became Abba Eban.

So there was a truce. I traveled extensively in Palestine and it was basically perfectly safe for anybody to do that. Curious enough, it was on the 27th of December, 1945, exactly one year to the day I arrived in Jerusalem, that I almost got blown up. A bomb, Jewish, had been placed in a British police compound. That began again the whole cycle of violence that went on right up until the British got out in May, 1948. The truce had broken down. The Arabs and the Jews started again against each other. The Jews against the British particularly, to protest British efforts to stop Jewish immigration into Palestine from Europe. Of course they ran many ships in illegally. Beached them and the immigrants would get off and disappear into the Jewish areas of Palestine along the coast.

The Arabs were aware of this. They objected to it. The level of violence simply escalated. You remember, later on, maybe '46 the King David explosion...the Stern gang had brought in milk drums in the basement of the King David Hotel which also housed the British Secretariat for the Mandate and blew it up. It was a ghastly scene.

Q: When you first arrived there was this truce going on. What were you doing and what was the main interest of our Consulate General in Jerusalem?

STABLER: The main effort, really was, of course, observing what was happening. The Consulate General had the rather unique position of being one of the two Consulate Generals that reported directly to Washington.

Q: It and Hong Kong.

STABLER: Yes, it and Hong Kong. The exequaturs were issued by two foreign powers, Great Britain as it related to Palestine and then, even though Transjordan was not independent, we were commissioned vice consuls for Palestine and for Transjordan.

Q: So you covered Transjordan?

STABLER: We covered Transjordan as well.

Q: Which would be today on the other side of Jordan.

STABLER: At that point it was still an emirate. There was a British Resident there. Abdullah, King Hussein's grandfather, was the Emir at the time. But he also had certain authority and we had an exequatur from Transjordan as distinguished from the exequatur signed by King George for Palestine. In 1946, Transjordan became independent.

In any event, the role of the Consulate General at that time was one of really tracking what was happening there. The Consul General, Mr. Pinkerton, was someone who played his cards quite close to his chest when it came to the substantive side of things. I really never did know to what extent he was turned to for advice as to what we should be doing about Palestine.

My role at that time was simply as vice consul in charge of visas. In addition I handled cultural matters. I used to take films out to kibbutzims and Arab groups and give little talks about American history, etc. It was interesting going to some of the kibbutzims and showing films produced by OWI on a variety of things related to the United States. The visa work was tremendous. Not so much the first year because no one went anywhere due to strict regulations and lack of transport, but when the war ended there was an overwhelming number of passports, etc. that had to be dealt with in terms of getting people back to the States. There were ships that came in to do this sort of thing...to take people back who had been stranded.

Shortly after I got to Jerusalem, the early months of 1945, Mr. Pinkerton apparently had learned that the Emir of Transjordan was unhappy with him because although he was accredited to Transjordan he never went there. He decided that he better go down and see the Emir. Abdullah had winter quarters in Shuneh in the Jordan Valley, on the other side of the Jordan, not terribly far from Jericho. He was down there and Pinkerton decided he would go down but he seemed to think he needed an excuse to go down. The excuse was to present me as a new vice consul.

We went down and to one of 26 it was pretty heady stuff seeing an Emir. Abdullah was very nice and it was very pleasant visit. The following Sunday I decided that I would go back down and personally sign the book. I got down to Shuneh and was very much impressed by all these Arab Legion soldiers who would snap to attention and salute when they saw a consular license plate. When I got to the winter quarters I said to one of the guards who came out to ask what I wanted that I wanted to sign the book. He disappeared and came back a few minutes later and said, "I am terribly sorry the book is in Amman, but the Emir is here would you like to see him?" I said that

that would be splendid. So I went in and had a nice chat with Abdullah and told him how impressed I had been by the Arab Legion that I had seen along the roads. He said, "Well, I am having a maneuver in about three weeks time and I would like you to come as my guest." I said, "That is very kind of you, Your Highness, of course I would like to come."

After three weeks I had still heard nothing at all. One morning I was in the file room of the consulate hunting for some document and came across a letter from Glubb Pasha, who was then the British Commander of the Arab Legion, addressed to Pinkerton saying that the Emir was holding a maneuver on such and such a day and commanded me to invite you, Pinkerton, to come to the maneuver. I was crestfallen that I had been forgotten by my new friend.

The appointed day for the maneuver came and I went to my office in what used to be affectionately called "the turnip shed" of the Consulate General -- a little horrible shed that was heated by a big potbelly stove. I had been in my office not more than 15 or 20 minutes when the phone rang. It was Mr. Pinkerton down at the winter quarters saying, "You get on down here as quickly as you can. The Emir said that the invitation was for you and he won't start until you get here." I thought to myself, "That's a lot of fun, but the end of my career."

I pulled myself together and drove down. As luck would have it I got a flat tire and got stuck in the sand somewhere. By the time I finally got to the maneuver it was over. The Emir was very nice and invited Mr. Pinkerton and me to lunch in his tent.

That was the beginning of a long relationship and friendship that I had with Abdullah and his son, Crown Prince Talal who reigned very briefly after Abdullah was assassinated, and his grandson, the present King Hussein.

Q: To get a feel of the atmosphere in the Consulate General. This must have been sort of annoying to Mr. Pinkerton wasn't it?

STABLER: Well, curiously enough you would have thought it would have, but it really didn't seem to. I think in a sense he was somewhat relieved that he didn't have to worry about Transjordan. He wasn't that interested in it. He didn't really enjoy going over there.

Q: What was his background?

STABLER: Pinkerton was a career man. He had been in Personnel, had been somewhat of an administrator. I can't now remember where he came from.

Q: But he was an Arabist.

STABLER: No, he spoke no Arabic. I don't think he spoke any foreign language at all. He got along well with the British, they liked him. But he had no real interest with the Transjordan thing. He left in '46 at some point. I can't remember quite when. I was invited personally by the Emir to come to his independence days celebrations and the Consul General was also invited but I don't remember whether that was Pinkerton or not...I think it was Pinkerton. But by that time I was fully known in Jordan and was regarded really sort of the US presence, if you will. I don't

think Pinkerton really resented it, if he did, he never said anything.

I had lots of things that I did in Jerusalem. I became a good friend of the High Commissioner, General Sir Alan Cunningham, and his staff. I generally had a pretty good position in the Palestine government, although I didn't really deal with the political side of it. Although, for example, when the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry came to Jerusalem in '46...the British were already discussing what it was that they should do with Palestine because it was becoming more and more a burden for them. Violence was continuing. There was the problem of Jews in Europe. They eventually said that something had to be done. They suggested a group go to Palestine, including Americans, to see what could be done about it. So the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry was appointed and the senior US delegate to that was William Phillips, a former Under Secretary of State and Ambassador to Rome in the early part of the war before we went into it, and whose wife was my godmother. So Pinkerton assigned me to look after that delegation. I also was given the responsibility for acting as escort for quite a few Congressional delegations that came to Palestine. Jack Javits was one of them who came.

Q: He later became Senator and a major figure in the Jewish-American scene.

STABLER: Absolutely, a very fine person. There were a number of others. So I wasn't ostracized or cut out by Pinkerton, although I did not play any role in political substantive work. He did that entirely himself. He never showed us any of his messages that he sent back and forth on substantive questions. He played it all very close to his chest. I never quite understood why he didn't take some of us into his confidence, but he didn't.

Q: To get a little feeling for the atmospherics within the Consulate General at the time, this was before the King David business...

STABLER: Well, that was '46, the King David thing.

Q: Okay, at that time, were you under any constraints about talking either to the Jews or the Arabs?

STABLER: No, not at all. I traveled extensively and saw lots of both sides. I did a good deal of work on the Arab side too. But I never ever prepared, curiously enough, during the period Pinkerton was there, any sort of political report. I went around extensively and talked to people but my role was not that of a political reporter.

Q: That is odd. In other words, the younger officers who generally get around more were not being used.

STABLER: No. We had Pinkerton, a commercial man named Malcolm Hooper, an officer who handled American citizen passports, etc., an OSS representative, and two of us who did visa work. Pinkerton was the only one who did the political work.

Q: It is interesting because what you are saying is that Pinkerton was not a particularly experienced political reporting officer.

STABLER: I don't really recall what his background was. My recollection was that it was more administrative -- personnel. He was quite well regarded. He finally ended up as Minister in Beirut and as Ambassador to the Sudan. Loy Henderson, the top man in Middle East affairs, had regard for him. But I never really had any idea of what Pinkerton did politically because I never saw a report.

Q: You know, it is hard to recreate the time, but it really took a decade or so for the real enormity of what had happened to the Jews and others in Europe during the war to sink in. The Foreign Service came pretty much from the educated class in the United States and was not particularly responsive to the Jew in the United States. I can recall hearing, not so much in college, but in prep school, anti-Semitic jokes. At that time, particularly with turmoil obviously beginning to come with ships docking all the time, was there an annoyance with the Zionist movement?

STABLER: For one thing, for those of us who were serving in Palestine, it was clear that in a demographic sense that the majority of the residents of Palestine were Arabs. There were about a million and a half people in Palestine of which about a million were Arabs and roughly 500,000 were Jews. So in the demographic sense, the majority was clearly Arab. On the other hand, as you drove around Palestine, which I did extensively, at all hours of the day and night, you couldn't help but marvel at what the Jews had produced in their part of Palestine along the coast in particular. It was a miracle what they had done agriculturally and to some extent industrially. They worked terribly hard. They were aggressive, of course, in terms of what they hoped to ultimately achieve. One probably didn't know at the outside a great deal of what had been happening in terms of the genocide in Germany. I happened to live part of the time in Jerusalem in a small apartment in a Jewish house. The owner was a marvelous woman who was a Dutch Jew, and who, after I left, unhappily was killed in one of these horrible terrorist actions where the Arabs shot up the bus in which she was in. You couldn't help but have great admiration at what they had done, but also you recognized that there was this constant encroachment on what was a demographic majority in the area. You couldn't help but be rather disgusted by some of the terrorism they pulled off in Palestine. A lot of one's British friends were killed as a result of incidents like King David, etc.

Q: Which includes some of the people who later, like Menachem Begin and the present Prime Minister, Shamir.

STABLER: Yes. Menachem Begin at that time was someone who had a big price on his head. There was the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern gang. One had someone by the name of Sartori, I think his name was, who was the Ford representative in Jerusalem and also represented I think the Palestine potash company, the Dead Sea. He was socially everywhere. Everybody knew him. The day the British left Jerusalem, May 15, 1948, he turned out to be all this time one of the important members of the Stern gang. I eventually dealt with Moshe Dayan. He was a very aggressive, abrasive individual, very difficult to deal with, but at that particular point he was fighting for his survival.

There was this constant sort of friction involving British, Jews and Arabs which got fairly tiring.

I have to admit it was very hard to be entirely neutral. You invariably felt more one way than another, although our official position was that of being entirely neutral between the two. I always cite what happened to me on the 15th of May, 1948 when the British left as evidence of my following instructions to the letter. When I was caught in the crossfire between the Jews on one side of the street and the Arabs on the other side I ended up with 37 bullet holes in my car, and still being alive at least I was neutral to the extent of saying, "Who shot at me?" It was very tense. You had the feeling that the British administration was more sympathetic to the Arab cause than the Jewish cause. And the Jews knew that.

We had difficult moments. The Consulate General was not very far from the building of the Jewish Agency. One morning there was an enormous explosion. It was quite clear that it had come from the Jewish Agency. One was sorry that this had occurred but we were even sorer when we realized to our absolute horror that the Consulate car had disappeared. What had happened was that one of our Arab drivers had taken the Consulate car, had it loaded with explosives, drove into the Jewish Agency courtyard (allowed in because of the Consulate plates), got out, disappeared and the car blew up. So it was the Consulate car that was responsible for a lot of damage; fortunately nobody was killed. Our driver vanished and eventually we learned that he had ended up in Honduras. I went there some years later and discovered there was a large Palestine population there.

So there was this constant tension that existed which took its toll on people. It was hard on people, there were curfews, bombings and god knows what. After the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry, of course, then those things went on; the British finally said enough is enough and turned it over to the UN.

Q: Did a new Consul General come out before the British left?

STABLER: Yes, he did.

Q: Was there a change in the atmospherics within the operation? You knew you were getting ready for a cataclysmic event.

STABLER: Yes, there was because Pinkerton went off as Minister to Beirut before we had embassies. Robert Macatee came out from the Department...I don't now remember what other jobs he had had. I knew him before when he was assistant chief of Personnel in 1941. We are talking about five or six years later. I think he came from Washington at the time. He was quite different. By that time I had been there for going on three years and was probably, with the exception of the OSS fellow...

Q: He was the equivalent to our CIA people later on.

STABLER: Yes. There was just one man who was dressed as an American major. He was known by the British, obviously, for what he was.

I had been there for quite a few years by then and had become more involved in the substantive side of things and would do occasional political reporting. I did do a great deal more, and

became sort of the political advisor, along with the OSS fellow to Macatee on a great many things.

Yes, he was there before partition because I remember that shortly after partition Frances Bolton, who was then member of congress from Ohio came out on a visit to sort of test the waters. She was rather pro-Arab basically and was rather annoyed with this partition because again we were talking about a country which had a majority of Arabs and here they were dividing it up and giving part of it to the Jews. So Macatee was there at the time.

Partition came along because the British said, "We have enough of this. We are getting out in 1948 and you better do something before then because if you don't there will be total chaos and there won't be anybody here."

Q: Was this really saying, "Here you Americans have been talking about Jewish homeland, etc. and this is your problem."

STABLER: The Jewish homeland was what the British themselves had been talking about, the Balfour Declaration of 1917. But by 1947 there was clearly increased pressure in the United States because of what had happened in Germany which by then was fully known. There was real pressure of what do you do? We were not prepared to open up our immigration to let them all come into the States, so the next question was, "Where do they go?" By this time clearly the Zionist movement had decided that Palestine must become the national home for the Jews. Everything that they did was aimed at that time in terms of immigration to get them into Palestine. This was becoming a tremendously difficult thing for the British who had a large army, several divisions of troops, in Palestine. After all it is not a very large country, about 140 miles long and 70 miles wide. They had a tremendous concentration of first class British troops. And a fairly sizable police force which was composed of both Jews and Arabs, but the leadership was all British.

I think you are quite right that part of it certainly was directed to the United States. The British said, "We couldn't find anything through the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry; no one can come up with any solution; we don't want to have anything to do with this; we can't cope with it; we are getting out; so do what you will, we aren't going to be here."

The UN came up with the Partition Resolution which, of course, was strongly resented by the Arabs. I was advised ...again I would make a good many trips across the Jordan to see what was happening there...by the British when I went over there to take my car and have two Arab Legion soldiers with submachine guns sitting in my back seat. I did this and got over to Amman and my Jordanian friends asked why I was doing this as I was well known and no one would do anything. They thought it was sort of an insult to come with two Arab Legion guards. So, I never had them again and nothing happened.

But there was very strong resentment. Temple bombs increased and we recognized, of course, that the day would come before very long, this was 1947, that the British would be out and where would we be. So we decided that in terms of safeguarding the Consulate we would have the British come and give us an expert estimate as to what it would need to guard the Consulate.

They came up with a figure of 285 marines, which would be 24 hours guard service plus road escorts. We sent a telegram to Washington saying that, in terms of the future, here is what has been recommended. Washington obviously went into a dead faint because they never answered it.

About a week before the British left, Washington suddenly threw on top of us something like 30 civilian guards...young men who after the war, not knowing what to do had answered some sort of ad and signed up as embassy guards. They came from all walks of life. One man had ended up as head of the commissary in Rome, but still was a guard and found himself in Jerusalem wondering what the hell he was doing there. None of them knew how to shoot a gun. I had to take them out personally to a range, although I had never shot a tommy gun, to teach them how to shoot tommy guns. They were totally undisciplined. In addition to that all of a sudden they sent us, which was very useful, a 10 or 12 man navy communication team which turned out to be the only way we could keep communications going. I think we had in the Consulate General 15 of these civilian guards who were very nice young man but who were basically undisciplined. They drank quite a lot; one of them got mad at me one evening and chased me with a machine gun. It was really chaotic.

We asked for an armored vehicle for the Consul General...they had set up a United Nations Truce Organization which was made up of Consul Generals from France, Belgian and the United States. The meetings were usually held at the French Consulate General, which was right under the walls of the old city. In order for our Consul to get back and forth he had to go in a car without armor or walk. So we requested an armored car. They said they couldn't send a car but could send an armored personnel carrier which doesn't have any armor on top; it just had armor on the side with a canvas top. We never got that either. The Consul General was killed by a sniper's bullet. The fact of the matter is that the Department of State was totally not prepared for anything of this sort.

Q: After Mr. Pinkerton left you were able to get a little better feel for the relations. Were instructions coming in from Washington?

STABLER: We were sort of left out of the loop on these things. There were a lot of conversations between London and Washington which we were not privy to. So a lot of these things were being done without our knowing what was going on.

Q: Just as an aside because people sometime forget how things are. There was no embassy in Tel Aviv, there was no embassy in Amman or anything like that. You were it.

STABLER: I jumped ahead a little bit because I talked about the Consul General being killed by sniper fire. It was not Macatee, it was Tom Wasson and he didn't come until just before the British left when all married men were removed. But no, Tel Aviv didn't exist as far as a US post is concerned. There wasn't a Jordan. I was the only contact with Transjordan. I was no longer accredited to Transjordan because Jordan gained independence. I traveled there as a friend.

Q: There was no mission in Jordan?

STABLER: There was nothing at all. The only thing that existed was the Consulate General in Jerusalem. I don't have any recollection that we were really consulted a great deal on these things or that we had much of an input on partition or were asked very much of what we thought about these things. I don't recall that we were kept up on the happenings in the UN. Things would happen and we would not have had advanced knowledge of what was going to happen. So we were really cut out of the loop. I suppose the High Commissioner was being queried because the British are better about these things than we are I think. Most of what we knew was gleaned from the British.

Q: During my last job I was seconded to the Historian's Office. Among other things I did a history of our Consulate General in Jerusalem. In the 1920s after the Balfour Declaration had come out, our officers there...the Jewish community was small and I think there was a certain antipathy towards the Zionist movement, a pro-Arab feeling ...were reporting again and again saying, "Zionism is all fine, but a homeland here means blood on the streets, and this is just not going to happen." Their predictions, of course, are true, there has been a tremendous amount of fighting which continues really to this day. Were you able to give reports saying that there was going to be a blood bath?

STABLER: Yes, one was giving Washington reporting of the views of various communities on this subject -- the Arabs and the Jews and some of the religious leaders who have an interest in all of this, and also the views of the British. We reported on what was actually happening there -- the various acts of terrorism, the strong feelings of the various Jewish and Arab communities. Keeping Washington not only abreast of what was happening, but what probably would happen if certain things were done.

Again, Pinkerton, I don't know what he said. I do know...because we did do a lot of reporting after Macatee got there in which I was involved...giving various points of view and letting them know actually the tensions that were existing between the communities and what might happen if certain things were done. And then, of course, after the Partition, we brought them up to date on that.

Q: Prior to Partition. In your reporting did you feel any concern about...okay, if you report this, this report might be looked with disfavor by both the Jewish community and those sympathetic, there was still a residue of the New Deal Administration which had had very strong Jewish support...did you feel any constraints?

STABLER: I think Pinkerton may have felt some constraints because he was a very cautious man and didn't want to upset anybody particularly. It may be that some of that could have come through in his reporting. After him there was a greater openness in expressing points of view. I mean not worrying about the political side. One tried to call the shots such as they were. The Arabs expressed very strong views about things, those views would be reported without regard to whether they would upset somebody or not. By the same token the views of the Jewish Agency, the official Jews, were also reported, plus the British who were more apt to favor the Arab cause than the Zionist cause. But I don't think political considerations entered into this reporting at all. Although one knew what the feelings were in Washington with the Department of State on one side and domestic political aspects on the other side. But when the time came for Truman to

make his decision to recognize Israel de facto on the first day the British had left, I can assure you that we were neither consulted nor informed.

Q: I don't think anybody was informed.

STABLER: I don't think anybody was. Although the effort was made at that particular time to persuade the President that if he was going to recognize Israel de facto that he could temper it by recognizing Jordan de facto, even though Jordan had been independent since 1946 and we are talking about 1948. The President declined to do so.

Q: Was there a problem about not recognizing Jordan then? Was it budgetary or was there...?

STABLER: No, I think when Jordan became independent no one in Washington really bothered to think about recognizing it, regarding it pretty much as a British affair. In 1948 it was entirely a political thing. The President made the decision that this would have to be aimed at Israel and not be tempered in any way by also recognizing an Arab state. By that time the general outrage of the Arab world had already been felt with respect to what was happening with Partition and therefore it would be regarded by the Jews as probably insulting to try to balance it. So he declined to do that and it was only in January, 1949, when we recognized Israel de jure that the decision was made to recognize Jordan de jure at the same time.

Q: I want to stop at the Partition time where we will pick it up later. One last question. What was your feeling and those at the Consulate General about the British letting go? Were you thinking, "Oh my god, they have a responsibility, and shouldn't get out." or "Obviously they can't control the situation and lets see where the chips fall."?

STABLER: Obviously everybody recognized there would be utter chaos and almost anarchy once the British left. It was well known as a result of everything that had transpired before -- the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry and then various UN studies, etc., and the British statement that they were getting out. One can sympathize with the British because this had become an enormous burden to bear, extremely expensive in terms of money and lives with no returns, which they had been carrying on for a great many years. There was no way that they were going to be persuaded to stay on. Pressure was brought to bear on them to stay on. They may have considered it for a while, but by that time the Labor Government had come in and I think that they finally just realized that there was no way they could do it or really wanted to do it.

We all knew that Partition wasn't going to be viable because everybody was against it. It was a big unknown that we were embarking on the day that the British pulled out. But the political situation had reached the point where there was no alternative. They wouldn't stay and the UN had no ability or capacity to put a force in there. It was just one of these machines that gathered speed and there was no stopping it. The United States had no power to stop it either because we were behind the Partitioning. We certainly weren't going to take over from the British. Domestically it was quite clear that this was what the Jews wanted because this was the creation by partition of the homeland. As it turned out they got the whole thing.

We knew in the Consulate General that there was the Hagganah.

Q: That was the Jewish army.

STABLER: Yes, that was the Jewish army. It was illegal, but the British didn't do much about it. They knew it was there and had some utility in the defense of kibbutzims and things of that sort. They got their arms helter-skelter by stealing from British ammunition depots and things of that sort. That was sort of the unofficial army. Then there was the Stern gang and the Irgun Zvai Leumi. The Irgun Zvai Leumi was the larger group and the Stern gang the smaller group. They also existed. One knew that the Jewish Agency ran a fairly efficient operation and the assumption was that the Hagganah would acquit itself pretty well in the struggle against the Arabs.

But as you added up the Arab manpower for the Arab armies, it was hard, frankly, to see how in the final analysis the Jews would be able to withstand this onslaught. Added to this, of course, was the view in all the Arab capitals -- American representatives in all the Arab capitals were reporting that this better not happen because the Jews would be pushed into the sea. At times the war between our representative, James McDonald, in Tel Aviv and our representatives in the Arab countries was worse than the fighting because those in Arab countries took one side and McDonald the other.

Q: What was in Tel Aviv?

STABLER: On the 15th of May when Truman recognized Israel de facto, we set up a diplomatic representative's office in Tel Aviv. James Grover McDonald came to Tel Aviv as the first American representative. Although he was not an ambassador in the strict sense of the word, he was the American Representative in this de facto situation. The office was set up in Tel Aviv as indeed if it were an embassy with communications. Messages would be repeated Tel Aviv and Arab capitals.

As I say, on paper it certainly looked as if there was no way the Israelis could withstand the Arab onslaught.

Q: Can we focus on what you were doing at the time of the Partition, on May 15..?

STABLER: No, May 15 was when the British left in 1948. Partition was the previous year in 1947.

Q: Well, then when the British left, because I...

STABLER: They are two distinct things. The Partition was the United Nations resolution to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Maybe we went over that last time. If we did, then lets take it up to May 15, 1948.

Q: Yes, that is what I had marked on the last tape.

STABLER: When the British pulled out of Jerusalem, they pulled out of Palestine a day or two later because they moved with the High Commissioner up to Haifa and had an enclave and then they shortly afterwards pulled out completely.

In any event, May 15, 1948 I was at the Consulate General. The staff there by that time had been reduced by many. Those of us who were there were all bachelors including the Consul General, Tom Wasson.

Q: I might mention at this time that it was the policy in those days that when trouble started you got rid of the families and also, if possible, you put bachelor officers into a place.

STABLER: Yes, it certainly was the policy as far as Jerusalem was concerned. We had a number of married officers there and they all transferred. Those of us who remained were bachelors and there were, I think, several officers who were brought from other posts for temporary duty who were bachelors. For example, Stu Rockwell, who also became an ambassador later on, was in the embassy in Ankara and was detailed as one of the officers to augment the staff. And then there were one or two others but I don't offhand remember who they were.

In any event, on the morning of May 15, Major Andronovich, Nick Andronovich, who was the CIA representative in Jerusalem, and I drove out in my personal car. The Consulate General by that time had no car because it had been blown up -- I think I mentioned it last time. We drove out to a little airstrip called Colombia and found there a small plane and British troops drawn up in battle array with a battery of field artillery with guns aiming in the direction of Jerusalem. In due course the High Commissioner arrived, Sir Alan Cunningham, who was a friend. He was received with full honors at the little airstrip. After saying goodbye to me and Andronovich and his staff, he took off in his little plane headed for Haifa. The guns were hitched up and bit by bit the British forces also departed.

In a very short period of time Andronovich and I were left standing on an extremely empty airfield feeling really quite lonely, because with the departure of the British forces all public security in Jerusalem came to an end. There was no neutral police force, no security provided by a third element, that is to say, Jews, Arabs or the British.

Andronovich and I drove back into Jerusalem and I came to the Consulate General and found sitting on the steps going up to the office a group of members of the staff including civilian guards who had recently come in and one other officer, Bob Houghton, by name, who is dead now. They were all rather irritated because they had wanted to go up to the hotel which was not too far from the Consulate General on the main streets near the YMCA. When they had walked in that direction they had been shot at. The British had gone, and public order had completely collapsed. They went back to the Consulate General and asked to borrow a car which was refused them. They didn't want to risk walking up there again and being shot at.

I said, "Look here, I have my car with a couple of flags on it. Hop in the car and I will drive you up there." This was around noon time on the 15th. In they got along with me and my little dachshund. We drove up the street around the corner from the Consulate General and almost in no time we started getting shot at. I drove the car right up on the sidewalk and let the people in

the car get out. They almost fell into the hotel.

As soon as they had gotten out I started driving up the street towards the YMCA at which point I was taken under machine gun fire -- on one side by the Jews and the other side by the Arabs. I decided it was a no win situation and backed my car down the sidewalk and came really within a hairbreadth of having a bullet right through my head. It was scary. I was able to get out and fall into this hotel, literally.

There we were stuck for over 24 hours. That night...there was virtually no food in the hotel, there were no lights and we were concerned that during the night either a Jewish or Arab patrol might come in to this hotel and shoot first and ask questions later. Things were very tense at that time and the Jews and the Arabs were really after each other.

It was while we were all sitting in that hotel -- we did have a battery radio or some sort of communication -- that we learned that Mr. Truman had announced the de facto recognition of Israel, which made us all even more nervous because this was the area where there were quite a few Arabs around and we didn't think that decision would be very popular.

In any event while we were there one, possibly two, of the men who were with us there, part of the Consulate staff, got rather antsy about being cooped up and without my knowledge or permission, I was the senior officer there, went out onto the street and were promptly shot. Fortunately, neither of them were killed; they were picked up by Red Crescent ambulances (very brave ambulance people indeed) and taken off to hospitals. One of them was a civilian guard who was well into his 60s by this time.

Q: This was the type of person they sent out?

STABLER: This was the sort of harebrained scheme they thought up. Ages went all the way from the 60s down to the early 20s. This gentleman was in his 60s.

Anyway, he was taken away and, of course, we had no idea where. At that point we didn't know whether he was dead or alive. I think there may have been two, certainly there was one.

In any event, in due course the people at the Consulate General were able to arrange with the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had people in Jerusalem at that time trying to help in keeping some semblance of humanity in all of this that they come down to the hotel under the protection of a Red Cross flag -- I think these were mostly Swiss and extremely brave men because this was a wide open street absolutely visible from any sort of sniper's post. They came down by small groups and began removing the people in this hotel. Being senior officer I was the last to leave. Just before I left they started mowing the streets with bullets of one sort or another so we had to hold up awhile. We all got out and went back to the Consulate General. Those were the events of May 15.

There then began a period of one month in which really we were under siege -- the whole of Jerusalem really. The Arab Legion had occupied the Old City and were lobbing mortar shells into the New City. We lived there at the Consulate General with our own generator. We had a

naval communications unit which was just across an alley way in a convent. We had the sort of guard force that would shoot street lights out and do all sorts of things.

During that period we had a number of casualties. One of the naval communicators at one point was walking behind the Consulate General, I don't know why he was there after dark. He ran across a patrol, we don't know whether it was Jews or Arabs, and was shot. He eventually died. Two of the guards, two young men, heard screams and went out behind the Consulate into this no man's land and brought Walker, I think that was his name, back into the Consulate. We had a US Public Health doctor assigned to the Consulate General at that time and he was able to give first aid and got him into a hospital. Eventually, I am sorry to say, he died.

The Consul General, Tom Wasson, was a member of the Security Council Truce Commission which was composed of the United States, France and Belgium, as I remember, and was supposed to keep in touch with the Jewish and Arab communities with the idea of somehow getting a truce from the fighting that was going on, which was widespread. The Egyptians had come into Gaza, the Iraqis had marched a division into Palestine, the Syrians had fiddled about a little bit up in the north, the Arab Legion had occupied the West Bank and the Old City. The Truce Commission met in the French Consulate which was just under the Walls of the Old City. Wasson was obliged to walk the distance, which was relatively far and fairly open between the Consulate General and the French Consulate. On his way back from one of these meetings he was crossing a street just behind the Consulate wearing a bulletproof vest, but a sniper, and to this day no one really knows whether it was Jewish or Arab, shot him in the arm which was the one area that was not protected by the vest. We got him to the hospital but he died very shortly thereafter.

At the time he was hit I was in the Consulate General, the only officer there at the moment. We had a number of communications at that point. We had the navy and a special CIA/OSS operator on the road, who was also wounded in a mortar attack in due course. I had to decide who was going to be the acting Consul General. We had Bill Burdett who was assigned there; we had Stuart Rockwell from Ankara who was on temporary duty but senior to Burdett. But I made the decision that an officer permanently assigned to Jerusalem should be the acting consul general. I sent the message informing the Department that Consul General Larson had been shot and seriously injured and I assumed charge, signing it Bill Burdett. So Bill Burdett indeed was acting consul general for a month or so until a replacement came.

During that period we were pretty much holed up. You could get around and some people lived outside the Consulate General. I lived in the Consulate General and slept with telephone and tommy gun by my bed. We ate ten-in-one rations that had been brought in before.

Q: Ten-in-one rations being a military combat type of ration.

STABLER: Yes. Enough food for one man for ten days or for ten men for one day, something of that sort.

Q: I might add, not the greatest food in the world.

STABLER: Not the greatest, but it was the only food we had because all the markets were closed.

Q: He hadn't been around a lot but seemed to have more of a world view than many. Did he use you as a sounding board to find out what this peculiar place, the United States was? Because America really had very little influence in that area, the Middle East, at that time.

STABLER: There wasn't a great deal. We began to have a good deal more. We had some degree of influence, but not in the north because obviously Iraq was in the British sphere, and Lebanon and Syria were more or less in the French sphere. Very shortly after I got to Jerusalem there was the uprising in Syria and the French were eventually pushed out.

He was interested, of course, in the political views of the United States. I don't think he ever quite understood why he wasn't regarded more favorably by the States. The fact there was no recognition obviously galled him. He assumed, in a way, that as he regarded the American President as an important figure the American President by like token regarded him, Abdullah, as an important figure, which of course obviously wasn't the case. He had that sort of a vision of the world where he saw himself in a larger role than he really had. This also was somewhat likened to what he regarded as his role vis-a-vis the British Queen. The British did look upon Jordan in their way as an important element and he looked at the Queen as a fellow monarch.

Q: Actually it would have been the King.

STABLER: Yes, you are right. I was flying across the Channel in 1950 when I got word that the King had died. So it was the King.

He had very little idea of what made this country tick. I think they were all aware of the rather strong domestic political influence of the American Jewish community which, of course, distressed him.

Q: Did he talk to you about this?

STABLER: He never really took me to task about the general Arab view that our policy in the Middle East was dictated by domestic considerations. I don't ever remember him talking a great deal about that. He was apt to talk about the larger picture of how he viewed and looked towards the future and some peaceful arrangement where Jordan would be a bigger state and Israel would be there, etc. He obviously very much wanted to have a formal relationship with the United States.

In January 30, 1949, I went down to the cable wireless where I had to go to pick up my messages -- by this time I was alone again, I didn't have any clerk -- and found a US info message in the clear put out by USIA which declared that the United States had recognized Jordan and Israel de jure. Then there was a coded message. I had to go back to the house and get my one time pad out and laboriously decode the message which said exactly what the message had said that was in the clear. I was to inform the King that Jordan was recognized de jure. Then I had to sit down and type the message out, sign it, get into my car and drive to the Palace, see the King and hand him

the note. This was about 11:00 in the morning. He said, "Yes. Where have you been? I have been waiting for you since 8:00 this morning." It had been on the BBC. Yet, the Department had seen fit to give me no warning or opportunity to have at least the advantage of appearing to be on the inside. It had all been made public, yet I had to go through this business of decoding this stupid message which said all the same things as the public message.

The King was pleased but I think he would have been more pleased if I had been able to go in the night before and say, "Your Majesty, I just have come to inform you that we are announcing tomorrow morning that we are extending de jure recognition."

Q: When you went back to Washington afterwards, did you ever find out why this happened?

STABLER: I am afraid it is just our system which never really functions terribly well with these things. Part of it comes from the White House which sometimes doesn't tell the State Department when it is going to do something. The State Department is frightened to death of sending any message ahead of the White House. Nobody in the White House stops to think about the other side that maybe some foreign policy advantage could be gained by doing some of these things in a slightly different way.

Q: I might add that I have had some interviews with people who were in the middle of a civil war where we recognized one side or the other in Africa leaving our embassy extremely exposed because they were under the power of the group not accorded the recognition.

STABLER: I think, as a general rule, we have been extremely lacking in using our information sometimes to our best advantage. We don't tell our people in the field sometimes what they ought to know. We don't tell them in a timely enough fashion. We generally view the ambassador as someone who is there but not really considered as a primary matter. The British are much better than this. They consider the ambassador an important person and a priority member of the team. He is told what he has to know in plenty of time. I don't mean to make a capital case that our relations with Jordan were forever compromised by that. All I am saying is that it would have been a good gesture to have told the King in advance, but we didn't do it.

He was pleased and we set up the legation in Amman. The British Royal Air Force sent an honor guard to the Legation the morning I raised the flag, which was in February because I think it took them a month to get all the staff out and formally set up the Legation.

That year, the fourth of July, the first one where we had formal relations, the Arab Legion sent a brass band to play at the reception that I gave that afternoon. It was all done with good humor. The King was obviously pleased to have the United States finally a member of the diplomatic corps in Jordan. It didn't change a great deal because one had already worked as a mission.

Nothing really spectacular happened during that period. A lot of it was dealing with the question of the future and how to settle the problem with Israel. What to do, etc. Then, internally, the King spent some time trying to decide...I spend a certain amount of time with him. We discussed and debated what we should call Transjordan. It was called the Kingdom of Transjordan and he wanted to change it. The discussion was whether we call it the Hashemite Kingdom of the

Jordan, or Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Ultimately it was decided to call it Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. While I was traveling with him we would spend time trying to design a new decoration. Things of that sort. Just sort of amusing household details.

Q: You were there more because of your long term visiting and as a friend...although there was quite a difference not only obviously in rank but also in age. Do you think he was reaching out to you in some of these ways either as a counter to or difference with the British, because they had been there so long?

STABLER: I don't think as a counter. I think he obviously enjoyed the idea that he had a "special relationship," if you want to call it that although it really wasn't, with representatives of the great powers. To him the French were not very important and they had all been involved in the business of denying him the Kingdom of Syria; the Fourth Republic was a mess, not to be taken very seriously. Obviously he had nothing to do with the Russians; they weren't there and they were bad. He had had all these years of close relationship with the British, now suddenly the United States had become a friend too. I am sure that going back to what I mentioned very early on when I first went over to Amman in early 1945, with Pinkerton who had been criticized for not taking an interest in the Emir, and took an interest, and although I was only a vice consul that seemed to appeal to him too and for some reason we struck it off quite well personally. But certainly there was no question that I represented his contact with the other great power. It was never a counterbalance to the British because there was nothing we did. The British provided arms for him, they provided military officers, and trade, etc. And we provided nothing.

We did, however, recognize that he was a force for stability in that part of the world and that view is still held today. In spite of the fact that Hussein, for his own good reasons, did what he did, we are not prepared to get rid of him.

Q: To put this in context, we are talking about just after what was called the Gulf War between the United States and its Allies and Iraq in which Jordan and King Hussein were at least verbally giving a great deal of support to the Iraqi side which was not appreciated by the United States at all.

STABLER: One has to remember that King Hussein has a great many Palestinians in his Kingdom and at that time Saddam Hussein was trying to use the Palestine ploy to garner support; King Hussein is a survivor. The fact is that Jordan does represent an element of basic stability and we are not just about to abandon them, and certainly in the period I am talking about, 1948, Jordan was the only country that showed at least some degree of sensitivity and rationality when it came to Israel.

During that period I saw a lot of the King. He gave me a horse that I used to ride. He used to play polo in Amman with Arab Legion officers which was fun but dangerous. One had really an interesting time with not only the Jordanians and Palestinians but with the foreign community. It was a very small town. Everybody knew what everybody else was doing. There was a lot of intrigue and things of that sort. But it was a wonderful experience. I was amused at one point when Stanton Griffis, US Ambassador in Cairo, came over to Amman. I showed him around and took him down to the Winter Quarters in Shuneh to have dinner with the King. He was quite

taken with all this performance and apparently wrote to Bob Lovett, who was then the Under Secretary of State, recommending that I be made the first US Minister to Jordan.

Well, I was only 28 or 29. That fell, as you can imagine, not only on deaf but scandalized ears in Washington...the idea that someone at the lowest grade in the Foreign Service should suddenly become a Minister. Of course some of my colleagues in the Middle East like Keeley, who was US Minister in Damascus, didn't think it was a very good idea either. Anyway, it didn't get very far. So I became the first Chargé d'Affaires in Amman and then in August, 1949 I was transferred. David Fritzman came out as the Chargé d'Affaires.

Q: I have done an interview with him.

STABLER: You have done an interview with David?

Q: Yes.

STABLER: Then, as you know, the Minister was selected, a man by the name of Barnes, I think it was. He suddenly disappeared from sight and didn't go. The first US Minister was Gerald Drew who came out in early 1950.

I was told to return to Washington without delay, the fastest possible means. I rushed back, rushed to the Department to the greeting, "Oh, you are here? Why did you come back so fast?" No one then knew why I had been told to come back so fast. I worked on Palestine Affairs for a while. Then in January, 1950 I became Political Advisor to the US Representative to the UN Trusteeship Council which met in Geneva from January, 1950 through March, 1950, to draft the statute for the international city of Jerusalem -- the Corpus Separatum. This was an interesting three months of activity where the Trusteeship Council very seriously went through step by step, chapter by chapter setting up an international city of Jerusalem and for the holy places in what had been Palestine, so that Bethlehem, Nazareth, etc. would be under the control of the administrator of this international city with an international police force.

That was pursuant to the Partition Resolution in 1947. At the end of the session, the plan was given to the representative of Israel and the representative of Jordan, who then controlled the holy places in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Within a matter of a very few minutes those representatives turned the plan down. And that was the end of that.

WILLIAM C. BURDETT
Vice Consul
Jerusalem (1948-1950)

Ambassador William C. Burdett was born in Tennessee in 1920. He entered the Foreign Service in 1941 and served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. His career in the Foreign Service included posts in Iraq, Israel, Turkey, Great Britain, and Malawi. Ambassador Burdett was interviewed by Richard Nethercut

in 1988.

Q: The Mid-East is very much on peoples' minds now in view of the possible breakthrough in Arab-U.S. dialogue. Could you tell me about your involvement in Mid-East policy and which assignments were the most significant?

BURDETT: My first significant involvement in U.S. policy towards the Middle East arose during an assignment to Jerusalem. I went there in May of 1948 as a Vice Consul 0-5, Foreign Service Officer-Class Five, arriving four days before British troop withdrew. Unhappily our Consul General, Thomas Wasson, was killed by a sniper several days later. As a consequence I became Acting Consul General and the U.S. member of the (UN) Security Council Truce Mission.

Q: That must have been quite an unusual experience for somebody at such a junior point in his career. Can you recall some of the feelings you had, and how this worked out?

BURDETT: The entire situation was unusual. Jerusalem was divided into Jewish and Arab sectors with feelings of apprehension all around. There was sporadic firing, mortar barrages, some of the shells falling in the Consulate General compound. Our movements were limited, but we maintained telephone contact with the British Consulate General in the Arab sector. The British proved most helpful throughout in keeping us abreast of developments in the rest of Palestine. I attended meetings of the Security Council Truce Commission in the French Consulate General. We were in regular communication with officers of the Jewish Agency, and the Jewish Defense Forces. Occasionally, we could also reach the commander of the Arab Legion in the old city of Jerusalem, and other Arab officials. Fortunately, we established early a close working relationship with Colonel Moshe Dayan, commander of Israeli forces in Jerusalem.

Q: What about communications with the State Department? Were they reliable and did you get rather detailed guidance, or were you forced to make a number of decisions on your own?

BURDETT: Shortly prior to the British withdrawal the State Department established a Naval Communications unit across an alley from the Consulate. We had our own generator and thus perhaps the best communications that existed in Jerusalem with the outside world. We could receive messages almost instantaneously from Washington. In the confusion then existing the Department allowed us to take the initiative in determining our activities and reporting to the extent we could. The Department realized the restrictions on our movements and did not press us for jobs that were not feasible. We made the facilities of our communications unit available to members of the American press.

Q: You mentioned that one of the people you negotiated with, or had contact with, was Colonel Moshe Dayan. Would you care to elaborate on this contact with him?

BURDETT: As a member of the Security Council Truce Commission we worked with Colonel Dayan and Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah el Tel of the Arab Legion and UNTSO in drawing up detailed cease-fire lines for the Jerusalem area and monitoring the truces. Dayan was a tough

negotiator but as a sabra knew and had grown up with the Arabs. Fortunately the personal relations between Dayan and el Tel were good which facilitated the work of the Truce Commission.

Q: Looking back now in the context of subsequent American policy towards the area, what effect do you think your role at this time had on subsequent American policy in the area?

BURDETT: We encountered constant difficulties with the Jewish civilian authorities and had the impression that they would reach an agreement and when they thought it advantageous would ignore it. This was shown in the question of bringing supplies to Jerusalem after the Security Council imposed truce. We became involved in a public controversy with Bernard Joseph, the top civilian Jewish official. The truce agreement provided for a "standstill" so that neither side could take advantage of the truce to improve its position. Contrary to this provision Jewish trucks entered Jerusalem regularly, ignoring a check point the Security Council Truce Commission tried to establish. Most importantly the Jews took advantage of the truce period to construct what was known as the "Burma Road" beyond the range of Arab Legion guns linking Jerusalem to the main Jewish areas. Thus, by the end of the truce the Jewish authorities had successfully broken the siege of Jerusalem. Thereafter they enjoyed military superiority in the area, while before that this advantage had rested with the Arab Legion.

Q: I see. Now at what point did you then complete your assignment as Acting Consul General, and did you stay on in Jerusalem after a new Consul General had been appointed, or what happened?

BURDETT: During the summer of 1948 John MacDonald was assigned as Consul General. He was transferred shortly thereafter, and I resumed charge of our office just before the assassination of the UN mediator Bernadotte. I was then in charge of the office until early in 1950 when a new Consul General arrived, and I was transferred to Tabriz.

Q: Did this experience in Jerusalem stamp you as a Mid-East specialist and have an impact on your subsequent career development?

BURDETT: Unfortunately I am not an "Arabist", and have no scholastic or linguistic knowledge of the Middle East. I've maintained a professional interest in the area ever since and did receive assignments related to that area through a large part of my career.

Q: From Jerusalem I judge that you were subsequently involved in the Mid-East crisis involving the Suez Canal. Could you please explain your involvement there?

BURDETT: From Iran I was transferred to the Department and assigned to the Office of Near Eastern Affairs and then the Bureau of Near Eastern and African Affairs. President Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal in 1956 marked the failure of an ambitious program of Secretary Dulles intended to seal off the area from "international communism". To contain Soviet expansion, Mr. Dulles adopted a policy of impartiality in the Arab-Israel problem and set about creating a Middle East Defense arrangement. I participated in developing a detailed proposal for a comprehensive Middle East settlement. We thought Israel obtained word of our

plans (Israeli intelligence on our planning was "remarkable" indicating inside leaks), found them distasteful, and deliberately adopted policies including aggressive border raids, to make it politically difficult for Nasser to move towards an accommodation. At the same time Israel's supporters in Congress blocked the provision of military aid. In 1955 Nasser reached the conclusion that he could not count upon the United States to restrain Israel politically. He also concluded that the U.S. would not meet his requests for military assistance sufficient to enable him to protect Egypt from Israeli aggression. Nasser decided to turn to the Soviet Union for military assistance. Increasingly he adopted a non-aligned anti-Western stance.

The deterioration in relations was rapid. In the summer of 1956 we replied negatively to the Egyptian demand for a "yes" or "no" answer on an outstanding offer to finance the Aswan Dam. Nasser used this in part as a pretext for nationalizing the Suez Canal. A mighty scramble then ensued to find ways to assure the continued international use of the canal and to provide the British and French a face saving alternative to the use of force to regain control of the canal. Two major conferences were held in London. Nasser in effect rejected the proposals coming from those conferences. In late summer of 1956 the British and French military preparations were well publicized. However, we thought these were in the nature of bargaining postures and contingency planning. The actual decision of Britain, France and Israel to attack the Suez Canal caught us by surprise. We made a last minute effort to forestall the attack unsuccessfully.

The Administration was then confronted with an "agonizing reappraisal". President Eisenhower decided that we had no alternative but to oppose the British, French and the Israelis.

Q: You were very much involved on the Washington end of things and I wonder if you could describe how the State Department related in this case to the formulation and the implementation of President Eisenhower's policy?

BURDETT: Once the decision was made to oppose the British, French and Israeli attack, Secretary Dulles became in effect the "Desk Officer". Our efforts were coordinated by his office. I was the bag carrier when Bob Murphy was sent to London to reconnoiter prior to the attack, and I served as "bookkeeper" in the sense of assembling briefing books and doing staff work.

BILHA BRYANT
Israeli Citizen
Haifa, Israel (1948-1954)

Bilha Bryant was born in 1934 in Bulgaria. Bryant served in the Israeli Army and worked in the private sector before joining the Israeli Foreign Service in 1959. Bryant resigned from the Israeli Foreign Service and married Edward (Ted) Bryant in 1963. With her husband, Bryant was assigned overseas to Mozambique, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Korea and India. Bryant then began to work for the State Department and served in the Soviet Bureau, Eastern European Affairs and Congressional Relations. Bryant was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: What was the Mixed Armistice Commission in those days. We're talking about 1950-ish, aren't we?

BRYANT: Well, '53 or '54. Representatives from the Israeli and Syrian or Lebanese military would meet once a week to discuss border incidents; it could be as minor as a donkey crossing the border, or something serious such as kidnaping across the border or shooting at working farmers. Of course, United Nations officers also participated. Eight to 10 people usually attended the meetings, not more than that, depending on the seriousness of the incident. Not much was happening on border with Lebanon, but there was always something going on with the Syrians.

Q: What sort of things were you doing?

BRYANT: At that point the Syrians were sitting high up on the Golan Heights and were shooting at Israeli farmers, or fishermen on the Kinneret (Lake Tiberias). Both my superiors were high-ranking officers conducted the discussions. I was only a second lieutenant and my job was to sit quietly and take notes of the proceedings and then follow up.

Q: How were these meeting at that time there with the Syrians?

BRYANT: The meetings were very civilized. There was no social chatter and exchange of jokes, but at the same time there was no hostility as such. I think the hatred came later on when the Arabs started losing part of their territories. The Syrians, as you know, lost the Golan Heights.

Q: So the '56 war would be the Suez War?

BRYANT: The Suez War. As soon as the war broke out, I, like thousands other Israelis, was mobilized. I was assigned to the Public Affairs Office of the Israeli Army, specifically, to escort foreign journalists who were reporting on the war. A very interesting thing happened then; if you remember, the Israeli army was moving very fast across the Negev. So there we were, riding across the desert in a convoy of buses following the conquering army. At one point we lost track of the army but were able to continue by following the hundreds of shoes and boots left behind in the desert by the retreating Arab forces. Actually, I found that to be a very sad sight. Finally we did get to Sharm el Sheikh.

Q: Had things changed at all after the '56 war?

BRYANT: No, they hadn't. Perhaps at first the glory of victory helped morale in the country, but it also brought a new and horrific factor to everyday life - terrorism. While I haven't lived there for over 35 years, I still remember well the horrors of terrorism for the ordinary Israeli. I still get upset at the thought that the Arabs lost the Suez war fair and square and that the only way they could stand up to Israel was by killing and maiming innocent people, including small children.

DANIEL OLIVER NEWBERRY

Vice Consul Jerusalem (1949-1951)

Daniel Oliver Newberry was born in Georgia in 1922. He received his bachelor's degree from Emory University in 1944. He then served overseas in the US Army from 1943- 1946. His career included positions in Jerusalem, Turkey, New York, Laos, Iran, Turkey, and Morocco. Mr. Newberry was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 1997

Q: How did you get into Jerusalem?

NEWBERRY: With difficulty! [Laughter] It was really rather a gripping experience for somebody like me who really didn't know very much about how to conduct himself as a Foreign Service officer. The airstrip at "Columbia" was literally just a landing strip. The paved, asphalt road from Ramallah to Jerusalem ran across the landing strip. There was vehicular traffic going across the landing strip! It was that kind of situation.

It was getting rather late in the afternoon, and the pilot had to fly on to Beirut that same day. He had to get to Beirut before dark because in 1949 they didn't have any landing lights at Beirut airport. So the pilot and the crew of the airplane were eager to get out of "Columbia" airstrip. While they were getting all of the cargo unloaded, which was destined for delivery to the UN Mission up there at Government House in Jerusalem, I was talking to an obviously European soldier in the uniform of the Arab Legion. He turned out to be an ex "Afrika Korps" German who had somehow escaped becoming a prisoner of war. He had enlisted with the Arab Legion. So there I was, chatting away with him in German, never realizing that I was closing the "trap" around myself by being seen and heard speaking German.

The point I'm leading up to is that a woman Major in the Arab Legion, and remember that this was in 1949, was in charge of the arrivals and departures of all persons at this airstrip. She was the only officer in the Arab Legion who could speak four foreign languages. Her name was Major Asia Halaby. She held a commission in the Arab Legion. We eventually got on fairly cordial terms, but not that day! She took one look at my passport and said: "Mr. Newberry, you cannot land here!" I said: "Where can I land? I don't have an assignment to Beirut. At least, I'm assigned as a vice consul in Jerusalem. It says so in my passport." She repeated: "You can't land here!"

I realized that I was in trouble. So I talked to one of the American Sergeants who had been a passenger on my plane from Athens. I said: "When you get up to the UN Mission at Government House, pass the word back to the American consul over on the Israeli side that the new American vice consul is out at the 'Columbia' airstrip and is in trouble." This Major Halaby had said: "Okay, you can stay, but you're a prisoner of war!" That's when I said to this American sergeant: "For Heaven's sake, get the word to the American consul and tell him what my situation is."

Well, as it turned out, this Sergeant went to a cocktail party and forgot all about me. However, another one of the UN military people was staying at the same "Bed and Breakfast" place where I was under "house arrest." Three days later, he saw the American consul, Bill Burdett, on the

street in Jerusalem and said: "What are you doing about Newberry?" Bill is now dead, God rest his soul. He said: "Newberry? He's still in Washington." I found out about this conversation later on. Anyway, once the consulate knew that I was out at "Columbia" airstrip, another vice consul came out and "bailed me out." That was my arrival at my first post. I had literally been declared to be a "prisoner of war."

Q: Dan, could you explain, both for me and for the historical record, what the situation was in Jerusalem in 1949 when you arrived there? How did it appear to you?

NEWBERRY: I'll be glad to do so. First, let me say what the "technical" situation was. What was referred to as the "Old City," that is, the entire walled city of Jerusalem, plus the eastern side of the city, including Mt. Scopus and all of the area adjoining it to the East, was controlled by Jordan. This was the situation left over from the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948. The Jordanian Army, made up principally of the Arab Legion, held what is now the West Bank of the Jordan River. That is, the "Old City" of Jerusalem, plus the West Bank of the Jordan River. Israel controlled what was called the "New City" of Jerusalem and everything West to the Mediterranean. So, in effect, we had to deal with two governments in Jerusalem.

We dealt with the Jordanian "Mutusyarif," as they called him, the Governor of the "Old City." On the Israeli side, the Israelis still had a "Military Governor" of Jerusalem. So that was technically the political division of authority.

As it turned out, we had a little difficulty in getting me started on my assigned duties. Bill Burdett, the American consul in Jerusalem, had already decided that I would have one of the most irksome jobs in the American consulate, because that's what they always do to the most junior officer. [Laughter] That was arranging "clearances" for American travelers to get through what was called the "Mandlebaum Gate." That is, from the Israeli to the Jordanian occupied sections of Jerusalem. Mandlebaum Gate was actually a square, or a "Platz," as they say in German.

Since the "cease-fire lines" happened to be laid in place, Mandlebaum Square was "no man's land" between the Jordanian held sector and the Israeli held sector. There weren't very many American travelers whom either side would allow to cross to the other side. In particular, the Jordanians didn't like people to come first to Israel and then to Jordan. It was my job to arrange for all of these "clearances," to go and meet these people, and to walk them through "no man's land" and help them with their baggage, since no vehicles could go through this area. That is, unless I happened to have a consulate jeep, which couldn't carry much luggage in any case.

The only kind of vehicle allowed to go through the Mandlebaum Gate was a foreign, consular vehicle. Everything else was stopped. It was like being on the bank of a river where there was no ferry boat. People literally walked across the demarcation line.

So this was one of my first, assigned duties. However, our old friend, Major Asia Halaby, of the Arab Legion, was also the person who handled the clearances for the Jordanians. During the first two or three weeks that I was doing this job, I had some other duties to handle on the Jordanian side, but my name was not on the Jordanian "clearance list." Finally, the American consul took

the matter up with the Jordanians. Major Asia Halaby said: "We suggest that you assign somebody other than Mr. Newberg" [sic] to that duty.

Of course, Bill Burdett stood on principle. He got his friend, Wells Stabler, who was the American Chargé d'Affaires in Amman, Jordan, to go to the Jordanian Foreign Ministry. Major Halaby was then ordered to let me perform my duties in clearing people to go from the Israeli to the Jordanian side of the line.

Q: I think that she must have thought that you were Jewish, because she heard you speaking German.

NEWBERRY: That's why I mentioned the fact that I was heard speaking German. Eventually, she told me this. She said: "Your name is Daniel, and I heard you speaking German. What else was I to think but that the State Department had committed the great effrontery of assigning a Jewish vice consul here?" As I found out later, that was what was bothering her, although I didn't know it at the time. Actually, I think that the State Department would have had every right to assign a Jewish vice consul to this position. It might have been a little hard on the incumbent, but there was nothing wrong with the principle of assigning a Jewish consular officer to the American consulate in Jerusalem. We had Jewish FSOs and have had them assigned to Jerusalem, but not in 1949. When I thought about what might have happened if the Jordanians had had an American "prisoner of war" in those circumstances, it did not leave me with a very cozy feeling.

Q: What was the military situation there? Was there a cease-fire at that time?

NEWBERRY: There was a cease-fire. As I recall it, the truce talks at Rhodes were still going on, although I will have to check the dates. They already had in place the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), or had it on hand very soon after that. There were multinational contingents monitoring the borders between Syria and Israel, Jordan and Israel, and Egypt and Israel. They had these UN "Truce Supervision Units" based around there. It was a pretty "hairy" [dangerous] business. Some of the personnel assigned to these units came close to great, personal peril in handling this job. It was a very tense time, indeed.

It was also particularly dangerous. I remember, from the time when I was still under "house arrest" at this "Bed and Breakfast" place which was called the "American Colony Hotel" [North of the walled city of Jerusalem]. Actually, it's more than a bed and breakfast place, but I was a newcomer and didn't know the difference.

I wanted to go to the Anglican Cathedral to attend religious services. They told me at the American Colony Hotel to stick to the main road because there were still land mines that had not been "defused." It was still a combat situation in May, 1949, even though there was a truce in effect.

Q: What was the American consulate general in Jerusalem doing in those days in its relationship with the Arabs and the Israelis?

NEWBERRY: It was more a case of what the consulate general was trying to do. It was really an anomalous situation in terms of our relations with our own colleagues. The American ambassador in Tel Aviv insisted that the consulate general in Jerusalem was a "constituent post" of the American mission in Israel. He tried to give orders to the consul general in Jerusalem, but the consul general would have none of it. In consular terms, the consulate general in Jerusalem reported directly to the State Department and not to the embassy in Tel Aviv and not to the Legation in Amman, Jordan. This was about the time when they stopped referring to the country as "Transjordan," calling it simply, "Jordan." That was sort of the bureaucratic situation that we had.

In traditional, Foreign Service practice we all got to know and to cultivate the Military Commander of the Jerusalem Garrison on the Israeli side. He was a colonel named Moshe Dayan [later Israeli Defense Minister and a major Israeli political figure]. He was very approachable. He and his wife were obviously very ambitious. They had what the Europeans used to term a "calling day," a certain day when new arrivals could go to Dayan's house and meet all sorts of interesting people.

That's what I did, even though I had no reason to meet higher ranking officials. So I got to know Moshe Dayan and his sister, who was being "courted" by one of our officers. I won't say which one. Moshe Dayan's sister-in-law married a young Israeli Air Force Lieutenant. I was lucky enough to be invited to the wedding. That young Lieutenant was named Ezer Weizman, who is now President of Israel. [Laughter]

It was an unusual situation where a young, low-ranking Foreign Service officer, in fact, the most junior FSO, had regular access to these Israeli "movers and shakers." Just as during a later part of my experience in Jerusalem, toward the end of my tour there, I just "happened" to be on the Arab side of Jerusalem one day in August, 1952, when something terribly dramatic happened inside the Old City. I found out that King Abdullah of Jordan had been assassinated in a mosque! I was the only officer in our consulate general who knew this. I was trying to alert the other side of the line, while still doing my job as a reporting officer.

So for the next several days all of us in the consulate general were trying to piece together what had happened. Obviously, the Jordanian Police moved in and arrested people right and left. However, it was just my luck that I happened to be in a place where nobody in the American consulate general would have known about what had happened for hours until the BBC [British Broadcasting Commission] reported what had happened. I was able to contribute to the reporting on this event.

Q: You mentioned that you had contacts, even as a young officer, among the "movers and shakers" on the Israeli side. What about on the Jordanian side?

NEWBERRY: I was just going to say that, in the context of this quick "round up" of people who were arrested by the Jordanians, was what I thought was one of my best contacts. He was explaining a lot of things to me. I guess that he was a nephew of the famous Mufti Hajamin al-Husseini, who was very prominent among Palestinians. My friend was arrested and eventually hanged for alleged involvement in the conspiracy to kill King Abdullah! I began to think that

acquaintanceship with my friends, the people whom I was cultivating, was potentially dangerous.

Q: What was your impression of Jordan when you first arrived in that country, including how it was run, where it was going, and all of that?

NEWBERRY: Well, Stu, I can only give a very circumscribed response to that very good question. As a "new kid on the block," I was so concentrated on getting my work done, and it was a very busy job, that I didn't really have the leisure to go out and sort of "explore" things.

We didn't have "professional" diplomatic couriers. We took it in turn to drive our diplomatic pouches over to Amman, Jordan. I would chat with the people in our Legation there, which consisted of two rooms in the Philadelphia Hotel. So I picked up impressions regarding the situation. However, my recollection of those years is very limited. The British were still very much "running the show." That impression has lingered with me, especially after King Abdullah was assassinated. Abdullah's successor, King Khalal, was mentally so limited. Then, it was some further time before the "Brave, Young King," Hussein, really began to take control of the situation. But during all of this time, from 1950 to about 1960, it seemed to me that the British were still very much "calling the shots."

Q: What about Israel? What was your impression and the reaction of our people in Jerusalem toward the Israelis?

NEWBERRY: I have to say, quite candidly, that I was personally shocked, when I arrived at the consulate general in Jerusalem, to find that, to a man, our people were all very "anti-Israeli." I was shocked at this because, first of all, as I told you, some of my best friends and closest "buddies" in the U.S. Army during World War II had been Jewish refugees from Nazism. I was prepared to be "open minded" about Israel. However, as I learned more about some of the more terrible things that the "Hagganah," the most prominent of the Jewish organizations, did during the first Arab-Jewish War [in 1948], I began to appreciate that there really were two sides to the Arab-Jewish conflict.

Then, at a certain point, the line from "Romeo and Juliet," about "a plague on both your houses" appeared more reasonable to me. "A plague on both your houses" was pretty much my attitude during the rest of my time in Jerusalem, because such outrageous things were done on both sides. I think that I was honestly "neutral" by the time I finished my tour of duty in Jerusalem.

Q: Either then, or not too long afterwards, our consul general was killed, and nobody, even to this day, knows who killed him.

NEWBERRY: I heard many, almost eyewitness stories. I think that it is beyond debate that our consul general, Tom Watson, was killed by a sniper. They still had his "bulletproof vest" hanging up in the consulate general which was supposed to protect him. However, the bullet entered right under his armpit and went right past the "bulletproof vest." So, despite taking precautions, he was killed in that way. I haven't made a detailed study of this matter, but on the basis of circumstantial evidence I believe that the sniper could only have been on the Israeli side. Well, I don't really know. However, the point is that, when he was killed, Consul General Watson was

either going to or coming back from a meeting of the Special Consular Commission which was trying to implement the truce. He was on an errand of peace, either coming or going, when he was shot by this sniper.

Q: Do you think that that contributed to the bitterness of the people in the consulate general toward the Israelis?

NEWBERRY: It may have, because the man that I replaced was also shot, presumably from the same direction. However, he survived. So that's part of it. I think that the natural, sort of "social" contacts of the Americans in the consulate general, especially those who couldn't speak any other language but English, was with the military and civilian people in Government House. I would have to say that they were pretty much anti-Israeli.

Q: What about the relations between the consulate general and I guess that by now it was our embassy in Tel Aviv?

NEWBERRY: We had an embassy in Tel Aviv. The ambassador was a "political" appointee.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

NEWBERRY: His name was James McDonald. He was a prominent and perhaps the leading, Gentile "Zionist" in the United States. He was "rushed out" to Tel Aviv shortly after the United States recognized Israel in 1948. He didn't know much about the State Department, but he thought that he had access to the White House, [then under President Truman]. He attempted, without success, to persuade the consulate general in Jerusalem to consider itself a "constituent post" of the embassy.

Ambassador McDonald's performance in Tel Aviv is interesting, in retrospect. I liked him personally but I thought that he was not a good choice to be ambassador in Israel at that time. He didn't serve in Tel Aviv until toward the end of the Truman administration. We had a career FSO as the second American ambassador to Israel, Lynette Davis.

I was assigned to temporary duty in the embassy in Tel Aviv for the last few months of my tour in Israel. This was during the interim period when we were waiting to know who the new ambassador to Israel would be. I remember hearing a youngish Israeli Foreign Ministry official telling me: "Well, we hope that the new American ambassador will be a career officer, because we know that in the State Department they discounted everything that Ambassador McDonald said. We want an American ambassador who will report accurately what we say to him." Of course, since Ambassador McDonald was such a partisan of Israel, he was interpreting what the Israelis said to him, and the Israelis didn't want that. The Israelis just wanted an accurate report of what they told him.

I had not been in Israel since that first tour, but the Israelis had obviously learned how to "operate" in Washington. However, at that time, which was just a year after Israel became independent, they were still "feeling their way" as to how best to influence the development of U.S.-Israeli relations. Having an all-out, pro-Zionist American ambassador in Tel Aviv was not

their idea of the ideal situation.

Q: It still isn't. Just recently our ambassador to Israel was actually an Australian citizen who had also been a lobbyist for the Israeli government. Then he was naturalized as an American citizen and is now the Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

NEWBERRY: Well, you said it, Stu. I didn't, but I'm not disputing any of the irony in your remark.

Q: This is a very "dubious" situation, to say the least.

NEWBERRY: I think that, as an aside, that applies to sending, how should I say it, "hyphenated" Americans as ambassador to any country where they are closely associated with either the culture or the politics of the country in which they are supposed to represent the United States.

Q: I know that recently we had a Greek-American ambassador to Greece. I heard that his views on Greek-American relations were completely discounted in Washington, because his reporting was so "biased."

NEWBERRY: There's another side to such a situation, too. I am talking now, not so much of the ambassador, but of American Jews who may be assigned to the embassy in Tel Aviv. When I was in Jerusalem and then, briefly and for several months at the embassy in Tel Aviv, the labor attaché at the American embassy was a very sharp guy. His name was Milton Fried. He was the only identifiable, Jewish-American officer in the American embassy.

The reason he was chosen for the position of Labor Attaché, and he told me this himself, was that he was the son-in-law of Sidney Hillsman, a very prominent American labor leader. However, he said privately to me: "This is not a place for an American Jew to be assigned. All of the Israelis think that, because I'm a Jew, they can 'use me.' In fact, I'm an American, and I resent this attitude." Those were pretty much his words. It's awkward to be in such a situation.

Q: We've run across this in a number of countries. Well, during the time that you were in Jerusalem, were there any incidents or events which particularly come to your mind which you or the consulate general had to deal with?

NEWBERRY: I can tell you of some "colorful things" that I had to deal with.

Q: Let's hear them.

NEWBERRY: In the Table of Organization of the consulate general in Jerusalem, I was called the "citizenship officer." We did not issue visas, thank God. I think that most Foreign Service officers who haven't done visa work consider themselves very lucky not to have had that kind of assignment. I have great respect for visa officers, and some of my best friends are visa officers, and all of that. However, I consider that my assignment to the consulate general in Jerusalem was very interesting, and I learned a lot about consular work, but very little about visas.

Let me get on to citizenship matters. This had a particular angle because I was assigned to Jerusalem. In 1949 one of the things that the citizenship officer in Jerusalem had to do was to keep track of all of the American veterans in our consular district who were entitled to receive benefits under the "GI Bill" [legislation enacted in 1945 to help veterans attend college or other training courses]. There were lots of veterans in Jerusalem at the time, and they all wanted their checks delivered on time. I had to make sure, if they were attending Hebrew University, for example, that they received their money on time. This involved a big, administrative problem.

There were other aspects of this citizenship job. There were many naturalized American citizens in the Jerusalem consular district who were probably very close to the "point" of automatically expatriating themselves. Under the Nationality Act of 1949, a naturalized, American citizen could not remain overseas indefinitely. So I found myself having to prepare certificates of expatriation for American citizens. When I learned the job, I anticipated this situation and I would call them in and tell them that if they didn't go back to the U.S., they would lose their American nationality.

Most of these people didn't speak any English. They spoke Yiddish. So there I was with my college German. I spoke German to them, and they would answer in Yiddish. So that's the way we communicated.

I think that most people who are acquainted with that part of the world are aware of those extreme, Orthodox Jews who have been sort of caricatures. These Jews, many of them from Poland, wore big, black hats, had side curls in their hair, and big, black gabardine coats. There was a community of these Orthodox Jews in a certain quarter of Jerusalem who were American citizens. I had them as "customers," too.

Of course, I didn't have any political objection to them, but I had to keep on good terms with them. First of all, because they were American citizens and, secondly, because we had to pass through their community, even on the Sabbath, to get to the Mandlebaum Gate. Several times I had stones thrown at me in this area, the Mea Sharim quarter of Jerusalem, because they considered that I was "desecrating" the Sabbath. In fact, I was like a postman, doing my appointed rounds, but they didn't like it when I passed through their quarter on the Sabbath.

What I'm leading up to is that these people were a very important, colorful, and even "pungent" part of my recollection of Jerusalem. These people took their ritual baths before they came in to meet me, but they never washed their clothes! You can imagine, in a warm climate like that of Jerusalem, what they smelled like when they came into my office! I'm not kidding you. I reached the point where I would have to stand by the window and keep them all the way across the room, just to be able to talk to them. It was that bad! Sorry to go into this aspect in such detail, but if you want to talk about "color," that's one of the more "colorful" sides of doing citizenship work in Jerusalem!

Then, over on the Jordan side of the consular district, I had more "colorful" experiences. Of course, when I first got to Jerusalem, we didn't have any sort of office over on the Jordan, or Arab, side of the city, because, as it turned out, the office building of the consulate general was on Ramallah Road in the "New City" of Jerusalem.

As it turned out, we were eventually able to use a couple of rooms in the building housing the American School of Oriental Research in the Old City of Jerusalem. The citizenship officer (that is, me) held office hours there, one day a week. Anybody who had claims to Social Security checks or who needed to register the birth of one of their children who had claims to being American citizens (for many Arabs were American citizens), could meet with the citizenship officer at the American School of Oriental Research.

On another day in the week I went up to Ramallah, which was perhaps half an hour's drive from Jerusalem. I had office hours at the Quaker School in Ramallah one morning a week for Arab Americans who came in to discuss citizenship problems. I can give you an example. It is curious to note that some of these people were actually shepherds. Their parents, or some of the older members of this community, somehow had gotten jobs in war industries in the U.S. during World War II. They stayed on in the U.S. long enough to acquire rights to a Social Security pension. Then they came back to Palestine and were re-absorbed into their own culture. When their children were born, they may or may not have been eligible to be registered as American citizens. So I really had to know U.S. citizenship law, inside and out. Otherwise, I would have been "zapped" [disavowed] by the Passport Office back in Washington.

Q: Did you get into any difficulties with Jordanian or Israeli authorities as you went along your appointed rounds? I mean, after you got over the initial problems you had with the Jordanians.

NEWBERRY: Not really. I can't recall that either side treated me discourteously, once they understood what I was doing. My greatest fear was that, because of the sort of "front line" atmosphere, I might wind up taking the wrong road. I remember once on a beautiful, spring day some friends of mine and I went out with a picnic basket. We took the wrong road and wound up in the middle of "No Man's Land." We tried to sneak back as quietly as we could, because in that atmosphere any frontier guard might have just shot us, if he'd seen us out there. My main concern was inadvertently making the "wrong move." As far as courtesy or discourtesy, helpfulness or unhelpfulness, I never encountered any of that. Granted, I was doing things which were politically pretty much "neutral." If you asked my superiors for their views, such as the consul general, if he were still alive, you might get an entirely different answer.

Q: Who was the consul general?

NEWBERRY: The first one was Raleigh Gibson. He had not yet arrived, and Bill Burdett was acting consul general. Gibson had been consul general in Salonika, Greece. I remember his telling stories about the famous "Wood and Pulp Case." I think that he was consul general in Salonika at that time. He finished his tour of duty as consul general in Jerusalem. Younger officers who don't know their way around Washington and don't have a "network" of friends and supporters back in Washington may have trouble finding out what's going on. After Gibson left Jerusalem, we had another long period of time when there was no consul general assigned. Roger Tyler then became acting consul general and served in that capacity for quite a long time. He replaced Bill Burdett. We didn't have Raleigh Gibson's successor as consul general until I had left Jerusalem.

I was out in Jerusalem for two and one-half years. We had a fully accredited consul general there for a little less than a year during that period of time.

Q: You mentioned that the officers in the consulate general in Jerusalem were basically "anti-Israeli." What would you say was the root cause of this attitude?

NEWBERRY: I mentioned their association with the UN people, and there were still a lot of British officials around. The British in Jerusalem had particularly bitter memories of what the Haganah [Jewish Agency] and what the Irgun Zvai Leumi [IZL] did to the British troops in Jerusalem. My colleagues in the consulate general, who had been in Jerusalem longer than I, would talk about "horror stories" dating back to this period. Well, that's about the best answer that I can give.

I had so much on my mind about learning how to do my job that I can't say that I spent a lot of time analyzing the views of my own colleagues. That's just my recollection of the situation, and I can't help you much more than that.

Q: Did you have many visitors to the consulate general in Jerusalem?

NEWBERRY: Yes, in spite of everything. You asked for color. I'll give you some color. I was assigned to make all of the arrangements for official Americans crossing through the Mandlebaum Gate, both from Israel to Jordan and from Jordan to Israel. I think that this particular incident happened during the second Christmas time that I spent in Jerusalem.

A strange, shall I say, "coincidence," or whatever the word is, occurred. Former Governor of Minnesota Harold Stassen, a famous name in American politics of that era, came to visit Jerusalem. I've forgotten what his position was at that time, but he was a perennial [and unsuccessful] Republican candidate for President. I can't recall precisely when this happened. Maybe he was still Governor of Minnesota. Anyway, we learned that he was coming to Jerusalem by way of Tel Aviv. I was asked to arrange for him to go across into Jordan through the Mandlebaum Gate at night. He wanted to go to Bethlehem to attend a Christmas Eve ceremony of some kind.

Meanwhile, we got word that old Senator Theodore Green (Democrat, Rhode Island) was coming to Jerusalem for a visit. However, Senator Green was coming to Jerusalem by way of Jordan. Senator Green was just about as durable in his own way as Senator Strom Thurmond (Democrat and later Republican, South Carolina). They both wanted to go to the Christmas Eve celebration, including Midnight Mass, in Bethlehem. So the consul general arranged to get over there, at the Mandlebaum Gate, and meet the car that brought Senator Green from Amman, Jordan. They were waiting in the car on the eastern side of Mandlebaum Gate at about 11:00 PM on Christmas Eve. I was coming from Israel and making my way to Mandlebaum Gate with Governor Stassen. We got over in the car, a large car. So I got Governor Stassen, the consul general, and Senator Green into this large car. However, I had the impression that Senator Green wouldn't speak to me!

What I discovered as we moved along was that this was one of the "tricks" of old Senator Green.

He could fall asleep with his eyes open! In fact, he used to do that on the floor of the Senate in Washington. So that was why he apparently wouldn't speak to me. He was asleep!

Q: This is the second interview done with Daniel O. Newberry. This is in 1997. I guess that we are just about the end of your tour in Jerusalem. One thing you might discuss. Did you feel, in Jerusalem, the "heavy hand" of the pro-Israeli press and politics in the United States? Or did this really come later?

NEWBERRY: Stu, my impression was that the pro-Israeli press had already won, hands down. There was no contest, from our perspective. There wasn't any pro-Arab press in the U.S., from our perspective. All of the American news media, including radio and what there was of television [TV] at the time, were pro-Israel. At least, that is the impression that we had out there.

Q: Was there any concern on our part about the Arabs who, for one reason or another, had been forced out of their traditional homes in Greater Palestine, which is now part of Israel, as refugees? Were we reporting or thinking about that at all?

NEWBERRY: We were reporting on it, insofar as the small staff at the American consulate general had the leisure to report these things. The embassy in Tel Aviv was not particularly interested in that aspect of the subject. The legation in Amman did some reporting because they had huge camps of Palestinian refugees on the East bank of the Jordan River.

Yes, we were concerned about this. We were talking previously about the "well springs" of anti-Israel feeling. I could see this with my own eyes. This is a technique that the Israelis still use. You create refugees when you want to, quite simply by bulldozing their houses. That is still a standard technique.

When I first went to Jaffa, which is a suburb of Tel Aviv, it looked like one of these old European cities destroyed during World War II. Jaffa, as a city, goes back to the time of the Crusades and before that, even to Biblical times. Jaffa looked like one of these old, European cities which were absolutely devastated during World War II. I asked people: "Where was all of the fighting? Nobody said anything about pitched battles here." I was told: "Oh, no, the Israelis demolished the town after the fighting was over." The Israelis had just about flattened the entire, old city of Jaffa, just to make sure that the Arabs didn't have any place to come back to. That is just an example of their attitudes.

Q: When you came back to Jaffa, did this type of thing cause feelings of revulsion among your colleagues, and maybe you? At this point the American public was sort of cheering for the "plucky Jews" to beat back the Arabs and all of that.

NEWBERRY: People tended to speak of "brave, little Israel." However, Stu, I have to say that in the "culture" of the Foreign Service in those days nobody was particularly interested in "debriefing" junior officers freshly back from their posts.

Q: They still don't. They don't "debrief" the senior officers, either. The closest thing we have to debriefing is the process that's going on here, 50 years after the fact.

NEWBERRY: Anyway, inexperienced officers like me were wondering what was going to happen to them next. I have no memory or any impression of anybody wanting to "pick my brains."

However, when I got to Atlanta for home leave, somehow "the word" got around that a local, home town boy had returned from being a vice consul in Jerusalem. The Hadassah Business Women's Club [Jewish community group] invited me to be a speaker at one of their meetings. I wondered how many businesswomen there were in Atlanta, and Jewish businesswomen at that. Atlanta was still not a very big city in 1949. This program was held at a Jewish country club in Atlanta. I was graciously received and then taken into the room where I was going to make my little speech. There were about 800 women in the room! They all wanted to hear everything that they could possibly hear about Jerusalem.

I would have to contrast this reception with the attitude of officers in the State Department toward one of their professional colleagues in talking about his experiences in Jerusalem. They might even have learned something from my talk! These Jewish businesswomen in Atlanta wanted to get everything out of me that they could. They were a very good, sharp audience.

Q: You were there in Jerusalem from 1949 until when?

NEWBERRY: From the first part of May, 1949, until some time in October, 1951. As I said before, during the last few months of that period I was on temporary duty at the embassy in Tel Aviv, although still technically assigned to Jerusalem.

Q: Let's talk a little about your reaction to being in Tel Aviv. I am speaking now of the atmosphere in our embassy there, as opposed to the consulate general in Jerusalem. Was there a difference in how things were regarded and dealt with there?

NEWBERRY: There was a definite difference in the atmosphere, because the people in our embassy in Tel Aviv had no contact, to speak of, with Arabs at all. That led to a built-in difference in outlook. It was a "different window on the world."

Of course, I had never been in an embassy before. I didn't even know how to work in an embassy. I was assigned to temporary duty in the Economic Section of the embassy. I had a certain set of subjects that I worked on. Talk about "color"? I'll give you another bit of "color." In those days we had "despatches," as you may remember. This was the only time that I ever wrote a despatch. The State Department was very proud of spelling the word "despatch" with an "e," rather than with an "i."

One of the things that I got interested in, and this was one of the ironies of the Foreign Service, was the "vanity" of my superiors. They wanted their sections to be fully staffed and to show that they were "overworked." In fact, the embassy was not "overstaffed." Nevertheless, they insisted on getting this young officer, me, who had been assigned to Jerusalem, moved up to the embassy.

There really wasn't enough work for me to do. There wasn't enough office space, either. There were four officers in a room half as big as this room. You know the dimensions of it. It was like the "City Room" of an old newspaper. We almost literally had to "climb over" each other to get in and out of the office. However, there I was in the embassy, even though I wasn't really "needed."

I thought of subjects to write reports on. I decided to write a report on the Israeli fishing industry. It was very poorly developed in those days. I realized that one of the keys to the fishing industry was the dietary laws and the "Kosher" rules about what kind of fish could be eaten. That is, whether the fish were scaled or unscaled, skinned or unskinned, and so forth. I had a Biblical quotation at the beginning of my despatch. In my experience this was the only time that I dared start off a despatch to the Department of State, quoting the Bible. This may still be rare.

However, I had a lot of fun and learned a lot about why the Israelis, at that point, hadn't done anything with their fishing industry. This despatch had to do with that. In Turkey, in the olden times, it had been the Greeks who did all of the fishing. The Turks had to learn how to catch fish, and the Israelis also had to learn how to be fishermen.

HARRY FLEISCHMAN
Jewish Labor Committee
(1950)

Mr. Fleishman was active in labor organization, Jewish and Socialist Party affairs in his earlier years, serving as Campaign Manager for Socialist Candidate Norman Thomas in his campaigns for President in 1944 and 1948. Joining the Voice of America in 1950, he reported on international Labor Affairs and current anti-communist topics for foreign audience consumption. Throughout his career, Mr. Fleishman served with US organizations furthering Labor and Anti-Communist objectives. Mr. Fleishman was interviewed by Morris Weisz in 1992

Q: *Harry, please describe the Jewish Labor Committee and your relationship to trade unions?*

FLEISCHMAN: Right. Well, the Jewish Labor Committee was an organization set up initially by the needle-trades unions and the Jewish led part of the American labor movement in the early 1930s to help in the fight against the Nazis and, when the war came, also against the Fascists in Italy and against Japan. It helped bring more and more workers to support these struggles and also to press for specifically Jewish issues, like the fight against discrimination against Jews in employment, in school quotas, and in all sorts of areas. It had the attitude, which is one that I have always had too, that to support the rights of the Jews in the United States, you had to support all minorities and to work for social justice on every front. So it was natural that I should be working with them, but they didn't have any [permanent] job available at that time. I also wrote a pamphlet of questions and answers about Communism for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which was another Jewish agency that worked on discrimination.

Then there were questions about getting a job with some government agency, and I remember that at that time one of the people that I contacted was you, Murray, who had certain ideas about jobs that might be possible including one, if I recall correctly, with the CIA, because you felt that there were some people in the CIA who were very soft on Communism, and that it might be useful for me to be there. Well, I did go to see. . .

EDWARD WARREN HOLMES
Consular/Political Officer
Tel Aviv (1950-1952)

Edward Warren Holmes was born in Beverly, Massachusetts in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree from Brown University in 1945 and a master's degree in international law from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1946. Mr. Holmes joined the Foreign Service in 1946. He served in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Israel, South Africa, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ghana, and Washington, DC. Mr. Holmes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: What was the situation when you arrived in Tel Aviv? Give a little feel for how you saw the situation in Israel. In the first place, we recognized Israel in 1948, didn't we?

HOLMES: Yes, we were the first country in the world to recognize the new state. When we went there in '50, the embassy had been there for about a year. We had to change ships, of course, in Milan, and got a small ship that sailed down to Tel Aviv. And the first thing we did was have to pass the baby, in a basket, over the side, lower it down into a boat, because Tel Aviv was not a real port; it was only used by lighters. So the baby went down, and then we went down the side on a rope ladder sort of thing, down into this lighter, with a few suitcases, and they took us into Tel Aviv. That was our introduction.

Q: Oh, boy.

HOLMES: Well, it was a very exciting situation. Israel was still at war with its neighbors. Of course, it still is, even today, technically. But it actively was, then. There were blackouts every night. There were sandbags around all the entrances to buildings, public buildings and apartment houses. And so, if you went to a party at night, you went in the pitch black, and you'd feel your way around the sandbags to find the door and then get in. It was total blackout until you'd get to someone's apartment, and then there would be lights there, the windows all sealed. So we lived in sort of blackout conditions, which was very exciting, in a way. Now there were no air raids, there was nothing of that sort. But the Israeli government, of course, was not at all certain there wouldn't be. With good reason, because it had been a very tough war of independence, and their independence was precarious. So the blackout was rigidly enforced. When we would drive at night, we had little slits in the headlights, just tiny, tiny little slits, the absolute minimum of light. So that was sort of exciting after South America, very, very different...

But it was a very exciting time. The people of Israel were extremely friendly. The people that we

dealt with in the Foreign Office were extremely well-educated, highly intelligent, proficient people to deal with. I mean, these were refugees from Germany, Poland, Hungary, or wherever, who had come to the new state. They were the elite, obviously, the intellectual elite who were in the Foreign Office. That was under Ben-Gurion, who was the prime minister. Moshe Sharett was the foreign minister, who spoke seven languages and at a reception could flip from one language to another just effortlessly in the receiving line. I was always impressed that he would jump from German to Hungarian to, of course, Hebrew, to French to English. A brilliant, brilliant man. So the quality of the government was incredibly high, and I was struck by that, I must say. Not drawing any invidious comparisons, but it was a type of brilliance that you rarely see in a government, all the way down through the Foreign Office, even to the more junior people. So that was interesting, and the whole situation was interesting.

While we were there, we traveled all over the country, with the assistance of the government. We had to go in convoys to the outlying areas; it was not wise to go on your own. We went to the Hula swamps up north that they were draining in those days, Stu, for agricultural purposes. They were channeling it into the Jordan River, draining the swamps. That was a big project. Took us all the way down through the Negev to the south. We'd drive cheek by jowl with Arab troops with machine guns, right along the border. It's a very narrow border, and the road goes right along the border.

We could get to Jerusalem once a month, the old city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a divided city, with barbed wire right down through the city. We could get to the other side through arrangements with our consulate general in Jerusalem. That is, they had to get permission from the Jordan government, and they would give us a certain time to cross the border, like a Friday afternoon. That was the typical time; you could go for a weekend. Then we would drive up through no-man's-land in Jerusalem. There was a little opening in the barbed wire, through this no-man's-land, which we were warned was heavily mined on both sides. So we'd stick to just the track. We'd drive along there and as we approached, the Arab Legion, which was the Jordan army, would have machine guns trained on us all the time as we went along through no-man's-land. Then we'd get to their post, where they often spoke no English. They would have a list of border passings for that particular time frame, and it was all in Arabic. So the Arab officer would look at this list, and we would present our passports, and if he could find something in Arabic that sort of corresponded to Holmes, he'd let us through. If he couldn't, you couldn't get through. There was no way if your name was not on the list. That was the list that was arranged through, as I say, the Jordan Foreign Office, which would send it to the military people and so forth. So, once a month, we did try to get over, basically to buy food. We had the one baby, and food was extraordinarily scarce in Israel; there was very strict rationing. Sometimes a half a can of peas, for instance, would be a ration. You'd go and you'd bring a jar with you, and they'd pour half a can of peas and take your little ration ticket. So it was very rational, and they were spreading out the food they did have to feed the population. But it was hard, with a new child, to get the types of food that we particularly wanted. And so, once a month, we'd go over and load up with food. We could bring food back; neither side cared if we did that. They would inspect it. We would buy for lots of other people, always, lots of meat and vegetables and milk and just everything, and bring it back.

Q: What was your job in Tel Aviv?

HOLMES: I was supposed to be in the Political Section, but when I got there, though, there was a need for me to be in the consulate. So I was in charge of the consulate, which was very, very busy.

Q: I'm sure it was.

HOLMES: Those were the days of American citizens who had been over fighting for the new State of Israel during the independence war and now wanted to go home, and the question was, had they lost their citizenship? Our citizenship laws were quite strict: if you enrolled in a foreign army and took an oath of allegiance, you jeopardized your American citizenship. So we had lots of those cases that were handed to me, I remember, to deal with. There were all sorts of things, but the big problem there was American citizens of Jewish faith and the question of their citizenship. A lot had come over to help the new State of Israel, and a lot had voted in the first election. Now voting in those days was enough to make you lose citizenship. Well, not exactly, it was sort of a grey area.

Q: Well, it was very complicated.

HOLMES: It was complicated.

Q: But essentially voting, service in a foreign military, and an oath of allegiance all could jeopardize your citizenship. And we enforced it in those days.

HOLMES: We did enforce it. We tried to enforce it. But I used to have lawyers argue with me the fine points of American law and decisions, and already the law was beginning to change a little bit. It's changed a lot since then, I believe, but in those days, we were told by the State Department to enforce the law, basically. But then the question was: did a young man take the oath of allegiance? Because the State of Israel permitted people to be in the army without an oath of allegiance, knowing our immigration law. So the question was: did he or didn't he take an oath of allegiance? Well, that's rather hard to prove. There were certain lists available. So my time essentially was taken up with the whole question of American citizenship problems. I don't think I did much with visas at all; I think there was some other officer that handled visas. So it was sort of interesting.

Q: Well, I'm sure. Speaking as a veteran consular officer, I can imagine what you must have been up against. Later it became very powerful, but did you find there was what one could call a Jewish lobby in Congress that was giving you a great deal of trouble on taking away citizenship from these freedom fighters or whatever you want to call them?

HOLMES: Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed. There was a very powerful lobby in Washington, and it affected us in many, many ways.

Ambassador McDonald, you may know, was not very au courant with the State Department. His line of command was President Truman. And he would pick up the phone, frequently, and talk to President Truman whenever he wanted certain instructions. And within a few hours, we'd get the

instructions that he wanted, which he had arranged with President Truman. He had that close in. In those days, the State Department was torn on the whole Israeli policy. There were many who said we shouldn't have recognized the new state; we did it prematurely, allegedly, by certain elements within the State Department. It was alleged that the Middle East Division was pro-Arab, anti-Jewish. So it was a very interesting political problem. As I say, Ambassador McDonald was a very able person, and he utilized his friendship with President Truman very much and, in a sense, would circumvent the State Department if he felt that it was important. He was very desirous to help the new State of Israel progress in as many ways as possible, with our AID program (it wasn't called AID in those days; Point Four, I think it was called) and different things to assist the new state get its feet on the ground and develop. He was very interested in Israel as a functioning entity, a new state, and did everything he could to help the new state develop.

Q: Well, now, give a little of the spirit of the officers. All right, you have this well-connected ambassador, McDonald.

HOLMES: A political appointee.

Q: A political appointee, who was extremely pro-Israel. You have the Department of State, which was very dubious.

HOLMES: It was mixed.

Q: Mixed, but essentially a very practical, pragmatic approach was, you've got a lot of Arab countries, and you've got one small country that's going to be a thorn in the side. And now, forty-odd years later, it's still a thorn in the side and causing all sorts of trouble.

HOLMES: And you had a president who was pro-Israel.

Q: A president who was way ahead of his Department of State on this. Now here you are, an officer coming in with no particular commitment one way or another -- you're not an Arabist, you're not of the Jewish faith, you've come out of Latin America. I think it's important to get a feel. How did you feel, as an officer there? Israel was a dynamic place. Did you get caught up in this? And not just you, but the others around you. And did you feel that maybe your colleagues in Egypt or in Jordan or in Syria were almost kind of the enemy? What was your feeling when you got into that situation?

HOLMES: I think you summarized it very well. First of all, the ambassador, McDonald, made it very clear that if people didn't agree with his mission, they might as well leave.

Q: It was really a mission in those days.

HOLMES: In his view, it was a mission, in that he was placed there by the president to carry out certain functions. In his view, it was to help Israel, okay? In those days, we had no military assistance or anything like that, but it was to assist the new state. That was his mission and his function, and he made it clear that's what he expected his staff to do. Once again, it was a small

embassy, quite small. It was a new embassy, and there were very, very difficult living conditions. We lived in a beauty parlor, I remember that, amongst all the dryers and blowers and things. That's where we lived because we couldn't find anyplace else at first. We lived there six months, in a beauty parlor, with a new baby, in amongst all this machinery.

Q: What had happened to the owner?

HOLMES: The lady was a Hungarian, and she had gone back to Hungary for a while, for a long holiday. We were extremely fortunate, because up to then, we had to live with members of the staff in their homes until we found this thing. So that's where we lived; it was tough living. But I think the morale was high in the embassy. I think people absorbed this mission idea. It was an exciting place.

Q: Oh, of course it was.

HOLMES: The Israelis were doing all sorts of things. I mentioned the draining of the Hula swamps. Well, that was a tremendous project, but it was progressing. And they were doing all sorts of forestation work, and they were putting in irrigation, and they were having tremendous groves of trees; agricultural development was happening. You know, they didn't just talk about it, they did it.

Q: This was a natural affinity to the American can-do feeling.

HOLMES: Yes. They were dedicated people, and they were brilliant people, working hard. And, of course, they had all the kibbutzim movement, which we used to be invited to visit and see. The spirit was tremendous amongst the Israeli people, and I think the embassy absorbed that spirit. As I say, if somebody was anti, then I think he would not stay. I mean, I think the ambassador would suggest that perhaps he should move on.

In a sense, the ambassador was fighting about five other ambassadors in the surrounding countries. But he was an able fighter, and he wrote very well, and the backing of Mr. Truman in the White House sort of helped his hand. But it was a constant battle, in a sense, because some of the other nearby embassies didn't care much for Israel, and they would see it from their viewpoint.

There were frequent border incidents, the usual things, stealing sheep across the border, and incidents at night where there would be some firing on the border, and who fired the first shot? God, you know.

We were trying to assist Israel by bringing peace with Jordan, and we were dealing with Abdullah, the king of Jordan. We did manage to have negotiations take place, secretly, across the border in Israel and in Jordan, by emissaries of Ben-Gurion and the king. I don't think they ever met, themselves, but their emissaries did. We were knee-deep in this, and this was a major desire of U.S. foreign policy, to bring peace with one of the countries. The feeling was that if they could get it with one country, then maybe you would start the process with other Arab countries, to bring peace. This was building up to a very hopeful point, when Abdullah was assassinated,

which ended that possibility for the time being.

But that is what Ambassador McDonald was involved in...I shouldn't say full time, but a large portion of his time was involved in it. He personally with Ben-Gurion, and our ambassador on the other side, trying to do this. So I don't think people would fight that sort of thing; both sides were agreeable. That is, our embassy in Amman. I think we were both trying to get this to happen. That is, we weren't dictating the terms, but we hoped that if they would negotiate, maybe they could draw a border and establish relationships.

It made enormous sense from all sides, if they could get over the war period and have a period of cooperation. Israel had, as I mentioned, brains and ability for development, and they could help the other side very much. And they needed food; they would buy the produce of Jordan. So, economically it made a lot of sense. And then the Jordan River could have been used both intelligently and in a very good way, by both sides, in irrigation schemes. Elaborate schemes were developed by us and consultants and so forth, with the idea of helping both sides. It didn't happen; Abdullah was assassinated. I think it was Abdullah.

Q: It was Abdullah. He was the grandfather of King Hussein. I think the crown prince was not right mentally or something like that.

HOLMES: Yes, they were gradually coming to the point where they might have achieved a peace agreement. The entire time I was there, that was our number-one objective.

Q: Were you in the Consular Section all the time there?

HOLMES: No, just at first. Once again there was that situation where there was a sudden need for me in the Consular Section. And so, when somebody else arrived, in x months, then I moved over to the Political Section. That's what I was slated to do originally.

Q: Because it was a small embassy, can you remember who the DCM and who the chief of the Political Section were?

HOLMES: [chuckle]

Q: Well, we can fill this in.

HOLMES: I remember Milton Freen was the labor attaché. He was very, very active in the Political Section. It was of course the Labor government there, his side was government, and he was a very able labor attaché. He was the son-in-law of a very prominent American labor leader. When I was in the Political Section, he and I worked very, very closely together; he was labor attaché, I was political officer. I was the only political officer.

Q: How did you deal with the Israeli government? What did you do in order to report?

HOLMES: Well, all the usual functions.

Q: But remember, I'm looking for somebody who is not familiar with how it works. What are the usual things that you do?

HOLMES: Well, a lot of dealings with the Foreign Office on whatever, all the minutiae, let's say, of relationships. Now there we had a lot of visitors. The ambassador told me he wanted visitors to be handled properly, and, as the political officer, my function was to be sort of in charge of visitors. And by visitors, I mean congressmen, prominent businessmen, journalists, a lot of political people. A lot of senators and congressmen come to Israel in great numbers, or they did in those days.

Q: They still do.

HOLMES: Still do, I'm sure. So I had to do a lot of the arranging of their schedules. And this took a lot of liaison with the Foreign Office, to be sure. And the Foreign Office was very good about it; they wanted these people to have a good view of Israel. And so this meant arranging for transportation, programs, visitations, where to go and when and so forth. These visitors wanted to see the kibbutzim; they wanted to see the countryside; they wanted to see this, that, and the other thing. And Israel was keen for them to do it. But we were operating under difficult conditions. They couldn't go some places because it was unsafe, so they would have to go with convoys. That meant liaison with the army to arrange protection for them. So that took a lot of time, as well as reporting.

Now we didn't have any threat of coups, as in Latin America, none of that sort of thing, but there were opposition parties. There was the Herut Party, which subsequently has become the government, but in those days was the opposition. It was headed by a well-known terrorist who had been involved in the King David situation, Menachem Begin. He was a member of parliament.

Q: How did you view him, as somebody sort of basically... You just put both of your thumbs down. He was sort of a scary figure, wasn't he?

HOLMES: Well, he was a well-known terrorist, there was just no doubt about it, and he was an extremist, whose speeches were...

Q: And Shamir had been involved with an assassination.

HOLMES: Shamir, oh yeah. But I don't remember Shamir, I remember Begin. Begin was the head of the Herut Party.

Q: Later became the Likud Party.

HOLMES: Yes, Likud is an umbrella organization, I believe, Herut and some others.

Q: But basically Begin was the...

HOLMES: He was the powerhouse. He was a brilliant guy. I did meet him, and he was very

impressive, in a sense. I mean, mentally he was a very powerful guy. Of course, he was a young man in those days. One never thought he would ever become prime minister, I don't think, in those days. It didn't seem possible. The Labor government was well ensconced, well run, and it had all sorts of, of course, connections with the Histadrut, which is the federation of the labor organizations.

But we reported on all these things, the currents of the opposition party, debates in parliament, the politics of the country, which were very interesting and very intricate; they were not easy. You had the religious parties, which were allied with Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion was Labor, but if he got a certain number of votes, he was allied with the ultra-religious parties. And they had their own agenda. So we very much had to report on what their agenda was, their outlook. It was a very busy political time.

Q: I'm sure it was. Did you feel any constraints, which came later, maybe, that whatever you reported would immediately end up on the desks of either the Jewish lobby or the senators from New York or California who had large Jewish constituencies? This later became quite a problem. I was wondering if it was at that time?

HOLMES: I don't recall such constraints. A lot of it was setting the framework of a new government. It was a new country, so the State Department wanted information and information galore.

Q: You were just scooping up information.

HOLMES: Yes. What is the Teachers' Union, for instance, and how does it fit into the picture? Sometimes there were little strikes of different groups, so how does that fit? Why were they striking? The doctors went on strike at one point. Why? What is their political influence? Each group had influence, in a way. I never could do enough reporting; I always felt there was more I would like to do.

Q: It sounds like a young political officer's dream. Here you were, in a new nation which was obviously on the front burner as far as American foreign policy. You were in on the ground floor.

HOLMES: It was very exciting. It was an exciting time to be there. There was an enormous amount of enthusiasm in the country, and idealism. For the first time in hundreds and hundreds of years, the Israelis had their own state, and they were excited about it. A lot of the people we met were out of concentration camps, escapees from the horrors of the holocaust. They had lost their whole family, many of them, and they were the only surviving member. But they were there in Israel, and they were totally dedicated to helping develop this new state. Tremendous idealism and enthusiasm.

Q: When you went over to Jerusalem, did you talk to our officers at our consulate general?

HOLMES: Not really. No, I didn't go over in a political mission at all. It was a food mission, plus tourism. We saw all the holy places, which was wonderful to be able to visit and to walk through the streets of Jerusalem, with no automobiles, you just walk through, as well as buying a

few rugs and being a tourist, basically. Well, I met some of our people over there; they would invite us sometimes. But it was a constant flow. They knew we came over to shop, basically, and to be a tourist.

Q: How did your wife find this? I can understand her traumatic arrival and having to live with the hair dryers and all that. How did this work out?

HOLMES: Well, it was tough. It was tough, particularly with a young child and the lack of food. I remember we had cases of baby food under the bed. We finally found a small apartment and managed, one way or another, frankly, by paying in U.S. dollars, the only way we could possibly get it, which was illegal under our regulations at the time. There was just no other way. There was no other way. We got an apartment, which was very hard to get; housing was just incredible. So we moved out of the beauty parlor into an apartment, and that was nice. Well, it was one bedroom, but we felt ourselves fortunate, because it was on the ground floor and had a nice terrace, so the baby, a boy, could be out on the terrace, which was fine. It was right on a busy street, but the terrace had grillwork, so the baby could be out there and sort of watch the passersby, who would speak to him. The Israelis love children. So we felt, you know, this was wonderful. But it was tough, the whole thing of buying food three months in advance.

And then, too, it was just an awfully embarrassing thing that we would have food for the children, and the other people in the apartment, whom my wife got to know, didn't have food. We were told we can't possibly share it. Well, we did share it a bit, because sometimes a woman would come down, weeping, and just say, "I have nothing to feed Yanni," who was the little boy who played with our little boy, you know, just little toddlers. And so, obviously... Under our bed were just cases of stuff, so we would share it to some extent, when we weren't supposed to. There were lots of things you weren't supposed to do, but frankly, I think the ambassador said, "You've got to live here."

Q: We've all gone through that.

HOLMES: We'd get paid in dollars, and through a New York bank account, we'd send a check or something. What the heck. I mean, I don't think it was too illegal. But we felt it because the ambassador would say, "These are the regulations." On the other hand, he tended to look a little bit the other way -- he didn't ask. In those days, the embassy didn't help get a place. You found your own place; you went out and knocked on doors to find someplace to live. The apartment we found was owned by a prominent actor in the Hadassah Theater there (I think it was called Hadassah). He was going to live in it himself, but he liked the idea of some dollars that would permit him, then, to visit the U.S. and so forth, which he wanted to do, so we got the apartment.

Q: Did you have any dealings with any of the people who were in the leadership, particularly of the Labor Party?

HOLMES: Oh, yes.

Q: What was your impression of them?

HOLMES: Just the same as the government: outstanding people, devoted, able. The whole labor system is extremely interesting. It was a labor government, after all, and the labor unions controlled an awful lot of companies; the construction companies and so forth were owned by the labor union. It was fascinating, just to learn this. Once again, there was this voracious appetite back in Washington for reporting on what things are; they wanted information on this brand new state.

Q: There weren't really real policy divisions from a...

HOLMES: Oh, there were, there were battles. There was a leftist Mapam Party, which was to the left of Mapai. Mapai was the government. They were both labor, but there was a split in the labor movement. They were more leftist than what we would call middle-of-the-road. Socialist, but the others were more left. They weren't Communist, but they were more left wing.

So it was reporting on all these things, on all these currents, and then the defections. One would defect from that group to this group. There were maneuvers. It was a fascinating political scene, more than I could ever report. I just felt I had to report some of the highlights, but there were so many things I'd have liked to report more.

Q: Did the American labor movement, the AFL/CIO, intrude much into what was going on, sort of getting involved on one side or the other?

HOLMES: They were very, very close to the Histadrut, the Mapai Party. Each of the parties had its own cohorts in the United States, its own supporting elements and groups. For instance, the extreme religious parties had strong religious groups back here, fundamentalists, I guess you might call them, Jewish groups. So each had its supporters.

Basically we reported; we were not involved in any way. We dealt with the government, which was Mapai, the centrist group, Socialist. We dealt with the government, that's all. And we were right up to our necks. Busy. Busy, busy. It was a busy, busy place.

And these visitors took an enormous amount of time. The ambassador had told me, "This is just as important as anything else. Be sure that the visitors get to see what they want to see and meet the people they want to meet." He's probably right -- it was politically very important, but when a senatorial delegation came, they...

One great visitor we had was Mrs. Roosevelt. I was assigned to be her liaison officer. Of course, they loved her in the country, they knew her. We had this wonderful two-week tour of the whole country, and I went along as her aide-de-camp, you might say.

Q: Well, how did you find her?

HOLMES: Absolutely fantastic. One of the most interesting, vibrant women I've ever met in my life. I've never seen such energy -- from morning till night, energy. This meant orphanages, hospitals, schools, politicians -- all day long, this was scheduled. The Israelis had one fault: they would tend to overschedule visitors, because they wanted them to see everything, and they'd put

too much in. And she was not a young lady when she came. She was at the U.N. in those days. She came with a doctor, a young man who was her doctor, and he would be flaked out in the afternoon; he was exhausted. I was exhausted; everyone was. But she would go on. Incredible energy. And vibrancy. And wonderful warmth. I think it was her first visit there, and she wanted to see everything. She kept up with the schedule, even, which meant every half hour another group, with more flowers, more speeches, more little talks. And she just carried it off brilliantly. A fascinating woman. And then, in the evening, she would talk to us about her early days with Franklin, and the polio, just as though we were longtime friends. She had incredible warmth. Outstanding woman.

That's just one visitor. We had Senator This and Senator That. Congressman Powell, I remember, came.

Q: Adam Clayton Powell.

HOLMES: That was difficult.

Q: He was very controversial. In the first place, he was a black congressman at a time when there weren't many black congressmen. And he had a reputation as being a ladies' man, very much, but at the same time he was, I suppose today you might say, in your face, or more confrontational than was considered prudent in a still-segregated United States.

HOLMES: Well, there, he wasn't confrontational. He came simply to visit, the way so many did. But he was very demanding, let's say, demanding on embassy resources, which were limited. It was a small embassy. I'm sure now it's huge by comparison. But it was small, and we just didn't have a lot of things. But he was very demanding in transportation and arrangements and so forth. I remember it was a very difficult visit.

But not the only difficult one that we had; a lot of our senators and congressmen are rather demanding overseas. If you're at a big post, it can be handled. But at a small post, it's more difficult; we don't have the resources, we don't have Scotch whiskey, necessarily.

Q: This was the beginning of the coldest period of the Cold War. The Korean War had started; NATO was being formed. Did you feel any winds coming out of Siberia? Did Communism and the Cold War intrude much then?

HOLMES: I don't think, at all. As I remember, we were totally bound up in relations between the United States and Israel. The big push was to help Israel achieve peace with its neighbor across the Jordan River. That was our focus. I don't recall the other things at all; they just didn't enter into the picture. It was a question of Israel vis-à-vis its Arab neighbors, and Israel needing development assistance, which we were giving in different ways, and wanting to help Israel develop as a new country.

Q: In the discussions that you would have, sitting around a small embassy, how about arms for Israel? Because in those days, what the Israelis were getting was mainly coming from the French, I suppose, wasn't it?

HOLMES: I don't recall that being in the picture. The war was over, in a sense, though one didn't know. After all, looking back now, we can say, well, there was no real threat. But the Israelis thought there was a real threat of renewed warfare with its neighbors. And there were incidents on the border from time to time, trucks being blown up occasionally, you know. So it was scary. They had just gone through a very difficult war of independence, with a lot of people killed, and it was touch-and-go for a while. They were fortunate enough to carve out a certain area. But I don't recall their needing more arms, or asking us for arms.

Q: So that wasn't an issue.

HOLMES: No, I think that came later on.

WILBUR P. CHASE
Principal Officer
Haifa (1951-1955)

Wilbur P. Chase was born in Washington, DC in 1919. His career with the State Department included posts in Canada, Germany, Turkey, Iraq, Israel, Philippines, and Washington, DC. Mr. Chase was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 24, 1990.

CHASE: So then my next post after Hamburg was Haifa, Israel. I had been transferred to Port Said to be principal officer there. I wrote a letter to the fellow in Port Said and said that I was going to replace him. And apparently this guy took the position that he didn't want to leave Port Said, and he protested and screamed. So, since he refused to leave, the Department then decided to find me another place to go and they offered me Haifa, and I said yes.

I was principal officer there. It handled the immigrant visa work for all of Israel. It's a port city, again. I had a staff of about four or five officers and about eighteen trained locals.

Q: What was the political situation, from your point of view, during this period, '51 to '55?

CHASE: Israel became an independent country in '48, and it was in the throes of trying to find its way in the world when I arrived in '51. There were large numbers of immigrants coming from Eastern Europe and from Europe in general. The country had very little in the way of resources. They were still trying to find their way around in how to organize themselves.

The Mapai Party was then *the* party. It is now the Labor Party of Peres, but it was a little bit different mix. Mapai, and its main economic instrument, Histadrut, ruled all things happening in Israel. There was this emotional zeal of: We're building a Jewish State.

There was a good bit of feeling against the Arabs. The Arabs had been dealt with pretty miserably. Sometimes you could say security was a legitimate excuse, but lots of it was just

mendacious.

I was back in Israel, in 1980, I think it was, the last time, and meeting my old friends, so many of them, who had all been supporters of Mapai in the old days, have now become right-wingers, supporting Likud, Begin, Shamir, and that crowd. And there is a much tighter animosity toward the Arabs. The Israelis in general, over this continuum, I think have done wonderful things in developing a country -- in every way other than learning how to get along with their Arab neighbors.

Q: Well now, at the time, did you do any reporting, or was this pretty much left to the embassy?

CHASE: No, we did a lot of reporting.

Q: How about on the Arab-Israeli relations?

CHASE: I was the main officer for reporting on Arab affairs in Israel. I would go up to the Arab communities and talk with them about their problems, trying to find out what was happening.

I recall, in the course of events, I wrote a report which in essence was criticizing the Greek Orthodox Church. Almost immediately, the Greek consul general from Jerusalem called me up and said, Oh, would I have lunch with him? He obviously had learned what I had said in my report, and he was down there to try and protect his flock, in showing me how much they all cooperated and worked together and were doing constructive things.

The Jewish Israelis were sometimes concerned about my seeing as many Arabs as I saw. They were distrustful of the Arabs and kind of wondering what was I doing.

Q: Things, of course, have changed so much, but at that time, as far as American relations with Israel were concerned, were you getting any sort of feedback from the embassy or from the desk or something, saying: Cool it, don't get too involved with reporting on the Arabs?

CHASE: No, I was being encouraged to do it. I mean, this was in my job description. This was one of the reasons I was down there. I was petroleum reporting officer for all of Israel, and I was to maintain contact with the Arab community and report on how they were feeling. I also reported on what was going on in Haifa. The desk officer at the time said that, as for learning what the atmosphere was on the streets of Israel, he found my letters more informative than the embassy's.

Q: Who was our ambassador at that time?

CHASE: Monnett B. Davis. He was a South American ambassador. He died in Israel December 26, 1953. After his death, Francis Russell was chargé for about a year or a year and half, and then the next ambassador was Lawson, who came out of Greece.

Q: You were sort of bounced around and had no particular designation. Did you have any feel for what was the embassy attitude and the Foreign Service attitude, within the desk, the embassy,

and your post, towards Israel at that time?

CHASE: Oh, I went down to the embassy staff meetings. At least once a month I was down in Tel Aviv, meeting the ambassador, the chargé, the DCM, and the other people.

Q: Would you describe it as saying that we were looking upon developments in Israel enthusiastically, or objectively, or somewhat removed, or how, within that context?

CHASE: At that time, we were not nearly as committed to Israel as we are today. We were on the way to. Everyone knew that there would have been no Israel except for the United States' support in 1948, and that Israel was looking to us for financial and economic support.

Just as I was arriving, I think it was, our first real AID mission was established. I can't remember the name of the fellow, but he came in with something like \$30 billion to be spent over three years. It was one of these first large grants of money to help the Israeli economic infrastructure.

I think there were a number of things that were going along in relation to Israel that I, as consul in Haifa, was not privy to. But I was very much privy to the thrust of our program that Israel shall succeed.

Q: Were you getting any reflections, either through communications or contacts with the Foreign Service establishment that was in the Arab posts around there, about developments there, saying what the hell, I mean, you know, this isn't going to be very good for us?

CHASE: Yes, I talked to Beirut frequently. I went over to Amman. I had met Roy Atherton in Stuttgart, and then he arrived in Damascus about that time and I saw him over there.

There was quite a lot of tension in the Foreign Service per se, as to whether the United States was being too deeply committed to the Israeli side. Were we conscious of what it was costing us among the Arabs?

I would respond to that sort of argument along the lines that whether Israel should or should not have been created was no longer the question. Israel was there, and the thing that we had to do was try to make Israel as successful as we could, to provide safety, a home for the Jewish population. But we also had to promote Israel's interests among the Arab States, to develop a modus vivendi. And so, in my reporting on the Arabs, it was: What are the things that Israel is doing vis-à-vis the Arabs that are unnecessarily causing animosities and disputes and problems, that in the long run, which I think until today, are hampering Israel's real security and safety.

Q: Well now, how about dealing with Israeli authorities? Did you find this quite different from, say, dealing with what was developing in Germany or in Iraq or something? I mean, how did you find the people you dealt with in Haifa?

CHASE: There are lots of differences in each one of these countries of how they view problems and what is their method of operation. But as for me, as an American Foreign Service officer, I constantly worked on the principle of trying to be sympathetic to their problems, and saying I

want to be able to tell Washington as accurately as possible how they see things and what are they trying to do. You use different words, you use a little different manner when working one group or the other, but the Israelis were very cordial to me, very open.

I might go back to Basra, Iraq, one incident that I found very amusing, on final reflection. As economic officer, I was supposed to be reporting on these companies that were doing business, and filling out WTDs, World Trade Directory reports.

I was asked to get the report on one company, and so I went around and talked to a banker, and said, "What will you tell me about this company?" I got back a little, sterile sort of bank statement.

I asked around, and I drove up and saw where their offices were. I knew the fellow socially, and I met him. A week or so after I got the request, I finally got to the point where I thought, well, I'll just have to go and talk to this guy. I didn't really know what to say, and I talked to Lester Sutton to find out what I should do. I didn't get much guidance.

Finally, I got into the man's office, and he had to leave. So I was kind of looking around over his desk: Where are the letters from? And what are the stamps? I thought, "How is this going to happen?"

So I sat around the office, and the fellow came back, and we chatted about various things. I must have gotten some message over to him, because finally he suddenly discovered that I wanted to know what his company was doing. And I had not told him that at all.

Once he realized that I was interested in his company, my gosh, books came off the desk, off the shelves, everything. He was showing me this contract, that contract. And I then finally discovered that there's nothing that a businessman wants to do more than talk about his own business.

And this sort of thing, of how does one get information, I learned from this one incident that frequently you have to tell the person: Look, I'm in there to talk to you because I want to know what you're doing.

And so, when I was in Israel, going in to talk to people about the business, I asked them, "Where do you get your supplies? Where do you sell your things?"

I can tell you all some interesting tales about the fine oils and essence industry. At that time, one of the major companies in the world was located in Israel. And I said, "Well, why are you here?"

And he said, "Freight costs are nothing. It's all knowledge of how the things go together, and it's skill." And he said, "So an American company was making hickory smoked hams, and hickory wood was becoming expensive, so he was trying to find an essence that would give his hams the same flavor. So he sent me over a variety of his hams and said, 'Can you make an essence that will produce this?'" All of his competitors in the United States were running into the same problem, and he wanted to get a source that none of the other people would know about, so he

thought: "Israel! They don't know about hams over there."

Well, they know about hams. And this friend of mine, who happened to be a Sephardic Jew from the Netherlands, a very erudite guy, figured out how to make this essence, so this was one of his customers. And he said, "I can compete with anybody, because the basic raw materials come from worldwide, the market is worldwide."

But then, going in and talking to, say, the military authorities who were ruling the Arab quarters of Israel, just go in and ask them: "Why did you seize somebody's land? Why don't you give him back his buses?" And they very rarely ever came and said, "Well, really, that's not an appropriate question to ask."

I did, though, find out an Israeli that I happened to meet and got to know. He was married to an American girl. And he asked me to take a drive with him one day. And in the course of the drive, he said, "Did you get a letter from Congressman Bolton?" (Frances Bolton from Cleveland.) "What is she writing you? Why did she write you?" And it turned out that he knew all about the letter. Then he said, "Israeli Intelligence have asked me to form a friendship with you and find out what you're doing."

I then had a local employee, a very smart Romanian Jew who was doing a certain amount of economic and political work for me. And when he left, he said, "Look, if my replacement doesn't tell you that he has been approached by Israeli Intelligence in a matter of a few months, be suspicious of him." This fellow came to the United States and graduated from some New York City school. He broke all records with complete A's.

Israeli Intelligence, I was aware, due to these various things, were interested not just in what I was doing, but I knew they were certainly indeed looking into what all of our U.S. government people were doing. And so Pollard was approached eventually.

Q: We're talking about a famous cause célèbre, a man named Pollard who was caught in the United States, having stolen and transmitted masses of top secret documents for the Israelis. This was in the late 1980s.

CHASE: I did not know that Eisenhower approved the sale to the Israelis of equipment that let them start on their atomic energy business. That was the type of secret that I was not aware of. And it happened while I was there.

Q: Were there problems for you dealing with expatriate Americans, particularly American Jews who went to Israel to settle there? If they had difficulties, did you get involved in this sort of thing?

CHASE: Very definitely. At that time, you know that an American citizen could lose his citizenship through a whole series of acts: leaving the United States to avoid the draft; voting in a foreign election; becoming naturalized in a foreign state. And I can't recall all the rest.

Q: Holding offices. It was up until the mid-Sixties, I think, when this was overturned by the

Supreme Court.

CHASE: Certain ones of these things were stock. I remember the American community asked me to come to a meeting and discuss this issue of why did they lose their citizenship if they did certain things. I was using a variety of analogies to try and say that you can't serve two gods at the same time. If you are an American citizen, wonderful. If you give your allegiance over to Israel, that's wonderful. But don't try and do two at the same time. All our laws are to prevent people from being put in a position where they'll have a conflict of interest.

Then we ran into a situation of taking away citizenship from people who had voted in Israeli elections. The people had an identity card, and so when they came in to get their passport renewed, we said, "Well, where's your identity card?" So we'd look in the identity card to see if there was a voting stamp there. And that's how the Israelis controlled who voted, by putting a stamp in their identity card.

Well, a number of these people said, "I didn't vote! I didn't vote! I didn't vote!" Here it was in their card.

As this went along, we then discovered that, particularly in some of the people we'd seen, the kibbutz would hold everybody's identity card, and as the person would come in to vote, they'd give them the identity card so they could go to the next room and vote. However, as the end of the day was approaching, and they had a number of ID cards that hadn't been voted, they would take them over and vote them. And so some of these Americans were losing their citizenship improperly.

We had a woman by the name of Sylvia Bernstein, a very wonderful lady. Her father was a prominent federal judge up in Philadelphia. Sylvia lived in a kibbutz, and she did not vote, she said, but her ID card said she had. We took away her citizenship. She came to me and said, "Look, we are friends. I want to just tell you, you have done a terrible misdeed." (I hadn't done it, my predecessor did it. But I would have done it.) And she said, "I did not vote." And she began to tell me of how this thing was going on in the kibbutz. We then went through, oh, quite a number of months of talking to various people, and finally we presented a report to the Department of State that we believed Sylvia Bernstein was telling the truth when she said she had not voted. And so, on this occasion, the citizenship was restored.

Then I had another friend who was a draft evader.

Q: American draft evader or Israeli?

CHASE: American draft evader. I can remember the day he came into the office. I had called him in and said I wanted to see his passport. So he gave me his passport and I threw it on my desk and I said, "I have to tell you that you're no longer a U.S. citizen." He got his citizenship back later on, of course, through these court proceedings. He was one of these interesting guys, but on this question of dual nationality, like a number of these other Americans, he wanted to be a citizen of both countries.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the American citizenship was something (which I've run across in other countries) that they wanted to keep in their hip pocket in case things got bad, but their real commitment was to the state they were in? I found this true in Greece, for example.

CHASE: Some would be perfectly comfortable stating it that blatantly. The majority of them would say: "We are true Americans, and we believe that there is no possibility of a conflict of interest between Israel and the United States." They wanted to participate in the local activities. They would say, "Look, our children go to the schools. We are being affected in various ways, and we think we should be allowed to do this."

You see, it wasn't against the law. And I, at least, felt convinced that the law was correct. I can recall I was up in Canada when the whole thing was declared unconstitutional. I thought, "My God, those Supreme Court people are jerks." And then I got, as quickly as I could, a copy of the whole decision. I began reading through, and I came to the conclusion, "My gosh, they're absolutely right. The Constitution doesn't give the legislative power to take away citizenship."

RICHARD B. PARKER
Consul General
Jerusalem (1951-1953)

Desk Officer for Jordan, Israel, and Iraq
Washington, DC (1957-1959)

Ambassador Richard B. Parker was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree in engineering from Kansas State University. Prior to joining the Foreign Service in 1949, he served in the U.S. Army as an infantry officer. Ambassador Parker's career included positions in Australia, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and ambassadorships to Algeria, Lebanon, and Morocco. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: Yes. Well, now, you went to Jerusalem in 1951. How did you see the situation at the time in Jerusalem and in the Arab world? How did it appear to you?

PARKER: I didn't have any idea of what it was. I had gone to see the Israeli consul in Sydney who recommended some books to me. I read several of these books. One of them was Arthur Koestler's Promise and Fulfillment. There was also a Lebanese consul there. But a man who for various reasons, principally his rather poor command of English, was not taken seriously by anybody. I did not go to see him. It never occurred to me.

I went to Jerusalem primarily with an Israeli-oriented background. I had no idea of the complications of the Palestine problem or anything else, or the history of our involvement in that area, or what our interests were. I was interested in my career and going to serve in a place that might be interesting and would have some prospect of maybe leading me to the exalted rank of class 3 or class 2 by the time I was ready to retire.

Q: Well, what was your job as the -- it was the consulate general now?

PARKER: Yes.

Q: How did it fit into the system because Jerusalem has always been a --

PARKER: Independent.

Q: Independent.

PARKER: Yes. Well, we reported directly to the Department, and we were very jealous of our independent status. We didn't take any nonsense from those bastards in Tel Aviv or Amman. We thought they didn't really understand the situation. The principal officer, the consul general, was in charge of political reporting, and we had primary responsibility for reporting on the activities of the mixed armistice commissions, which were the U.N.-supervised commissions which had both Israeli and Arab officers on them which were supervising the armistice agreements concluded in 1949. There were always incidents across the border to report on. A lot of activity, very interesting activity.

Q: Let's explain a little about the borders at this point in that area.

PARKER: Well, they were the borders where the fighting stopped in '48. Jerusalem was a divided city. We had an office on the Arab side, and an office on the Israeli side. The first six months of our tour there, we lived on the Israeli side. And the remaining eighteen months, we were on the Arab side. We had to go back and forth. We had a sort of permanent pass that would let us go back and forth through the Mandelbaum gate.

One of my principal functions was arranging temporary passes for people to go through the gates. To go from the Israel side to the Arab side and vice versa. These were tourists, officials, visitors, and so forth.

Q: Well, who was the consul general and how did he operate in this complicated situation?

PARKER: The consul general was a man named Tyler, Roger B. Tyler. No, sorry. S. Roger Tyler. He operated very well in this environment. He took things very much in his stride, moving back and forth, knowing people on both sides of the border. I think well-liked by people on both sides. He was a very poor administrator of the consulate general. I had a terrible time with him. But he was certainly, in terms of the political function, I think very good and quite well-liked, and everybody remembers him.

Q: Dick, you were saying you wanted to add something about dealing with -- we talked about the Mandelbaum gate -- but your assignment in Jerusalem in 1951 to 1953 about the West Bank?

PARKER: Yes. Thinking over the answer I gave you afterwards, I thought I should have pointed out that at this point in 1951, the West Bank, the region between the Jordan River and the 1948

boundaries of Israel, was controlled by Jordan.

The consulate general in Jerusalem had responsibility for reporting on the West Bank. People from Amman did not get over there very much. The Jordan River was always quite a division between us. Actually, the West Bank was our consular district. We didn't issue visas, but we did passport and citizenship and notarial services for the West Bank. We also in theory had responsibility for Gaza. In other words, we had responsibility for everything that was left over from 1948: Gaza, the West Bank, and the so-called corpus separatum, the separate body of Jerusalem. We didn't recognize the sovereignty of either Jordan or Israel over their respective halves to that city. Tel Aviv did not send people up to Jerusalem without our permission.

Back in 1951, the Foreign Ministry was still down at the place called the Village -- I think it was Hakirya.

Q: This is the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

PARKER: Israeli Foreign Ministry. We saw in the Foreign Service list that the Department was showing Gaza as in our district. Nobody from Cairo had been there since 1948, apparently. One day I decided to try to find out if we could actually go to Gaza. We had special passes that permitted us to go across the border in Jerusalem, up in Galilee on the Bridge of Jacob's Daughters between Syria and Israel, and across the Lebanese border at Ras Naqurah. So why not go to Gaza with a U.N. pass? So we applied for permission to go there, and it was refused by the Egyptians.

I don't know what the people in Gaza did, but certainly we were not providing any consular services to them, nor were we reporting on that area nor was anybody else.

Q: I must say, my two and a half year exposure in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia did not endear me to the machinations of that world. Why did we not develop the equivalent -- have you noticed -- of Arabists, of Israelists?

PARKER: We have trained some people in Hebrew. There are a number of officers who have spent two, or perhaps three, tours in Israel, but, you know, making a career out of Israel is pretty limiting in terms of your choice of jobs and places to go and so forth. Very little geographic scope. If you become an Israeli specialist, you are hardly persona grata across the line in the Arab countries. So it has not been something that has appealed a great deal to people.

Q: Now how did you, again, from the Amman point of view, our embassy, view Israel and how about, on a more personal side, how did you view the reporting that was coming out of Tel Aviv? Did you feel you were reporting on the same climate or was there a difference?

PARKER: Tel Aviv naturally tended to report things from an Israeli perspective. That was the perspective that they saw down there. Just as I think we tended to report things from a Jordanian perspective. We always thought they were terribly pro-Israeli, and they always thought we were terribly pro-Arab.

What was the first part of the question?

Q: How did we view Israel? One was the reporting and the other was the --

PARKER: Yes. I think we saw Israel as a considerable liability in the area. We realized that it was no escaping our identification with it given the political realities at that point. But we were concerned that this friend of ours was something that was really out of control in terms of its activities towards its neighbors. I arrived in Amman just after the Gaza raids in 1955 in which the Israelis went over in force in Gaza and killed a large number of people, attacking Egyptian police posts and so forth. A well-documented story and something that Israelis are still arguing about and something that led directly to the Egyptian press for arms from the Soviets. After the Gaza raid, they turned to us for arms, and we imposed conditions which they thought were unacceptable, and so they turned to the Soviets. And that became the Soviet entry into the area. Well, we saw this sort of action by the Israelis as the vector of Soviet penetration in the area.

Q: Okay. We can always add. You then came back to Washington to the Department in 1957 where you were the Jordanian, Israeli and Iraqi desk officer?

PARKER: Yes. I came back. As I said earlier, I was evacuated with hepatitis. My home leave was due. I had come home for home leave, and a vacancy opened up on the Israel- Jordan desk. They asked me if I would like to take it, and I said, "Yes." So we stayed in Washington, and I didn't go back to Amman.

Every one of my Foreign Service moves up to this one had been screwed up somehow. We had been separated from our effects and somebody else had had to pack them and so forth.

At that time the Office of Near Eastern Affairs was organized along the lines of an Iraq-Arabian Peninsula desk, which in those days was under Dave Newsom, an Egyptian-Sudan desk, a Lebanon-Syria desk, and an Israel-Jordan desk. I was on Israel-Jordan desk under Don Bergus. There were two of us on the desk, and we dealt with both sides of the line. I did that until somewhere in 1958.

After the formation of the United Arab Republic between Egypt and Syria and the Arab union between Iraq and Jordan, we reorganized to have a UAR desk -- the United Arab Republic desk, Egypt and Syria; an Iraq-Jordan desk -- the Arab Union desk; and -- let's see what did we do with, I forget what we did now with Lebanon. I guess we put Lebanon together with Israel. And we had an Arabian Peninsula desk.

Q: What were your prime concerns?

PARKER: Well, let me go back and finish this story. In 1959, I left after two years in NEA into the newly-formed Africa Bureau to be the Libyan desk officer in the Office of North African Affairs. I did that for two years. So that explains why I served on all three of those countries, actually four.

Q: Looking at it, did you find the perspective different in looking at, particularly you had been in

Amman but all of a sudden you had responsibility or joint responsibility for Israel, too. In your eyes, did you see or have a different perspective?

PARKER: Well, obviously. I mean, instead of just having Arabs calling -- of course, the Arabs were not really represented very effectively in Washington at that time; you didn't hear much from them -- but you did hear a lot from American Jews and from Israelis. They were all over the place, and you had to respond to them, and you had to take into account their view of the universe. So, yes, I think it's obviously a balancing experience.

We had a division of labor where Bergus handled most of the Israeli side, and I handled the Jordanian side.

Q: This is, again, the relatively early years after the creation of Israel. Did anybody ever sit down with you in the higher reaches of the State Department to talk about what was our real interest in Israel, or in the Arab world, other than political considerations in the United States?

PARKER: Well, certainly nobody higher up did. This was something we talked about among ourselves in the Office of Near Eastern Affairs. We had pretty full and frank discussions about it, but it was always understood that in the upper reaches, this was a political issue. And whatever the area experts or specialists might think of it, that in the final analysis, the political reaction was going to be decisive. This was not to say that the government was not prepared, particularly under Eisenhower, to confront the Israelis because we did - over Suez and over the evacuation of Sinai.

I was there in this bureau at a very interesting time in terms of our relationships with the Israelis. They were very unhappy with the pressures we were talking about putting on them to get them to withdraw from Sinai in 1957. The Israeli invasion occurred just as I got to Washington in the fall of 1956, and I lived with the consequences of that pretty intensively for two years.

Q: How did this play out? What were you doing and what were your impressions of the situation?

PARKER: I was doing the sort of things that all desk officers do. It is just like being a political officer with all these things that suddenly turn up. Anything the Department of State does, actually does I mean, as opposed to talking about it, comes down to the desk officer. He is the only person in the Department of State as far as I'm concerned who really does any work. There are a lot of people who sit around and talk about what's got to be done, but the desk officer is just like the platoon or maybe the company commander. He is the man who has to go out and do the actual digging and writing and putting of things together. Somebody else clears it or changes it or disapproves his draft, but then it comes back to him to redo. Except on such occasions as when you've got somebody like Foster Dulles deciding that he is the desk officer, and he's doing the work, and he's writing it, it's the desk officer who does it. There isn't anybody in between. None of the assistant secretaries or office directors do any writing of their own if they can avoid it. And the work of the Department is largely writing. You've got to formulate things in a memorandum that people approve and that becomes the document that authorizes expenditure of money and so forth.

I think the most important thing I did there and one of the few positive accomplishments I can record in my career was that I was the action officer for something called the East Ghor project. To make a very long story short, the Eric Johnston effort to have a unified development of the Jordan Valley failed. The Arabs agreed technically, but they did not agree politically. And so as a substitute, in an effort to do something to help Jordan which was in desperate state -- after having kicked out Glubb and lost the British subsidy in exchange for a promised subsidy from the Egyptians, Syrians, and Saudis which they didn't pay, and after the activities of nationalists like this man Suleiman Nabulsi and others were obviously leading Jordan into a situation where the king was going to be sacrificed, the king called on us and asked for help. This was in the spring of 1957. We then began a program of aiding Jordan. And our present involvement in that country dates back to that point. A serious involvement.

We were searching desperately for something to do to help Jordan. Jordan had no resources except phosphates. There is a little water in the Jordan Valley, not a great deal. And water in the Yarmuk, one of the tributaries of the Jordan. And an idea that had been floated some ten years before but then been abandoned because of the Johnston plan was to dam the Yarmuk and use that water to irrigate upper terraces of the Jordan Valley, the so-called East Ghor.

I had responsibility for fighting this project through the bureaucracy which took me a long time. I can't remember how many signatures. The last signature I got was that of the then Under Secretary Douglas Dillon. I can't tell you what a feeling of accomplishment that was for me to have this paper with his initials on it in my hand, authorizing us to go ahead and give the Jordanians -- I think the initial sum was ten million dollars -- to start this project, this diversion project.

It has really transformed that area of Jordan which was a howling desert into a fertile, well-watered oasis. To see the water gushing down that central conduit and going out into the fields is really very rewarding. It's about the only material thing that I can point to.

Q: What is probably almost unique is that there aren't many of these.

PARKER: No.

Q: Back to the repercussions of the '56 Suez War, what sort of involvement did you have with our policy which was relatively hard-nosed as far as the Israelis?

PARKER: I didn't have any. It was in the hands of Mr. Dulles. My maximum involvement was one day I took the Israeli ambassador, Abba Eban, to see Dulles and took the notes of the conversation. Dulles was calling all the shots, and we just followed his orders.

Q: How did a relatively junior officer and your fellow junior officers at Near Eastern Affairs evaluate Dulles in your lunchroom conversations?

PARKER: Well, we thought Dulles was sort of an S.O.B. We were terribly unhappy about his Presbyterian conscience and his attitude that neutrality was immoral. We thought he was

unnecessarily hard-line with the Arabs.

You know, we made a serious effort to bring down Nasser in those days. We were looking for people to support. If we could have found somebody to have a coup d'état, we would have. This was under the Eisenhower doctrine, which followed the Suez affair. It is ironic that first of all, we are on the side of the angels at Suez. We stopped the British and the French and the Israelis. We get the Israelis out of Sinai. But at the same time, we own something called the Eisenhower doctrine under which we appropriated two-hundred million dollars to support any governments in the area which were threatened by regimes dominated by international communism, for which read Egypt. We saw Nasser as a Soviet puppet. I mean, our government did. And we on the working level thought that was wrong.

Q: I was going to ask -- I mean, here is one of these assumptions. Was this a real assumption or was this just a justification to support the pressure from the Jewish lobby and the Israelis or was this really --

PARKER: No, I think the Israelis may have helped with this, and it was something that was popular with Jewish groups, but I think it was a conviction on the part of Dulles as well as Eisenhower that Nasser was no gentleman. That we could not do business with him, and we really ought to get rid of him.

I very much liken this attitude to that Reagan has and I guess Bush does as well towards Qadhafi. Qadhafi is an outlaw, therefore, you can do anything you want to him. It doesn't make any difference. The difference between Qadhafi and Nasser is, however, that Nasser had enormous support throughout the Arab world. He was the only Arab leader who has for many years had any support outside his own country.

Q: How did you view our embassy and our relations with Israel as from your observation point?

PARKER: Well, I had a very -- what shall I say -- difficult time. There was the usual problem that we and Tel Aviv didn't see things the same way. Sam Lewis and I had quite different views of the situation.

Q: He was our ambassador.

PARKER: He was our ambassador in Tel Aviv. And that's sort of normal. In this case, I was particularly disturbed that we were, in effect, acquiescing in Israeli hegemony over southern Lebanon. And part of our saying that we -- and we said this repeatedly -- that we support the territorial integrity of Lebanon, and we fully support the central government. We were not willing to say, "No," to the Israelis to get the hell out of south Lebanon. And they were supporting this renegade down there, Major Haddad, who had armed a little strip of Maronite villages along the border that he had organized against the Shia and against the Palestinians in a sort of a village defense effort. I can sympathize with that, but what it meant was that -- I mean, the way to deal with that problem was not to arm the villagers, but to get the Lebanese army down there and get in control of this area so it could police and defend it against the Palestinians which I think it would have done. But between the Israelis and the reluctance of the Lebanese to

really take any strong measures in this respect, Lebanon lost control of southern Lebanon, and it's been a continuing source of problems.

Q: Would you say our policy at the time you were there maybe somewhat indirectly but as a moving force was our relations with Israel as regards to Lebanon -- I mean, was everything predicated in what does this mean to Israel?

PARKER: Well, not so much that as we simply weren't going to cross the Israelis. It wasn't worth it. The Israelis had too much support in our Congress. If the Lebanese had been more resolute and better organized, and we had some chance of showing some positive accomplishment if we could get the Israelis to withdraw, I think we would have acted differently. But the Lebanese were such wimps that we weren't going to take the risk of confronting Israel and a hostile Congress. I mean, this is in a period when the Israelis controlled seventy-six senators, and we weren't going to take them on.

HARRY I. ODELL
Consular Officer
Haifa (1952-1954)

Harry Odell graduated from Brown University and later attended graduate school at the Fletcher School of International Affairs at Tufts University. Prior to attending Brown University, however, Mr. Odell had served in the US Army Air Corps during World War II. His Foreign Service career began in 1950 and it took him to places such as Germany, Israel, Sri Lanka, Greece, Jordan, and Switzerland. In addition, Mr. Odell has held several positions within the Department of State. He was interviewed by Peter Moffat in April 2000.

Q: Well, all good things come to an end. You had to go back to the Department?

ODELL: No. I went to Haifa, Israel as vice consul. In my wish list, I had said "the Middle East." I had no idea I would be sent as vice consul to Haifa. It turned out to be quite an interesting assignment. I got there in 1952. That was four years after the creation of Israel. It was an interesting period to see the changes taking place administratively in Israel. Manifestly, even in that short period of time in two years, administratively, things were working better than they had when I got there. Four years after the British gave up their mandate, they were just sort of beginning to get ordinary government service and facilities under control, in addition, of course, to coping with an enormous immigration problem, a military problem, and every other kind of problem. As a consulate, particularly in a port city, a provincial city, you didn't see the big picture as much as you saw the mechanics of the thing - the mail being delivered and the garbage being collected, conventional police work and so forth. It was interesting to see that movement take place in Israel.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

ODELL: Our first ambassador to Tel Aviv, who I think I met once, died of a heart attack and then he was replaced by Francis Russell, whom I saw more because he preferred Haifa physically to Tel Aviv and used to come up more than we wanted him to. I did see more of him.

Q: And your consul general was who?

ODELL: When I got there, it was a fellow named Wilbur Chase, who had been in Hamburg. He was a consular type and stayed one. Wilbur was there and then he went on extended home leave. I was in charge of the consulate the last three months or so. It was a pretty good period. Things were fairly austere. It was difficult to get things and things didn't work very well. There were constant power failures and that sort of thing. But things got better. Of course, in those days, with a diplomatic passport, you could cross the Lebanese border or the Jordanian border with no trouble at all, so we made a routine of going up periodically to Beirut and coming back with a car just absolutely bogged down with everything you can think of. It was not an unpleasant experience in Haifa. My son was born there. We found it very agreeable, although I had no idea of that assignment coming up. It was particularly interesting because... Talcott Seelye at the time was over in Amman. He knew from the word "go" that he wanted to be an Arab specialist. He and his wife and children came over to Israel twice. This was very rare of an Arabist in those days. They tended to avoid Israel like the plague. Talcott didn't. He had his strong views, which he still holds, but he came over. We visited them in Amman. Of course, Jerusalem was there in between. It was an interesting place to be. I got to know people that I still know. We traveled quite a bit. We went up to Damascus; Amman two or three times; Beirut several times (We didn't get to Cairo.); up to Cyprus, which was still British... We were there the night they were celebrating the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. Some official Americans assigned to Israel, if they were going to have children, the wife would go over to Cyprus or someplace and have this child rather than have it born in Israel. My son was born in Haifa and my wife said, "I'm not going over to Cyprus. I've been going to this doctor here and I want to stay here." When his passport was issued, the place of birth said "Haifa, Israel." He carried this with him. His passport to this day says he was born in Haifa, Israel. After he grew up, he traveled all over the place, including all through the Arab world. There was a lot of mythology connected with this.

good. I can't say that they were good, but they were relatively good. I felt that, for the Israeli Arabs, of whom there were many, many thousands, people who hadn't run away during the 1948 war, it would give them a sense of belonging, and I felt that would be a positive thing for the Israeli Government to do. So, after some effort I got them to agree and they did it. They printed the schedules in Arabic that they were going to use in the Arab communities. Of course Israel had contacts with local Arabs, particularly through the Histadrut. I think the Histadrut was used in recruiting these Arab agents, but they did do that. My tour there ended before the publication of the survey, but that was the original survey, the first labor force survey that Israel had ever taken, and it is still going on today in a much improved, much extended, form.

I regard that as a real contribution, and it led me to an interest in what was going on in the Arab community. I carried that interest through until the time that I became Labor Attaché so when I went back 13 years later I had contacts in the Arab community.

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MARGARET V. TAYLOR
Information Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv (1953)

Margaret V. Taylor was born in San Diego, California in 1925. She received a bachelor's degree from San Diego State College in 1946 and a master's degree from Stanford University 1966. Her career in the Foreign Service included positions in Indonesia, Japan, Finland, and Burma. Ms. Taylor was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1990.

TAYLOR: Right. Then, in 1953, there was the separation between State and the Information Service, the latter becoming an independent agency. Because of my lack of tenure and inexperience, I was "RIFed." So my career appeared to be coming to an abrupt halt, and I made preparations to return to the United States.

I got as far as the airport in Athens, where I was greeted by a USIS officer with a telegram from Washington that said, in effect, "Dear Ms. Taylor, you're going to Tel Aviv. So I, more or less, turned on my heel and went off to Tel Aviv. While I had very little tenure and experience, apparently someone else had even less, so I went to Tel Aviv where I served just for six months, completing that original two-year assignment.

Q: What month was this in 1953?

TAYLOR: Well, let's see, I left Tel Aviv along about May, 1954, and I was there for six months, so it was in the fall of 1953 when I went down there. I was there for a very short time but long enough to get a feel for that country and to gain more work experience.

When I went to Tel Aviv, I was cast more into the role of a secretary, and therefore my activities, in that sense, were much more curtailed. But, there was a wonderful CAO, Tom McGrail, who had come to Tel Aviv about the same time I did, from Japan, where he had spent many years, first with the Army and then he joined the Information Service, and was assigned back to Japan.

His next assignment was in Tel Aviv. He encouraged my interest in cultural work. He was himself a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic representative of American culture.

He had, I think, made quite an impression on the Japanese when he was there, from the stories that I heard him tell, and because he was a bachelor, (a good bit older than I) we often went to concerts together and to art shows, et cetera, and so I was able to associate with that group of people in Israel and through my own natural interests. It was a haven for me.

This was a period in Israeli history when the Israelis were really trying to reach out, particularly to Americans, but also to all Westerners, because they had great enthusiasm about the formation of that country and really wanted to meet as many foreigners as they could and give them a good impression of Israel. It was a matter of give and take. We brought with us our knowledge and representation of the United States and, of course, Tom was working with cultural programs, and the Israelis, then, were eager to invite us into their homes. So we had that kind of natural entree into the country through the people. It was a most interesting and pleasant way of establishing contact.

Q: Your program then, in Israel, was in many respects, I gather, similar to that which you were carrying on in Greece? Since you were dealing with a largely pro- American audience, it was more or less information about the U.S. and cultivating the friendships of the Israelis?

TAYLOR: Yes. Very much so. And we did travel throughout the country, visited kibbutzim, and went to the other towns: to Haifa and the part of Jerusalem that one could visit then. It was just what you indicate.

Q: Did you have a motion picture program there that went out into the field, or did you not?

TAYLOR: I'm a little hazy about that. There was a small motion picture program but I was not as directly involved in it and, of course, the population was very much smaller so I'm not sure that -- the program certainly wasn't as big as it was in northern Greece. However, I really don't recall how much of a program it was.

Q: And who was head of the USIS program at that time?

TAYLOR: Wilfred Cramer. And then there was Tom McGrail, the Cultural Officer, and a radio/press officer.

Q: I suppose they were able to place a good deal of information both on the radio in Israel and also in the newspapers?

TAYLOR: Yes, because there was an easy acceptance of information so I don't think that there was any great problem about getting our materials placed. There were problems of moving around on Saturday because everything closed down in Israel on Saturdays, but that was not a terrible impediment.

Q: Was there any particular program emphasis that you could determine? Did you have an

exchange program at that time with the U.S.?

TAYLOR: Yes, there was an exchange program but here again, having been there for this relatively short period of time, I don't remember the size of it. But we did have an exchange program and had all of the facilities of the Service and an ambassador who was kindly disposed toward USIS, so I think people were aware of what we were trying to do and there was support for the activity.

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

TAYLOR: Francis Russell, a fine career person. It was a most worthwhile, albeit very brief, experience.

MARGARET L. PLUNKETT
Labor Adviser, Technical Aid Mission
Tel Aviv (1953-1954)

Margaret L. Plunkett was born on April 15, 1906. She received a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a doctorate from Kernel University. Ms. Plunkett worked in the New York State Department of Labor; was a researcher at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology; was on the Wage Stabilization Board; War Production Board; BLS in the Labor Department and the Women's Bureau. She served in Tel Aviv, Israel as the Labor Adviser to the Technical Aid Mission and later in The Hague, Netherlands as the Labor Attaché. She was interviewed by Thomas D. Bowie on July 28, 1995.

PLUNKETT: While I was at the Wage Stabilization Board (WSB), the State Department asked me if I would be interested in going as Labor Adviser to the Technical Aid Mission in Israel. Well, I had changed jobs a lot in my life, and I was again ready to change. So I said, "Yes. I'd like to do that." So they appointed me. This was not a regular State Department appointment. I was on loan to the State Department from Labor for a two-year stint. So I took a leave from the BLS and went over to Israel.

Q: I see Golda Meir's picture here in your apartment.

PLUNKETT: That's right, and it says on it "Love, Golda." She was a wonderful woman and 1953 was when I first met Golda. She was Minister of Labor at that time. Well, the appointment as Labor Adviser to the Technical Aid Mission was an extremely interesting part of my life. We weren't part of the Embassy, but we were associated with it. The Embassy was superior in authority to the Mission, but it wasn't the governing board, so to speak. The Director of the Mission was a political appointee. This was during the Eisenhower administration. When the time came for me to leave for my post, I had to go to some office where there were people hiring people for the Eisenhower administration.

They probably took one sniff of me and said, "She's no Eisenhower supporter, and maybe we oughtn't to send her." And they said that to me-not that I wasn't an Eisenhower supporter, but that they had somebody else that they might want to send on that job. And I said, "You better not. I've given notice on my apartment and arranged for my furniture to be stored during this time. The Mission has assigned me an apartment there, and you can't undo that."

Q: Who were these people?

PLUNKETT: God only knows. They were young people who were Eisenhower appointees, and they were reviewing proposed appointments. So I hustled back to the Labor Department and said "I was told there was one more paper to be signed, and you better sign it this afternoon, because you've put me to all this bother of arranging to go there and I'm going." They signed the paper and circumvented those pipsqueaks who were trying to hire somebody else. It shows you what you can do if you open your mouth. When I was a kid my Mother used to say, "Don't be afraid to open your mouth." And I say, it hasn't been closed since!

Well, when I got to Israel, it was totally strange to me. I remember with embarrassment that when they said I would be stationed in Tel Aviv, I didn't know that Tel Aviv was the major city of the new state of Israel. I soon got to know it pretty well. Anyway, when you get to a new place like that, they make a formal appointment for you to meet the head of whatever agency you are assigned to. I went in to see him and he looked at me-He was a very nice man; we got to be good friends, but he wasn't very smart-and he said to me, "What are you doing here?" [laughter] I said, "Well, I was appointed to the position of Labor Adviser to the Mission. What is it that you want me to do?" Well, he fumbled and mumbled, and I was turned loose and actually I had to make the job.

Fortunately, his second in command was a much more sophisticated person and explained to me what we were supposed to do. We had different specialists on the staff there. The aim was to develop projects with the Government of Israel that would aid Israel in getting going. This was early 1953 when I went there, and they were still on their knees. It was a really remarkable time, and I was very glad to have been there at the very beginning.

As an example of the early difficulties, the local people had no access to the one first class butcher in Tel Aviv. The Embassy and the Mission people had to get permits from the Israeli Government to buy there. We were the only people, along with personnel of the other embassies of course, who could buy meat in that place. And it was not so elegant. You had to buy a hunk of beef, for example, wrapped up in brown paper. You didn't know what it was. It could have been the most tender steak, or it could have been the toughest hunk of beef, which I happened to buy once for local guests. After roasting, it was inedible. Instead, we wound up eating scrambled eggs.

Q: Was this kosher?

PLUNKETT: I don't know. It was an Israeli establishment, and whether it was kosher or not, I don't know.

Q: But it was a large supplier of the meat?

PLUNKETT: It was the supplier. I do not think they were importing Argentine meat then, as they did later. And our agricultural man at the Mission established their cattle industry. It was later a very productive operation in Israel. In many other countries, there was a lot of graft and not much solid work, but that wasn't true in Israel.

Q: Did you go to Embassy staff meetings or was the Mission considered a parallel body?

PLUNKETT: Yes, we had our own staff meetings, to which I went of course. It wasn't too long after I got there, maybe a matter of six months, that this second in command-he is dead now, and I don't remember his name-said to me, "You know, we were thinking of getting somebody to handle projects in public administration, but we think that you should do that." Well, that tickled me, because that broadened my scope very widely."

In this new area of responsibility, we had Israeli counterparts, people in the government with whom we worked very directly and from whom we got requests or suggestions and to whom we made suggestions for projects. I was assigned to somebody who was all right, but really I found I couldn't work with him! He was such a fuss budget, and this, and that, so I finally went to a man who [later] became a very famous man in Israel, Teddy Kollek. He was Director General of the Prime Minister's office then and I said to him, "Look, I can't work with this man. Nothing is ever going to get done." So he said. "Fine. You're going to work with me."

So that's how I got to know Teddy Kollek. And we have remained very close friends ever since. I just had a letter from him the other day. He eventually became Mayor of Jerusalem and was Mayor for 28 years. When he was 83, he ran for the last time. Unfortunately, I think, he was defeated, but after you have had the same mayor for 28 years, and he's gotten old and not very well, you ditch him for somebody else. He personally was almost destroyed by it.

I happened to make a visit to Israel at the time of the election in the fall of 1993. My nephew and his wife went with me, because I couldn't manage it alone with my bum locomotion abilities. While there, we had lunch with Teddy. This was a few days before the election, and he looked dreadful, but I've seen him on television more recently when he was on a trip across the States, and he looked very relaxed. He's running the Israel Museum now, which was one of his creations. He was one of the most creative people I have ever known, and a wonderful money raiser. He could pry a million dollars from a beggar just as easily as eating supper!

In any case, back to the technical AID mission. The Israeli Government wanted to make a labor force survey. In 1931 the British, who then controlled that area, did a labor force survey, but they did not include the Arab population. They just took a labor force survey of the Jewish population. This was long before [the establishment of] the state, of course, and nothing in that field had happened since. Well, then the government wanted, quite sensibly, I thought, to have a rounded labor force survey. That was a major project that I handled while I was there.

I did another thing that I think was very important. I said to the Israelis, "You're planning, of course, to include the Arab population in your survey." Oh, yes, they were. Well, then I said to

them that they must print the schedule that they were going to use in the Arab villages in Arabic, and they should hire Arabs to do the interviewing. Well, that seemed like an astonishing thought to the Israeli Government and even to our Mission. There was no connection between the Mission and the Arab population. It never spoke with the Arabs.

Q: Tell me, Margaret, how did you come upon that idea? What made you see the logic of it?

PLUNKETT: Well, it just came out of my head. After all, they were going to take a labor force survey, which is, in a sense, a kind of census. So I said, "Of course, since the British had never scheduled the Arabs, you've got to do it, because they are an important part of the Israeli population." They agreed, with a little persuasion, that that was true. They intended to cover the Arabs, but they didn't intend to do it except with Israeli personnel, and I thought to myself, this isn't going to be good.

Relations with the Arabs, and this was, of course, five years after the 1948 war, were relatively

SLATOR CLAY BLACKISTON JR.
Political Officer
Jerusalem (1953-1956)

Desk Officer for Jordan and Israel
Washington, DC (1956-1957)

Slator Clay Blackiston, Jr. was born in 1918 in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated with an A.B. degree from the University of Virginia. During World War II, he was an aviator in the U.S. Navy. Mr. Blackiston joined the Foreign Service in 1947 and served in Amsterdam, Stuttgart, Port-au-Prince, Jerusalem, Tunis, Jeddah, Cairo, Amman, and Calcutta. He was a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations in 1971. Mr. Blackiston retired from the Foreign Service in 1975. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: But you went to Jerusalem in 1953 and you served there until 1956. Was that just a regular assignment or did you ask for it?

BLACKISTON: I can't remember but I was very happy to go there and I found it fascinating, although we had a lot of problems there which maybe you know about.

Q: Could you explain what the situation was like at that time?

BLACKISTON: The situation was this: the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 had left a situation in which there was no peace, just Armistice Agreements between Israel and the four surrounding countries, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. The Lebanese border was the same border it had been, but on the Syrian border there were three demilitarized zones (DZs), where, when the fighting ended, Arab villagers were still living. The terms of the Armistice Agreement

were that life in the villages should go on as before; they shouldn't be interfered with. The Israelis, practically from the beginning, started encroaching the DZs and ultimately drove the Arab residents from the Hula area DZ and the two up at the headwaters of the Jordan. They also would fire on Syrian fishermen; there was a section of DZ that was only about 30 feet wide between the eastern edge of the Sea of Galilee and Syrian territory and the Golan Heights. The Syrian fishermen would drag their boats across this strip of land and fish as they had been doing for centuries and this would cause trouble.

On the Jordan border the Armistice Agreements were negotiated by the Arab Legion, as it was then called. It was officered by British officers; Glubb Pasha was head of it, and the brigades were headed by British officers. And when the Armistice Agreements were signed they were negotiated by British officers who really didn't know the terrain that well or the geography, so the Armistice border was drawn in such a way that villages were cut off from their land, instead of drawing the border so that it would encompass these communal lands. So many of the villagers would come over into what had been their lands to harvest crops, graze their sheep and so on. This would lead the Israeli border police to fire and sometimes kill them. Occasionally infiltrators from Jordan would cross into Israel and attack Israeli settlers. While I was there there was a famous attack on a town called Qibya led by Arik Sharon; it was a village at the end of a road projecting into Israel. In retaliation for some infiltration from Jordan, the Israelis made a massive night attack on this village of Qibya blowing up houses and killing some 60 people. The Israelis followed the same tactics -- there were a whole series of these things, Qibya is one of the best known -- they would encircle the town, mine the road (there would just be one road) on the Jordan side and then put these satchel dynamite charges against the buildings with the people inside. I think fifty-six people were killed. Then when the Arab Legion would come down the road, they had no other way to go as it was rocky terrain, the trucks would hit these mines. I was there the morning after with another FSO, Cleve Fuller; there is a picture in Life taken of us standing amid the bodies and describing us as UN observers. So this was the pattern of things and there were many of these places. My job included liaison with the UNTSO observers. Well, I lived on the Jordan side. Shall I describe all this?

Q: Yes, please do.

BLACKISTON: Is this getting too long?

Q: No, No. This is what I want, particularly this Jerusalem bit.

BLACKISTON: Let me describe the situation in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was also divided by the armistice line. There was the old city, which was the walled city, plus an eastern part of Jerusalem that was in Jordan; the new city was in Israel. The people of Jerusalem during the Arab-Israel war had defended the old city themselves, just the local inhabitants, but they were going to be overwhelmed so they called for help from Transjordan's King Abdullah. The Arab Legion came and did defend the old city so that it was not captured by Israel. We had one consulate general because the United States supported the UN partition plan which called for an Arab and Jewish state -- with a *corpus separatum*, which included Jerusalem and Bethlehem, an area that was to be internationally administered because of its significance for the Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths. Of course this never came to pass but we still today support the legal

fiction of it. At that time U.S. passports in Jerusalem said Jerusalem, Palestine; neither Jordan nor Israel. Now that has been changed, I believe. So we had the Consulate General; the main office of the Consul General was on the Israel side on Mammilah Road; across from us was a Muslim cemetery that the Israelis bulldozed. There was an office on the Jordan side and that is the one that I headed. We could cross back and forth during the daytime, and we did; the general public could not. Consular personnel could cross at night but you had to ask for special permission; sometimes we did go for a reception or something on the Israel side.

We had UN observers who were assigned to ensure that there were not violations of the armistice agreement, or if there were to investigate who was responsible. It was called the UN Truce Supervisory Organization, and they were on all four borders. We had what is known as Mixed Armistice Commissions for each of these borders; there was what they called the HKJIMAC which meant Hashemite Kingdom Jordan-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission -- there were similar MACs on all the other borders. The observers came from the United States, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, and maybe Norway, I've forgotten. My job was to get to know these officers and to report on incidents, so I got to know them very, very well. The MAC met in a building that was in a no-man's land between one part of Jerusalem and the other. There was some cooperation between the Israelis and the Jordanians with regard to mosquito control, because water would sit there and if they didn't do something about it it would affect both sides so they did do that much.

There was a firing incident in Jerusalem while I was there and the Jordanians -- this is on Nablus Road which comes out of Damascus gate going towards Nablus and would have gone on toward Damascus if there had not been a division between the countries. The Jordanians erected a wall which was about eight feet high, I guess, maybe more, so that in any firing from the Israel side the passersby would be protected. They were not using artillery but mortar shells. I am rambling a little here, but I might cite one case. We would get these Americans there, I guess you would call them hippies today -- they were going to make peace. I remember one day some guy had been in to the consulate to see me, then he'd gone over -- you could with permission cross over to the Israel side. One morning, there were loopholes in this wall, this guy walked into no-man's land and an Arab Legion man shot him dead right out in front of the consulate. Of course he should not have been there but he was a harmless guy. I remember my son calling me, and I looked outside and there was the guy dead.

I may jump a little bit, there is so much that happened there. You remember the Eisenhower Doctrine?

Q: The Eisenhower Doctrine was essentially what?

BLACKISTON: The idea was you would sign up the countries of the Middle East; if they adhered to this doctrine of objection to communism then they would get support, military assistance, from the United States. Lebanon signed up for it but nobody else. Also there was an attempt to get Jordan; we even tried to get Egypt, into the Baghdad Pact -- which of course we never joined. We joined the political committee and the military committee, I have sort of forgotten about that. But there was an attempt to get Jordan into the Baghdad Pact in 1955 and this really blew their stack. There was a farm near Jericho run by Musa Alami & Project, it was

quite famous; it used to get a lot of publicity in Reader's Digest. Musa Alami was a Jordanian who got money from Iraq for the farm which trained Palestinian youth in agriculture. It did a good job. That was at the time that Iraq was still more or less under British influence with King Faisal II on the throne.

Q: The King was assassinated.

BLACKISTON: That was later, when Abd al-Karim Qasim overthrew him in 1958. That was later, Nuri Said was the Prime Minister of Iraq who was pro-British. The Jordanians, the mass of the people, particularly the Palestinians, reacted very unfavorably to this attempt to get them into the Baghdad Pact. There was a big refugee camp down in Jericho which is in the Jordan Valley. The refugees came out of the camp and were attacking and tearing apart this Musa project, which was doing good work, actually. They trained students in agriculture, raising chickens and such, and they would sell their turkeys and so forth; but they were getting money from Iraq, Iraq being considered as opposed to Palestinian interests. So they tore the place apart. There were also some Mennonite Missionaries down in the refugee camp, and these missionaries -- well I think they accused them of trying to distribute Bibles. Whether they did or not I don't know but we got a call and I had to go down there in a jeep. These people were barricaded in their house and I brought them up to Jerusalem. Then one thing led to another and by the next year, early January, we heard rumors of an attack -- I've got a paper on all this part, I don't know whether you...

Q: When the time comes you might include that.

BLACKISTON: Well it's long, I just looked it up; I just realized I had it. So I am doing it off the top of my head here.

Q: That's all right.

BLACKISTON: In January 1956 there were rumors of an attack on the Consulate. So we brought over three marines from the Mammilah Road Consulate General and put up concertina barbed wire on top of the fence around it. We had several attacks on the Consulate, but the big one came one day, and I would have to look up the date, when there was maybe a thousand people milling around... this main attack was in January, I guess, with a large crowd outside and we had three marines inside. The crowd was calling to pull down the American flag and our gunnery sergeant, called back, saying, "It ain't time for colors yet." So this mob started breaking in; we had two doors, one a side door, the marine broke out the upper panels and was standing on a chair so he could fire his .38 revolver. My wife and two kids were up on the second floor hiding behind clothes' bags. There was a stairway up to the residence quarters from the side door and some guy had broken out a panel and was getting ready to step into the hallway leading upstairs. I had a shotgun, an automatic shotgun that my father had left me, and so I fired at this guy and he left or was pulled out or something. Anyway this went on for some time; it was pretty hairy! Finally the Arab Legion brigade sent troops down and drove these people away.

Q: Hadn't there been any protection before? Why hadn't they sent troops before?

BLACKISTON: I guess it was the political situation there. You see Glubb Pasha had not been

dismissed yet and it was pretty dicey. I was telephoning the governor of Jerusalem asking for protection. There were a number of people killed in this incident. I have upstairs the statement of, I think it was, Brigadier Gallatly, who gave me a figure of how many were killed; I have forgotten what it was. So this situation was not very good, it is not a normal thing and shortly after I was transferred.

Q: Did you have any dealings at all with the Embassy in Tel Aviv?

BLACKISTON: Oh yes, I am glad you asked me this. I didn't have direct dealings with Tel Aviv, but we had a constant battle with the Embassy; with the Army attaché reporting Israeli versions of border incidents, which were not true. We were getting the facts from the UNTSO observers and the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Supervisory Organization, who first was a man named General Vagn Benecke, a Dane. He had played a substantial role in spiriting Danish Jews across the Kattegat to Sweden. and yet this man, because he reported the truth, was just castigated by the Israelis. Now his successor was a General Burns, a Canadian Major General who had been in command of a Canadian division during the second World War. We got to know him quite well too; as a matter of fact I visited him some years ago when I was up in Ottawa. I am sure he is dead now. The Embassy in Tel Aviv, we considered, as constantly presenting the Israeli viewpoint. You see the first American Ambassador to Israel was a guy named McDonald who was confessedly a Zionist; no attempt at balance or anything. The Consul General was constantly getting flak from the Embassy in Tel Aviv, not from the Embassy in Amman. That was the situation.

Q: What was your impression of the Israelis at that time?

BLACKISTON: Aggressive; talking peace but not really wishing it. Nothing much has changed.

Q: Did you feel that your or the Consul General's reporting was inhibited because of domestic political pressures?

BLACKISTON: No, I do not think so. Actually, I was thanked. I will give you one example. The Israelis were complaining bitterly, because on the Mount of Olives, which was on the Jordanian side at that time, there was a Jewish cemetery and many of the grave stones had been knocked down during the war, not officially but by individual Arabs who had broken these stones. That's where this guy Robert Maxwell who either fell or jumped off his yacht off the Canary Islands was buried in an almost official Israel funeral.

Q: A famous British financier of Jewish background; Maxwell, I think.

BLACKISTON: Maxwell, is buried there and there have been allegations that he was a Mossad agent. So these gravestones had been knocked down by Arabs and the Israelis were complaining bitterly to the U.S. government about this. But I had traveled all over Israel and just right across the street in the Mammilah cemetery, which was a Muslim cemetery, I watched and took pictures where they bulldozed the whole thing. So I wrote a dispatch and sent in pictures, making the point that yes, Arabs had knocked down these graves but this was not done by the Jordan government, whereas what had transpired on the Mammilah cemetery was an act by the Israeli

government, and I drew a contrast there. Actually I have been all over Israel and they have destroyed graves and Muslim shrines all over the place.

Q: You left there in 1956. Was this before the Suez crisis and war in October of 1956?

BLACKISTON: Yes, they got me out of there because it probably wasn't good for me to stay there. So I went back and was on what was then called the Jordan-Israel desk, for a year. The experience in Jerusalem had interested me in the Arab world, so I applied for Arab language school.

Q: In your time on the Jordan-Israel desk who was the head of it?

BLACKISTON: Don Bergus.

Q: You were there during the Suez war weren't you? How were we treating that?

BLACKISTON: Yes, and I remember Bergus coming back from a meeting when the Egyptian Ambassador met with Dulles -- you remember the financing of the High Dam? You know what happened there was that we had initially offered to help finance it; Dulles initially tried to be evenhanded. Then he began to see Nasser as a real problem in the area, that he was playing footsie with the Communists. So he changed his tune and told the Egyptian Ambassador on that day that we were not going to finance the High Dam and of course that is what led them to go to the Soviets. I remember Bergus coming back and telling me, he had taken the notes, about this. May I make a comment of my own?

Q: Yes, please do.

BLACKISTON: I think it was a mistake to refuse, in one sense. On the other hand, two things: One is that there is an environmental problem with the High Dam and the second is that this would have required annual increments of aid and given the makeup of the U.S. Congress I don't think that a subsequent administration could have withstood the pressure. It probably would have been worse to say you are going to go ahead and start and then have to withdraw someplace along the line. That's the way it was.

Q: Did the Suez war get to the desk or were things on too high a level at that point?

BLACKISTON: No, I knew quite a bit about this because Dulles had this really crazy idea, you may remember. He concocted this idea when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company. When I first heard about it everybody thought it was really wild. You remember the Suez Canal Users Association? Well he cranked up this Dane who was supposed to be the head of it and all these people, I didn't quite understand it, we're supposed to run the Suez Canal. Well the likelihood of Nasser accepting this was -- well, it died aborning. So there were a lot of things going on that were interesting at that time.

Q: At that time, obviously things have changed a great deal, on the Jordan-Israel desk did you feel an obviously heavy Jewish lobby pressure?

BLACKISTON: It was terrible. I remember...was that then or later? Well anyway it doesn't matter; I'll give you an example. Maybe when I was back in the State Department later. Bob Strong was the Director of Near East Affairs, he was later Ambassador to Baghdad. He was going to have a briefing for members of the American press on developments in the Near East, only Americans. Now there was a guy named Cy Kennan -- have you ever heard the name? -- who is the founder of IPAC.

Q: IPAC is the Israel Public Affairs Committee, which is the preeminent...

BLACKISTON: It is an agent of the Israel government. Strong denied Kennan, who is an American citizen, the right to attend this briefing, and as they say, "stuff really hit the fan." Poor Bob, I think he was right, but he had to back down. Yes, there was constant pressure.

Q: How were your reports from Tel Aviv and our reports from the Embassy in Amman treated? And from the consul general in Jerusalem? Did people like Don Bergus who were supervising, in any of these disputed matters view the Embassy in Tel Aviv as being...Did you find that there was an Israeli advocate in Tel Aviv?

BLACKISTON: Yes.

Q: And Arab advocates in the other places where the Arabists were?

BLACKISTON: Well this is the thing, that these are Arab advocates. We who are Arabists deny this. We are not Arab advocates, we are U.S. advocates. We see American interests other than just the complete subordination to the wishes of Israel and the Israel lobby. That's where these people get labeled anti-Semitic and so on; either you are one hundred percent for them or you are anti-Semitic. Well I guess I have answered your question.

Q: Did you get any feeling in Embassy country team meetings [in Saudi Arabia] about reports that would come out of Israel? Did you feel that our Embassy there was the tool of Israelis?

BLACKISTON: I think I discussed that in our last session. My impression when I was in Jerusalem was that that was definitely the case. This was related to me by a fairly prominent Ambassador who served in Lebanon. He said to me that he was getting ready to go to such and such a place, he had been told he would be named, and some political appointee in the State Department told him, "As soon as we get the Israeli clearance you are all set." And my impression was that Army attachés sent to Israel had to be cleared by the Israeli government before they were sent. That was my impression, I may be wrong.

EUGENE H. BIRD
Israel-Jordan Desk
Washington, DC (1955)

**Vice Consul
Jerusalem (1956-1958)**

Eugene H. Bird was born in Spokane, Washington in 1925. He was in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1948. He attended the University of Washington, receiving a B.S. degree in 1948 and a M.A. degree in 1952. Mr. Bird's overseas career included posts in Israel, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and India. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.

Q: Before we get to that, let's go back to [your service] on the Jordan-Israeli desk. While you were there, how would you describe what later was called the Jewish or the Israeli Lobby?

BIRD: We certainly had a lot to do with it. I was viewed as being a fresh, new face on the scene when I went to work on the desk. I had no background in the Middle East. As a matter of fact my favorite story concerns Parker ["Pete"] Hart. I was told to go in and call on Pete, who had just been appointed the director of NE [the Office of Near Eastern Affairs]. So I walked in by myself. He said that he was happy to have me aboard but wanted to know about my background. Did I have any background in the Near East. I said, "No, I'm sorry, I'm a Swedish expert." He said, "Well, have you read anything on the Middle East?" I said, "I'm afraid I haven't." I said that I read the newspapers and other things, but nothing serious. I said that I had been in management training for the previous couple of years. He said, "Well, have you ever traveled there?" I said, "No, I haven't been close to the Mediterranean or the Middle East." He sighed and said, "Well, maybe that's what we need around here--fresh, new minds." [Laughter]

The people in the Israeli Embassy felt the same way. I had very good relations [with them]. Abba Eban was the Israeli Ambassador. Of course, there were a couple of junior Israeli Embassy officers who became great buddies of mine. Just before I was assigned to the Israeli desk, the Israelis had run what I presume was a "sod" [sodomy?] operation--I don't really know--against Don Bergus' predecessor. This had happened about 18 months previously.

Q: Who was that?

BIRD: I don't remember his name, though I remember his face very well. He was forced out of the Department completely. He was a regular Foreign Service Officer who had been on the desk and had been engaged in some negotiations. There was a party one evening at which he'd made a remark to the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] at the Israeli Embassy concerning the status of those negotiations, which the Israelis then proceeded to use in the negotiations. He'd given them some insight. I don't know what this was all about. There was nothing in the files on the desk, but what made a deep impression on me was that only a month or two after I came onto the desk in 1955 this officer, who'd gone up to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, had been brought back to the Department as a result of a case he had brought against the Department because he had been fired. The Department brought him back for one day. He came in to see us during that day. He didn't tell me anything but he had a long conversation with Don Bergus as to the circumstances. Don had been hurriedly brought to the desk as a result [of this situation]. So with the Israelis you always felt that you had to watch your back.

The Jordanians were always very charming. They had a wonderful Ambassador and a tiny staff. They couldn't compete [with the Israelis]. We had a lot to do, both with the anti-Zionists, such as Elmer Berger, who used to come in and talk to us and so on, and people like Don Peretz. And we had a lot to do with some of the Zionists, who would come in and have long conversations with [Assistant Secretary] Allen. Either Don Bergus or I would attend and take notes. Don would attend if the visitor was a very important person. Secretary Dulles saw many of them. Of course, Dulles was viewed within the Department--at least on the NEA side--as a person who had been defeated in his bid for election.

Q: Election as a Senator from New York [in 1950], wasn't it?

BIRD: From New York. He claimed to have been defeated by Jewish money and influence in New York. He supposedly never forgave them for that. I don't know directly. I have no idea. However, stories were told that Dulles would occasionally fulminate against them and refer to them as "those damned New Yorkers" and so on. Still, he had very close relations with Senator Javits...

Q: [Republican] Senator from New York.

BIRD: It was Javits' staff that "carried the water" for Israel more than any other group on the Hill. Of course, I was in touch with Senator Morse, although not necessarily with anyone else up there. But in the case of each of the issues that we had to deal with we would always consider it in terms of what impact it was going to have on domestic politics.

I remember having to answer some of the letters which Secretary Dulles was receiving from politically important people in Philadelphia and various other places. As the lowest man on the totem pole on the desk, this was my job. The [letter writers] would say, "If you don't change your policy on the Middle East, [the Republicans] are going to lose the next Congressional elections here." The Governor of Maryland at that time was also a person who weighed in strongly. I can't remember his name.

Q: I think it was Theodore McKelvin.

BIRD: He would weigh in strongly with Dulles. We would get the "flak" from that and would have to provide [a draft reply]. So it was similar to a situation of having Mme Sun Yat-sen and Mme. Chiang Kai-shek on the Hill on the same day when you're trying to open somewhat better relations with Beijing. It was very similar to that.

Q: You were new to the scene as you dealt with Israeli affairs but you had a fresher eye on this sort of thing. Were you keeping American domestic politics in mind? Normally, in the Foreign Service we are supposed to call things as we see them in American geopolitical or international terms and let the domestic politicians sort it out. But you couldn't do that in this case. Is that right?

BIRD: We would try, but it's like the old adage that "War is an extension of diplomacy." Or you can look at it in the opposite way, that "Diplomacy is an extension of war." It seems to me that in

our foreign policy we'll always have a certain tension on this subject. How much influence should ethnic groups--and after all America is nothing but a collection of ethnic groups--have on our foreign policy? How much influence should Russians [in the United States] now have on our policy towards Yeltsin? How much influence should Swedes have on our policy toward Sweden? Obviously, it is very modest. At one point it was clearly very important in United States foreign policy. The Mexican community or the Japanese on the West Coast--how much influence should they have had on preventing the internment of [racial Japanese] in 1941-42 [just after Pearl Harbor]? Well, the answer is that, because of the open nature of American politics and the American debate on American domestic politics, the Poles should have their say on our relations with Poland. Polish Americans should have their say. Jewish-Americans should have their say on our relations with Israel. But the [political] tactics may get to the point where there is real fear in people's minds and voices and so on, as there has been in only two instances that I know of.

One such case is Taiwan and China policy. The second concerns Israel and [United States] policy toward the Arab world. In those two cases the line [which should exist between domestic politics and foreign policy] is being crossed and has been crossed.

Q: How did you find dealing with Israeli diplomats?

BIRD: I found them quite charming. I was always very welcome in Ambassador Abba Eban's embassy. Some years after I left Washington [in 1956], friends told me that I was viewed as being very pro-Israeli when I went to [the Consulate General in] Jerusalem. And I was "courted" there. I was assigned a young Israeli who would call me at [various] times from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So I was viewed as potentially a very useful person to them in many ways, because I'd worked on so many different problems and projects affecting them, including the Johnston Plan [for the division of the waters of the Jordan River between Arabs and Israelis]. [On my way to] Jerusalem, I went via London. It was kind of unusual and, perhaps, kind of "bumptious" of me to do this. I arranged my travel so that I went to London, where I received a briefing. Dayton Mak took me to the [British] Foreign Ministry.

Then I flew to Beirut. I'd never seen these places before. Of course, I'd been briefing people on them. Fraser Wilkins once said to me, after a briefing I had given on Jerusalem, "How long has it been since you've been in Jerusalem?" [I had never been there and told him so.] It was very embarrassing. I could read and brief fairly easily. I went to Beirut and met the Ambassador and his staff and spent a day or two there.

Q: When did you go to Jerusalem?

BIRD: I arrived there on May 10, 1956.

Q: What was your job?

BIRD: I was just a vice-consul in East Jerusalem. I handled West Bank affairs...

Q: Can you explain how our Consulate [General] in Jerusalem was organized at this time?

BIRD: It was an independent office and still is. It did not report either to our Embassy in Amman, Jordan, or to our Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel. The main building for the Consulate was in West Jerusalem in Israel. We had a very small staff of seven or eight people [in East Jerusalem]. We had no CIA personnel assigned there. One of the first things that happened [after my arrival] was that the CIA asked to put in a couple of people there, disguised as USIS librarians or something like that. My Consul General asked me if I thought I could live with that. I said, "Oh, sure. I dealt with CIA a lot in Washington." I got some money from CIA to rebuild the roof of the old Russian Church in East Jerusalem. I had good contacts with the Russian community as a result of that.

The fact is that we carried in our passports a statement that we were accredited to the United States Consulate General in Jerusalem, Palestine. We received letters of recognition from the governor, or "Muhafiz" of East Jerusalem and from the Mayor of West Jerusalem. We defended our independence very strongly, as a result of which the Consul General was always in trouble with both of our Ambassadors [to Jordan and to Israel].

Q: Who was the Consul General at that time [in Jerusalem]?

BIRD: William Hamilton. He'd previously served in Khartoum but was not an Arabist as such. He was near his last assignment abroad. He had, perhaps, one more tour after that. He was a very well-educated, very quiet person. He didn't make a lot of waves. He always had some small problem going, either with the desk back in Washington or with the Ambassador in Tel Aviv.

Q: What was the situation in Jerusalem in the summer of 1956?

BIRD: Well, [John Foster] Dulles was Secretary of State. He'd made a couple of visits to the Middle East by that time, trying to work on the problem of Arab-Israeli relations. A very socialist-oriented Egyptian regime had just made its first agreement with the Soviets to provide arms in the Middle East. As a result, there was a newly-developing relationship between the United States and Israel to "balance" those arms shipments to Egypt. Syria immediately became a client of the "Czechoslovak" arms industry also--which was really the Soviet arms industry. This development was generally viewed as a prelude to war. In fact, I told my wife before I left Washington in May, "I don't think that you're ever going to get to Jerusalem because I expect a war to start even before you can come in late June or early July."

It didn't happen quite that way, but all during the summer of 1956 we were "Cassandras" in a sense. We were all predicting war and were trying to report, I suppose, and do everything that we could do, at whatever level we were operating, somehow to prevent that war from happening. The reason for the war, of course, was the nationalization of the Suez Canal by the Egyptians. In fact, the Eden Government [in the U. K.] and the French Government [under Guy Mollet of the French Socialist Party] were working very closely with the Israelis. We knew this. There was a buildup [of troops and supplies] on Cyprus. By September the level of insults between the Egyptians, on the one hand, and Paris and London, on the other, was pretty high. However, the

Egyptians really didn't want a war to happen. They were trying to use the United States to try to prevent that war from happening.

I think that Secretary Dulles, in effect, was "washing his hands" of the whole affair, quite frankly. We had a political reporting officer at the Embassy [in Tel Aviv]. I think that he was probably associated with the CIA. He was Hungarian Jewish in background. He had some very good friends in Israel. He managed to find out the exact date [of the beginning of the Israeli involvement] about a week ahead of time. He sent that date in to Washington. He had to send it on the "back channel" [through the CIA] because the Ambassador didn't believe him. Things like that were happening.

Q: We're talking about Ambassador Wally Barbour, aren't we?

BIRD: Yes. I presume that the warning got through to the Israeli desk and, therefore, to Secretary Dulles. I suppose that there were some efforts to work with London and Paris. What was a surprise was the closeness of the relationship between Tel Aviv and Paris and London on this matter. The Israelis were absolutely overjoyed with this opportunity to try to topple Nasser. We had very close relations with the British Consulate General [in Jerusalem]. A man named Wilson, the Deputy Consul General, was my contact at the British Consulate General. Later on, he became the head of the Foreign Office's Information Division and spokesman for the Foreign Office. He was a very elegant personality and well clued in to what was happening in the [Israeli] Foreign Ministry. They [the British] pulled all of their people, except a few officials like Wilson, out in August or early September, 1956. Then, after three or four weeks--or maybe a little longer--they brought them back [to Jerusalem]. Then everyone thought that the chances of war had diminished. We [in the American Consulate General] never believed that.

We had good reason [not to believe that], in the last 48 hours before the war started, when all the public transportation was disappearing off the streets. [Israel] was mobilizing its reserves. The first news we had of the invasion of the Sinai Desert by Israeli troops was Kol Israel [the official Israeli radio station] announcing on its 10:00 PM news program, "Our forces have reached the Mitla Pass, 70 km within the Sinai" [Desert] area. I was on the Israeli side [of Jerusalem] that night. The next day I went to the other [Jordanian] side. We had access to a [telephone] line through the British Consulate between the two sides. It was the only line across the Mandelbaum Gate. The British had negotiated that in 1948 before they withdrew from Palestine. We could "tap into" that line by calling the British Consulate. The British Consulate on the other side would call our Consulate. Of course, [the phone conversations] were "tapped" [by the Israelis], so there were things that we couldn't say.

The British, of course, were quite surprised at our reaction in 1956, as were the Israelis. It was a real shock to them. You have to wonder if Secretary Dulles simply didn't send the right message to [British Prime Minister] Eden. There have been lots of books and articles written about this, including Dick Parker's recent book ["The Politics of Miscalculation in the Middle East," by Richard Parker], but we don't really know whether Eden was being Machiavellian, though I suspect that that was it. He had decided, just as Don Bergus had a year before, "Well, I guess the only thing left is a nice little war." [In the State Department] they had no intention of doing the

needful and preventing a war from happening. I think that that's one of the great failures in American foreign policy in the Middle East.

It is my personal opinion that we could have prevented the 1956 War and could [also] have prevented the 1967 War. I was in [the Embassy in] Cairo in 1967 and in [the Consulate General in] Jerusalem in 1956 and saw the buildup toward war. However, we were not doing all that we could to prevent the war from happening. Why [we didn't do enough to prevent war] will always remain a mystery to me, because our interests were obviously very heavily affected by the closure of the Suez Canal in 1956. In fact, our reaction proved that it was not something that we wanted to happen. Secretary Dulles was a very intelligent person in many ways--in spite of being a lawyer. He let the situation develop to the point of crisis.

Q: Bringing our discussion back from Secretary Dulles to Gene Bird, here you were, straddling Arab and Jewish nations. What did all of you do during the Suez Crisis [of 1956]?

BIRD: I suppose we survived. The first thing we did was to evacuate everyone. We were told to get everyone off the West Bank area that we could. I called in [the heads of] the Mennonite and other missionary groups. There weren't a lot of Americans on the West Bank, but there was a sufficient number for us to have a problem getting them out. I tried to arrange for an aerial evacuation, because we didn't seem to be able to get permission to drive in our cars all the way to Beirut. A lot of people didn't want to leave their cars in Amman, [Jordan]. We made a disastrous attempt to bring in a DC-3 [aircraft], which we managed to lease from Air Jordan. We got about 30 people and all of their luggage out at the airport. At the last moment the Jordanians said that their plane could not fly because there were too many risks involved for an Air Jordan plane in the air. There had been a "shoot down" in 1948 of a plane from Air Jordan, or, rather, the predecessor to Air Jordan. We knew one of the survivors of this crash, the head of the American School for Oriental Research. Here he was, being evacuated on an Air Jordan plane. He survived the 1948 shoot down by a "Yak" [Soviet built] fighter, an Israeli fighter from Russia, which always intrigued me. So evacuation was a major issue.

And then there were demonstrations, which went on for about six months, during which time we kept our people out [of Jordan]. My wife and our two little children, both pre-schoolers and very young, boarded an aircraft, perhaps the morning after the [Israeli] invasion [of Sinai] and got out. It was one of the last aircraft out.

We had a lot of [American] tourists, of course. The tourists didn't see anything happening. It was a very calm period in Jerusalem itself. There were some troops up close to the line, but there was a prohibition written into the armistice agreement on having tanks near the line. Both sides respected that in 1956, unlike in 1967. So we had no incidents. I remember our emergency radio. I was trying to go from the Consulate on one side to the other. I turned the radio on but all I could receive was people talking back and forth in Hebrew. They had the same kind of radios that we did. We had provided [the Israelis] with communications equipment. [When I was on the Israeli desk], I had helped to get that radio equipment [for them] in substitution for jet aircraft. They had very good U. S. Army communications gear, which had been integrated into the Israeli Army. They used it throughout the Suez Crisis.

So we were a kind of lonely group of [temporary] bachelors, sitting there in Jerusalem for almost six months. The rumor mill was always active, saying that it [the prohibition on having our families there] was going to be off next week and so on. But the official description of the policy was that, "We wanted to teach both sides a lesson." I remember the puzzlement of the Egyptian who invited me over, shortly after Secretary Dulles had made a very pro-Egyptian statement of sympathy. I said that we were taking the whole issue to the [UN] Security Council and were trying to get the British and French to pull out [of the Suez Canal area]. Really, Israel was a sideshow in this whole thing, even though she had gone almost all the way to the Suez Canal. Israel had been prevented from going all the way by the British, who told them, "Don't go any farther. You're not to take the Canal. We're going to take it." In fact, the Israeli Army probably could have taken the Canal all the way down [to Suez]. There probably weren't that many Egyptian troops left in the Sinai Desert area.

This didn't happen, so the situation became a matter of arranging for the evacuation of British and French troops [from the Suez Canal area]. We [in the Consulate General in Jerusalem] weren't directly involved with that, except that we were in contact with people like [British Consul General] Wilson and with the French [in Jerusalem] and so on. At the Consulate General we talked a lot [about the situation]. We tried to come up with ideas. One of the ideas we came up with was letting the Israelis keep the Gaza Strip at that point, because Gaza was not an area which the Egyptians had been remarkably good at governing. It would have given the Israelis a reason to return all of the 400,000 [Arab refugees] to within the 1956 borders. Our expression was, "This will break the back of the refugee problem if you bring all of these people back into Israel." Let them go back to Ashkelon and the villages and so forth. We knew the villages had been largely destroyed, but we thought that we could find a way to reintegrate them into Israeli society.

I remember raising this idea at a very low level, just to test it with my contact in the Israeli Foreign Ministry. He looked at me as if I were really mad. It was a new idea to him. He said, "You don't understand anything about Israel, do you?" He meant [to say], "We don't want those people back. We want the land but we don't want them back." He said, "Why don't you take them instead to Brazil?" Years later Assistant Secretary George Allen told me that he had suggested the same thing to Secretary Dulles at the White House during the same period. They had been briefing President Eisenhower. Allen told me that both Dulles brothers were there--Allan Dulles from the CIA and John Foster Dulles from the Department of State. Allan said that maybe it would be a good idea to leave Israel with Gaza. John Foster Dulles went absolutely ballistic and said, "No, that would be rewarding aggression. We can't reward aggression. Forget that idea completely." So this was unacceptable from both sides. It's interesting to look back and see what's happening now.

Q: How was life for you in the Consulate General in Jerusalem? How were your contacts with people on the West Bank of the Jordan and how did they respond to the events of 1956?

BIRD: They were in a state of shock, of course, and then the situation turned into a state of concern about whether Israel intended to take the West Bank. The actual crisis itself only lasted about four or five days before [hostilities stopped], and about three days after the Egyptians lost Port Said. During that period the Mahafiz of Jerusalem, an East Banker who was very close to

King Hussein, though not a Palestinian, was in very close touch with the Consulate General and with me, because the Consul General wasn't always in East Jerusalem. So sometimes in the evening I would go over there and talk with the Mahafiz or some of his friends and attend some of his majelis [conversation] meetings. There was constant political talk about Israeli intentions. There was real fear that the Israelis intended to take the West Bank at that time. They feared that it could easily be done and that it would happen. We were watching any buildup of the Jordan Arab Army--the Arab Legion.

I remember sitting with the head of the American Colony Hotel [in East Jerusalem on the Damascus Road] and other people who were quite well known and long term residents of the area. I had also gone down to Jericho and had watched a very long line of [Jordanian] military vehicles which had come down the very road which Yasser Arafat is now trying to get control of. My friend, British Deputy Consul General Wilson, was also with me. We watched through binoculars to see whether they were going to turn up toward Jerusalem, which would be an indication of war, or turn and go across the [Allenby] Bridge and go back into Jordan. In fact, they turned and went across the bridge and into the main part of Jordan.

It was a strange time as far as our relations with the West Bank are concerned. Our Deputy Consul General had completed his tour [of duty in Jerusalem] and left. Andrew Killgore, the new Deputy Consul General, had not yet arrived, so I was more or less left alone. I roamed up and down the West Bank of the Jordan. There wasn't a lot of consular work to do. I ran the office. By then we had a couple of CIA types on the West Bank, working under the cover of the Consulate General. We were trying to report on what was happening in terms of the relationship between the West Bank and Jordan, because there wasn't much of a relationship between the West Bankers and Israel. The only place that they ever met was at the meetings of the Israel-Jordan Mixed Armistice Commission, or the IMAC, as they called it. That was just a few hundred feet from the Consulate office [in East Jerusalem]. I used to go over and talk with the Norwegian [UN officer] who was there at the time. We had very close relations with the UN. They had a very high level UN civil servant, a Frenchman. His efforts were to keep the two parties from militarizing the area close to the line of demarcation and keep the peace as well as he could. The effect that the UN had in terms of creating the conditions for peace were pretty minimal, in reality. This UN civil servant had a deputy, always a U. S. military officer, a colonel or lieutenant colonel, usually a Marine Corps officer. We became very close friends with him--his name was Barney. He was there during the Suez crisis in 1956.

Those military people in the UNTSO [UN Truce Supervision Office] really had more insight because they were operating on the Syrian front, and on the Egyptian front, too, through Gaza. And then, of course, there were the representatives of the UNRWA [UN Relief and Works Administration]. Henry Labouisse was ahead of UNRWA by that time.

Q: Henry Labouisse was former [U. S.] Ambassador to Greece, a professional Foreign Service Officer.

BIRD: A very fine person. I'd seen him just before I went out [to Jerusalem] at the annual pledge giving session at the UN Security Council in New York. What struck me then, of course, was that the Arabs, who had lots of money--Saudi Arabia and others--were still trying to push the

problem of the Palestinian refugees back on the West as much as possible because they didn't want to take responsibility by giving substantial amounts of money to UNRWA. In reality, they never did [give much support to UNRWA]. At that point [1956] we were giving 28 cents per refugee per year, an incredibly small amount. The same thing is true now with the Palestine funds. They're trying to get together our contribution, which is going to be relatively minor in comparison to what we give to Israel every year.

Q: What was your impression of Jordanian officials and the Jordanian Government at this time? What did we think of their rule over the West Bank?

BIRD: We heard from Palestinians that they didn't like the "little King" [King Hussein]. I knew the widow of a Husseini who had been executed for participation in the plot to assassinate King Abdullah [King Hussein's grandfather]. He was known as "the East German spy." I don't think that he had any relationship with the Communists at all, but, of course, in those days anybody from East Germany was very suspect. He was originally from East Germany. I never knew him, of course. He had been executed three years or so before. She was still there, very much accepted in Arab society, which was surprising. She eventually married a United Nations official but, of course, she had been very much a part of the strained relations between the West Bankers and King Hussein.

When we were there, King Hussein made his first, official visit to the West Bank since his accession to the throne. I remember my little son standing, along with thousands of other kids, on the road from Kalandria Airport, waving a Jordanian flag. The Jordanians had pretty effective control, of course, but the attitudes expressed by the Palestinians were very derisive. Shortly after we got there, the first, free election in Jordan's history was held. It went pretty well but it went pretty much against the king on the West Bank. I remember Sari Nusseibeh, who is now involved in the peace process at the present time. His father, Anwar, was running for the Jordanian Parliament. He received 1,400 votes from the West Bank. But I think that that was partly because he was identified as an Anglican, as a very Anglicized person. He had gone to college in Britain, was a very elegant personality, and later became Minister of Defense under King Hussein. I must say that relationships between the King and West Bankers were not good. I stood for two hours on the pavement waiting for the King to fly his own plane in, which he did. I still have some pictures from that period. All of the correct things were done for the King, but there were lots and lots of comments in the crowd while we were waiting, which we could overhear. They were saying something like, "He isn't my king"--that sort of thing.

Q: What about your relationships with the Israelis in Jerusalem after the United States came down rather heavily and stopped the fighting in 1956? What happened to you?

BIRD: My contact in the Foreign Ministry of Israel and I met almost every other day during this period. We had breakfast or lunch and sometimes met later. We talked a lot. I think that at one point--it was probably one day after the war started--I speculated that the Russians might threaten something in the way of retaliation. After all, it was "their" army that was being defeated. I speculated that perhaps they would threaten to fire their missiles. And sure enough that night, the Russians did threaten to fire missiles. He called me the next morning and said, "You must have had information." Of course, I didn't have any such thing. It was pure

speculation. I think that the Israelis were quite astonished at the extent of the political defeat that they had suffered from this. It took them a good many years to come back from it. It wasn't until 1967, in fact. I think that the "old man," [David] Ben Gurion, probably expected a severe reaction, but all the signals had been strangely absent that we would be terribly displeased.

Q: The British, of course, who were so much closer to us than anybody else, at least at Prime Minister Eden's level, were astounded at what happened.

BIRD: They had come up against a Puritan Secretary of State.

Q: Well, it wasn't so much a Puritan Secretary of State. There was also President Eisenhower, who obviously was calling the shots.

BIRD: That always intrigued me. Why did he do this? I've asked [Ambassador] Dick Parker about this and so on. But if the [U. S.] really intended to come down on the side of Nasser, why didn't we do something to prevent [the British action], because this was the way it was viewed--coming down on the side of Nasser? Of course, I realize that it wasn't viewed by President Eisenhower that way.

Q: It just may be that some people in Washington think in long range terms. Then, all of a sudden we get to the point where somebody [in the White House] essentially says, "No, this is wrong." [We often tend to be] fairly passive until a certain point where we say, "To hell with this!"

BIRD: I think that, in spite of everything, we were probably a little surprised at the Consulate General [in Jerusalem] at the extent of the cooperation between Israel and the Paris-London axis. However, I wonder if we could have prevented that war. This always intrigues me. It seems to me that we could have used our "clout" to have prevented it.

Q: At this time you were sort of a new boy on the block [in Jerusalem]. Did you get any feel of what the views of the Arabists were? I mean our Foreign Service Officers who were specialists in the area.

BIRD: I got to know some of the Arabists because they had come on their annual tour from [the language school] in Beirut. There must have been about 20 of them in training at that time. I was the "control officer" for their visit [to Jerusalem]. I set up their meeting with [Prime Minister] Ben Gurion on the Israeli side and with the Mahafiz on the Jordanian side of the city. We traveled around Israel with them. Really, it was the first opportunity I had had to see a lot of things in Israel, and I accompanied them down to the Embassy [in Tel Aviv], too. I remember only one, remarkable meeting. That was with Prime Minister [David] Ben Gurion. The "guru" or one of the "gurus" of the Arabists was Edwin Wright, who came along with them. It was the first time I had met him--well, maybe I met him back here in Washington. It's possible. He was not a person that I knew well, if I knew him at all in the period before 1956. A number of the really well known State Department Arabists were there. Dick Parker wasn't there--he was already in Amman in the Political Section. But Andrew Killgore was there, as were Bill Crawford and Lucien Kinsolving, among others. I met all of these people for the first time.

We went up to the Knesset [Parliament]--the old building--and we were ushered into a kind of amphitheater, probably the place where the Knesset met at that time. I don't recall that it was all of that large. We were seated in the bottom row of seats. The old man, Ben Gurion, came in, a remarkable looking person--someone that you wouldn't forget. And that's part of the story. He sat there and gave us a description of the 1956 War and where they were. This was perhaps six months after that war. He took questions. Ed Wright finally put up his hand. Ben Gurion recognized him. Ed started to ask a question, but Ben Gurion interrupted him. He said, "I know you. We've met before, haven't we?" Before we went in, Ed Wright said that this was his first opportunity to meet the Prime Minister. Ed was very flustered, but he said, "I don't believe so, Mr. Prime Minister." Ben Gurion replied, "Yes, in fact, it was in the fall of 1943, on the lower level of the old State Department building" (now the West Executive Building) "in one of the corridors there, on the second floor, as I recall." Ben Gurion was very exact. He had obviously been carefully briefed or had an excellent memory, one or the other. Ben Gurion continued: "I led a delegation of people interested in getting Jews out of the [concentration] camps and out of Germany and, perhaps, bombing the camps. I made the representations to you." Ed Wright looked at him for a moment and he said, "Yes, I remember the delegation." He had forgotten that Ben Gurion was a part of that delegation.

We all shook our heads afterwards. It was a simple thing. Any assistant could have looked at the [list of visitors] and seen the name of Ed Wright, known who Ed Wright was, and mentioned it to Ben Gurion. But I still don't know, to this day, whether Ben Gurion was told that Ed Wright was there or whether his memory was really that impressive. He was very impressive. We talked about his retirement--what he wanted to do, to retire to the Negev Desert, to Stabokur. I guess that this meeting with Ben Gurion was one of the most memorable things that happened during this period. I would go to the Knesset from time to time but, of course, I didn't speak Hebrew, so there wasn't a lot of point to sitting there and listening to the flavor of the discussions.

The flavor of the debates hasn't changed. I was there in May, 1993. They still shout at each other in a way I have not seen in any other parliament except in Lebanon. They absolutely are the most aggressive group of people that I have ever seen in a parliamentary situation--maybe a little like the early sessions of the U. S. Senate when they used to have fistfights on the floor of the Senate. [Laughter]

Q: Well, there you were, the new boy on the block, looking at both of these worlds. The Arab world on the West Bank was somewhat artificial, but it was a new nation. Israel [was] on the other side. What were your impressions of these two worlds, at that time?

BIRD: As you recall, I'd had a lot of briefing experience for 18 months before [going to Jerusalem] and I'd read everything I could get my hands on in the early and mid 1950's that had been sent in from all of the posts in Israel. We had a post in Haifa at that time, in addition to Tel Aviv [and Jerusalem]. So my impressions were probably skewed to some extent by the reports which I had read. There were reports like the story told by a friend of mine, who was DCM in Amman, who decided that he should visit Israel. He came down near Tulkarm on the Israeli side of the line. The [Israelis] took him to see an Israeli orchard, [an orange grove on], a Kibbutz [collective farm]. It was a very impressive, beautiful orchard. At one point he put all of this in a

report. I went to visit that orange grove afterward, just because I wanted to see it, after reading this impressive report by Paul Garron. Paul said that the Israeli Foreign Ministry guide said to him, "Have you ever seen such a marvelous orange grove? Did you have any idea that we have things like this?" Garron, who had been in Amman for two or three years and had visited the West bank in his travels, replied--and this was the ultimate "put down"--"Yes, as a matter of fact, I viewed this [orange grove] from the other side of the line. I was shown it by the man who planted these trees."

I think that, in some respects, you get a reputation with each side, and you have to watch the kind of reputation you get with the Israelis, because they have a long memory about such things. Andy Killgore has told me that since he left Jerusalem, he has been reminded [by the Israelis] of things he had said or reports he had sent in and so on and so forth. You get very sensitive to the fact that anything you say may be used against you.

I went from this orange grove up across on the other side to Tulkarm and stayed in and around that city for a couple of nights. It had lost most of its land to the Israelis and was sitting there on a rocky hillside. I talked with some of the people there. Then, on that same trip, I went to Kibbya because there had been a series of reports while I was on the Israel desk back here in Washington on the "Kibbya Incident," which Sharik Aron had inspired.

Q: *Yes, when he was a captain in the Israeli Army, I think.*

BIRD: Yes. I think that it happened in 1953, but it may have been 1952. I don't know.

Q: *Would you explain what it was?*

BIRD: Yes. There had been an incident in those orange groves, in which a couple of Israeli workers, one of them a woman, had been killed. The retaliation policy was in force in Israel. I could tell you about the retaliation policy in great deal, in terms of [how it originated], but I won't. [After the incident] the Israelis sent in a platoon. They decided that the tracks led near to the village of Kibbya. So they went across the line at night and surrounded the entire village. Sharon later said that he had gone to sleep after they captured the village--he'd taken a nap. In fact, that probably isn't at all true. What the Israelis did was to have sappers [Army engineers] wire the houses--they knew that people were inside these old stone houses. You blow one wall down, and the whole thing comes down. They blew up a number of houses, killed 85 people there, and wounded a lot more. Almost all of them were civilians. It was a severe act of retaliation for those two Israelis who died. Things haven't changed very much. They did the same thing--are doing the same thing--in southern Lebanon today.

Q: *Shatila and Sabra [Palestinian refugee camps just South of Beirut]?*

BIRD: The [key factor] is that the policy of retaliation [is still in effect], and Sharon is still a major factor in Israeli politics. He was "out" for three years, until 1956. When the 1956 crisis came along, they "rejuvenated" him--brought him back. He'd been forced out of the Army after the investigation of the Kibbya affair. Somebody had to be blamed. But, in fact, it wasn't Sharon. It was the policy of retaliation.

Q: *"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"?*

BIRD: Well, yes, in many respects. So I used my background to go to places like Nablus and to talk with the Mayor there, Hikman Masri. He introduced me to a real Arab city, the first Arab city I had known, because Jerusalem--even in those days--was not really that Arab. It was a much more sophisticated place. I enjoyed the contact with village life.

I did this on the Israeli side, too. I would visit kibbutzim [plural of kibbutz, or collective farms]. I remember the Jerusalem Corridor [from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem]. A friend of mine has just written a book about that same area. I remember going into the Jerusalem Corridor and being shown by a young man from Hebrew University the real defense works that the kibbutzim had. They had 6" guns. These were big ones, I might say, speaking as a naval gunner, hidden in the orange groves, even back in caves. They were pointing directly at Abu Musa, which was one of the Arab villages across on the other side. They were really prepared as, probably, they should have been, for almost anything. The people were a little bit afraid that an American vice-consul really shouldn't be in such a situation, because it revealed too many Israeli military secrets.

One of the things that I did because of my relationship with some of our military people out there--and I was still a reserve officer in Navy intelligence at that time--was talk a lot with them about their contacts with the Israeli military. I remember reporting some of this--how difficult their relations were and how they couldn't find out anything from the Israeli military. While I was there, our military were still in shock from the fact that the American Ambassador's office had been "bugged" with the wooden eagle, a big, carved American eagle. They [the Embassy general services officer] had taken it down and sent it out for touching up. When it came back after five or six months, they discovered that all of the Ambassador's conversations could be heard on a certain frequency outside. The [Israelis] had installed a sound-powered transmitter inside the eagle. This became one of the famous stories back [in Washington] when new employees were briefed on how careful they should be and on the security needs of the Embassy in Course 101 [at the Foreign Service Institute].

I remember my Consul General at that time being very, very concerned about security on both sides of the line. Every couple of weeks we carried the diplomatic pouch from Amman to Tel Aviv, across the line. Somebody would bring it [to Jerusalem] from Amman and then we would carry it up to Tel Aviv. [I remember] how careful we had to be. We usually had two people accompany us just so that one side or the other, the Jordanians or the Israelis, wouldn't try to set up an "accident" and seize the pouch. Not that there was a lot in it, but I think that, in any case, you learn these security concerns as the result of being in a potentially "Berlin type" situation--a divided city where you'd say good night to someone on one side, perhaps an Israeli. And they would send "greetings" to Mohammed on the other side. The situation was very, very weird. It was something you don't forget very easily.

Q: *Of these two worlds, were you making any professional judgment about what you wanted to do about them?*

BIRD: I think that I went out there with the reputation of being very, very pro-Israeli, or at least "tilted" in that direction. As one of my Israeli friends said to me, after I'd lived on the Israeli side for a while and then moved to the other side, because that's where my office was, "You know, we cannot seem to keep people satisfied with Israeli society, once they see it." He said, "I don't know why it is. We've got to do a better job out there." I think that, overall, I ended up by the end of two years with a desire to stand back and try to remind both sides how necessary it was for them to make some sort of peace there and share that land.

We could see that the U. S. had suffered a good deal from the 1956 War. It had threatened our relations [with Britain, France, and Israel]. It had happened when the Hungarian Revolution was going on. Some people say that we didn't take the kind of action we could have taken because of [the 1956 War in the Middle East]. The Middle East is a conundrum for almost all of our policymakers. I can see the same pattern developing now. The alarm bells ring, and the Secretary is expected to rush out there. By the time I left Jerusalem I sometimes felt that the most important thing was, perhaps, to stand back and remind [both sides] of their responsibilities to themselves. I didn't become "pro-Arab." I just became a lot less "pro-Israeli."

Q: How did you find just accompanying this group of [Foreign Service Officers] studying Arabic? Particularly when they were going around Israel, what kind of comments did they make and what were their reactions?

BIRD: I came away from that experience of spending a week with those officers, who were not that much older than I but were more experienced and were specialists in Arabic, with the feeling that I had never heard so many derisive comments about the Arab society that they were supposed to report on. The officers were all male, of course [at that time]. Their remarks tended to be derisive of Arab society and not of Israeli society alone, by any means, though there was that, too. Certainly, they couldn't be viewed as so committed to promoting Arab policies, countries, and culture that they couldn't see the U. S. interests involved. I know that that isn't the common view [of U. S. Arabists], but they reflected an opinion contrary to the view that those who have become intrigued with Arab culture are its defenders. I go back to my [Israeli] friend's comment that all of the United Nations people, after first living in Israel, move across the line and feel more comfortable when they live in an Arab culture. Frankly, I think that it's partly that they had much better housing and living conditions. Also, it is somewhat overwhelming to try and live in a society of people that consider themselves somewhat exclusive and definitely "chosen" in the sense of religion [as do the Jews].

We enjoyed the contrast between the two societies. You know, over the years we've gone back many times to Jerusalem. The feeling I have is that the division is still there. It's just as if the Mandelbaum Gate had never been taken down. Socially, there is almost no real, relaxed contact between the two sides. I think that attempts by the Consulate General since 1967 to bring both parties together have largely failed. There have been "peace parties" on both sides. We managed to [establish contact] with Hanan Ashrawi and Naomi Chosan, one of the Israeli women members of the Knesset. They were once very close to each other. However, when I was talking with Naomi Chosan about this [relationship] not too long ago, she said, "You know, I haven't seen my friend Hanan for a long time now." So the relationship [between Arabs and Jews] is still very, very distant, even among people like that.

HARRIET CURRY
Secretary to the Ambassador
Tel Aviv (1956-1958)

Ms. Curry was born in Annapolis, Maryland, daughter of a Marine Corp family. She was raised at military posts throughout the United States. She was educated at The George Washington University, after which she worked with a number of non-governmental organizations. After joining the State Department she served as Secretary and Assistant to United States Ambassadors in Brazil, Senegal, Israel, Jamaica, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Syria and Pakistan. She also had several assignments in Washington.

CURRY: I enjoyed the post, and it was one way to get overseas, which is what I wanted. My first post was Tel Aviv.

Q: Where?

CURRY: Tel Aviv, at a very interesting time.

Q: You were in Tel Aviv from when to when?

CURRY: 1956 to 1958. I was wrong about the dates that I got started looking for a job in the Foreign Service. I said 1952, but from 1951 to 1956, I worked for the World Bank. I worked for the World Bank for five years. I enjoyed Tel Aviv except during the fall, when the Israelis went into Egypt.

Q: This is the Suez crisis?

CURRY: The first one, yes. The first time the Israelis went into Egypt. When I later visited friends in Cairo, they referred to it as the "Israeli incursion". The Israelis were talking about it as the "Israeli campaign". During that time, for about seven months, everybody in the AID program except a few officers and me were evacuated. I thought of transferring directly from there, in Tel Aviv, to the embassy, to see if I could work for the State Department, but it wasn't possible. But, it put the bug in my ear. After I left, after two years in Tel Aviv, again I saw that same personnel officer. A transfer was arranged, eventually, after nine months in Washington, in the Department.

Q: Well, let's talk a little about Tel Aviv. While you were there, you must have gotten involved, through acquaintances and all, in the state, with the Israelis essentially under siege, and all that?

CURRY: Yes. It was a very interesting place to be. I had some Israeli friends, but mostly embassy friends, particularly during the seven months, when the AID operation was suspended. I went to fascinating places, historically, such as Nazareth. We couldn't get to Jerusalem often, but

you could go there, with permission. I picked up old coins that were on the beach surface. I learned a little bit more about the Bible being real.

JOSEPH WALTER NEUBERT
Political Officer
Tel Aviv (1956-1958)

Mr. Neubert was born in Montana. He attended Yale University and served in the US Army in World War II. Entering the Foreign Service in 1947, Mr. Neubert served as Political and Economic Officer in Yugoslavia and Tunisia. Following Russian language studies at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, Mr. Neubert was posted to Moscow, Soviet Union, where he served as Political and General Services Officer. From Moscow he was assigned to Tel Aviv as Political Officer, where he served during the 1957 Arab-Israeli War. This Oral History is a self interview, done in 2007.

NEUBERT: After departure from Moscow and some months of further Russian language training in Germany, I ended up in June 1956 in Tel Aviv as a member of the political section. Why the Russian language training seemed useful was never terribly clear. Everyone in Israel (or almost everyone) spoke English. Besides, the native language of the East European Israelis (like Ben-Gurion) was usually Polish. Oh, well.

It was clear that relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors were tense. There were constant alarms and border raids. I remember one night in early October, I awakened to shuddering windowpanes. I said to my wife, "That sounds exactly like outgoing 105 howitzer shells (I was in the armored artillery (105) during the war). And so it was. The Israelis had, that evening, taken out a Jordanian border point some eight kilometers (5 miles) east of us. Since we were on the seashore, one can see how constricted Israeli territory was.

From there on things got more tense. And on October 29, we heard on Kol Israel (the voice of Israel) an announcement that Israeli paratroopers had dropped into the Sinai desert to seize the passes leading to the Suez Canal.

There is no reason why I should repeat the history of the war. As far as the Americans at the Embassy were concerned, our life was directed by the Department of State--or perhaps just John Foster Dulles -- who immediately took charge.

Anyway, we were told to evacuate all "non-essential" Americans. I put myself first in line, but to no avail. The way it worked out, all dependents were ordered out, as well as all AID personnel. And many Embassy personnel -- but not me.

First of all, I was told to accompany the Embassy dependents (including my wife) to Haifa and see them off on a Greek ship to Piraeus. Then I was told to supervise the departure of all other American citizens from Haifa. Well. There were a lot of them. And we were supposed to load

them on destroyers the U.S. Navy would bring in to Haifa.

So the next day we documented many American tourists and waited for the ships. We were, of course, down on the docks and, once in a while, the air raid alarms would go off, and we all awaited apprehensively the arrival of the vaunted Egyptian Air Force. Happily, it never arrived.

About four P.M. the first (and last) American destroyer showed up over the horizon, zigzagging at flank speed. He sped in and tied up. We quickly loaded him with hundreds of tourists bound for Cyprus, whether they knew it or not.

I was having coffee with the captain when an argument arose on the deck. It seemed that a dozen or so conservative Orthodox Jews had discovered there was no kosher kitchen on board. They insisted on remaining in Israel. So they did.

After this I asked the captain what his plans were (his anti-aircraft guns were fully manned and weaving about). He said he had no confidence in anyone's submarines and that when he left, it would be zigzag at flank speed.

And so it was. He must have been doing 25 knots when he left the breakwater -- at dusk -- and he rapidly vanished. I pitied his passengers.

No more American ships came. But that wasn't the end of the evening. Shortly thereafter, the word was spread that an Egyptian destroyer was approaching Haifa. Those of us sitting on hillside terraces leaned back to enjoy the fun and our drinks. Fun soon came. First a half dozen motor torpedo or motor gun boats (Israeli) cranked up and vanished in frothing wakes. Then, a half-dozen vintage British-made Meteor jets went out at Wave-top height. Then -- believe this -- a French destroyer anchored in the harbor, with lights on and flag flying, opened fire to seaward. He obviously outranged the Egyptian by miles -- whether he hit the Egyptian is another question. Anyway, the Egyptian (a former light British destroyer) gave up and was towed into harbor -- and presumably is still a (minor) part of the Israeli navy.

With the usual Israeli victory in such wars, the problem retreated to the political level. In this particular case (French and British involvement in the Canal bit aside) what was involved was trying to persuade the Israelis to get out of the Sinai and the Gaza Strip. So the Ambassador was told by John Foster Dulles to go up to Jerusalem to talk to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Golda Meir on this subject. As it turned out, I was his note-taker. So we traveled a good deal. In, incidentally, an antique Cadillac, that could barely make the trip. And, shades of modern terrorism, the chauffeur had a Tommy-gun on the seat beside him. Since the chauffeur was also responsible for maintaining the Cadillac, I had little confidence in the "shootability" of the Thompson gun.

Meetings with Ben-Gurion and Meir were a delight. They were both wonderful people. They never said anything that didn't make sense -- more sense, in my view, than Dulles had to offer. Basically, they took the position that they had to have Egyptian guarantees of the existence of Israel before they gave up the Sinai and (secondarily) the Gaza Strip. A view with which I (personally) fully agreed. Whether when Israel agreed to leave without overt guarantees there

had been any private assurances from Dulles, I do not know. Certainly not through the Embassy in Tel Aviv.

As I have observed earlier, languages are not easy for me. Ben-Gurion used to kid me about this. He would ask me how much Hebrew I had learned since we last met. I would say “none” or, perhaps, “shalom.” He would then throw up his arms and say, “If I can learn Greek at age 70 to read the classics in the original, you can learn Hebrew at age 34.” I usually replied that, since all his 16 ministers spoke English, it wasn’t necessary to speak Hebrew. (Actually, all his ministers were born, as he was, in Eastern Europe.)

Once, when Ben-Gurion and I were alone in his office-incidentally, a fascinating place -- I asked him if he was “religious,” particularly since he had been contributing to a “national” press debate about the eternal question of “what is a Jew?”

I said I really didn’t understand the question or the answers. Nor his answer. Nothing loath, I asked him if he was “religious.” He meditated a moment or two and then said, “I cannot be. I am a Marxist. Not, you understand, a Communist. But a socialist, a Marxist. I cannot believe in God.” I said I could understand that since I too did not believe in God. But why, then, did he talk so much about the nature of the Jew and why did he accept the political support of the conservative Jewish parties. He grinned and said the latter was a domestic political question -- he needed them -- and the former was an international question -- he needed money from international -- and, particularly, American Jewry if Israel were to survive.

I then asked him when he had last been in a synagogue. He said, “Oh, a week or so ago.” I said, “For religious reasons?” He shook his head. “For political reasons, of course.” I pursued the question, “Have you in recent years been in a synagogue for religious reasons?” He again shook his head. “Never.”

Ben-Gurion’s views on religion were surprising to me only in that he expressed them so bluntly. The Israeli newspapermen I knew in Tel Aviv agreed on practically nothing except the lack of religious belief amongst the Israeli Jewish population. They commonly asserted that at least 85% of Jews in Israel were non-believers. This, of course, vastly complicated the eternally debated question of “What is a Jew?”

In the summer of 1957, Senator Hubert Humphrey visited Israel. I was his escort officer from the Embassy. We wandered all over this rather small country -- from Galilee to the Sinai. Finally, we flew, in an Israeli Air Force C-47 to Eilat, on the Gulf of Tiran (or Eilat), then the southern most point in Israel. We visited the mines of Solomon and generally disported ourselves like tourists. Then we headed back to Tel Aviv. We flew low over the desert while experts told us how the ancient inhabitants had lived on irrigated terraces (still visible). Then, abruptly, the weather changed and we encountered a sandstorm. The aircraft was thrown about violently. Dwayne Andreas, a friend of the Senator’s and I were sitting opposite him in aluminum bucket seats when a sudden jolt threw us up and down. Our seat became unhooked and Andreas and I were “stabbed” by the seat hooks. Andreas was more severely hurt -- in the back. I had just been hooked in the right buttock. But, whatever, there was a lot of blood all over and, of course, medical care when we got back to Lod airport. I still vividly remember that Humphrey gave us a

party to remember when we collected, walking wounded and all, in his hotel room at the Dan. A wonderful man.

ALFRED H. MOSES
Lawyer, Covington & Burling
Washington, DC (1956-1980)

Ambassador Moses was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He was educated at Dartmouth College, Princeton University and the Georgetown University Law School. After service in the US Navy, Mr. Moses joined the Washington, D.C. Law firm Covington and Burling, where he dealt with matters concerning Middle East and Romanian Affairs. Prior to being named Ambassador to Romania in 1994, Mr. Moses served as Special Counsel to President Carter. He subsequently became Special Presidential Envoy for the Cyprus Conflict. Ambassador Moses was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: I was wondering, going up to the 60's and 50's, what about Jewish issues, and this would move into Israel and all that?

MOSES: Well, the springboard for everything I have done in the international field was my organizational affiliation in the Jewish community. I was chair of the Washington chapter of the American Jewish Committee in the late 60's. I was in my 30's. The national president was Arthur Goldberg. I used that as a springboard to become increasingly involved in Middle East affairs, Israel-related issues, and refugee issues. That is what got me to Romania. That is how I became ambassador to Romania two decades later. I also chaired the committee on behalf of the organized Jewish community that negotiated with the Business Roundtable on the law passed by the Congress making it illegal for Americans to participate in the boycott of Israel. I testified in the House and Senate. As I said, I chaired the negotiating committee on behalf of the organized Jewish community. There were three of us: Max Kampelman who later was Counselor at the Department of State, and Paul Berger, a Washington lawyer. Max was our leader.

Q: Well during this time as you were involved with Jewish organizations, did you see a change or a split or something between, you know at one point I think almost everybody in the United States thought Israel was great and all this, and the Palestinians were sort of a peripheral group and all. It took quite awhile before all of a sudden the realization came that there was something else. They were also people with aspirations.

MOSES: It is more complicated than that if you will permit me. Early on, Israel was not held in high regard in this country. The government was thought to be socialist, and it was. The country was thought to be largely non-religious, and it was, and its mere existence was considered by the foreign policy establishment to be contrary to our interests. Truman's decision to recognize Israel, which historians can argue about, I would like to think was taken for humanitarian reasons, not political reasons. Goodness knows, at one time or another he stuck his thumb in the

eyes of everybody in this country including organized labor. He went to the Hill to draft the railroad workers into the army. He took on John L. Lewis; he took on virtually everyone. He was a feisty guy. He made the decision largely because six million Jews had been killed in the Holocaust, and he believed Jews deserved a country of their own. As you know, once he made a decision there was no looking back. The relationship between Israel and the Truman Administration in the ensuing four years was not close. Truman recognized Israel's independence, de facto in '48; he was in office until January of '53. During that period the prime minister of Israel never visited the White House. This coolness continued under Eisenhower, particularly with the Suez War. The British and French, together with Israel, clobbered Egypt. Eisenhower ordered the Israelis to pull out of the Sinai in February of '56. The issue in those days was not the Palestinians; it was more the Arab world, our friendship with the Saudis and others. People in Washington had a real chip on their shoulder regarding Israel. The State Department crowd was very frosty towards Israel. I remember former Assistant Secretary of State Lucius Battle telling me in '82 when Israel invaded Lebanon, "Tell your soldiers to get out of there." "OK, Luke, what do I tell, the Marines, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy?" He said, "No, you tell your Israeli soldiers." I said, "Luke, you are confused. I am American." I think he was anti-Semitic.

Q: What about the Carter administration came in from the election of '76 but came in in '77. Did that engage you?

MOSES: Yes. I chaired the negotiations with the Business Roundtable on the anti-Arab Boycott legislation on behalf of a broad coalition of Jewish organizations and was at the White House frequently garnering support for the agreement we struck with the Business Roundtable. Commerce and State were opposed; they were still operating under the Ford Administration's script.

Q: This is on what issue now?

MOSES: The legislation countering the Arab Boycott of Israel, the secondary and tertiary boycotts that applied to any company that did business with Israel or that did business with a company that did business with Israel. An office of the Arab League sent questionnaires to companies doing business primarily in Saudi Arabia. The legislation made it illegal for an American company to respond to that questionnaire.

Q: Well this was done by the Arab league.

MOSES: Correct.

Q: I remember I was amused. This goes quite a ways back. I was in Dhahran as a vice counsel and found out that IBM had a, this is the days of card sorting, not computers, and had a card sorting outfit, a small one in Israel. So they were going to boycott IBM. The Egyptians said, "Wait a minute. Our entire military mobilization scheme is based on the IBM cards. We can't do this." Did it seem to be an effective boycott or not?

MOSES: It is hard to say. It certainly discouraged doing business with Israel and investing in

Israel, even doing business with companies that did business in Israel, depending on the company's clout. They didn't want to take on an IBM, but smaller businesses, sure. I testified at the Congressional hearings in the House and Senate. So did a spokesman for Dresser Industries who said, "We don't comply with the boycott, but we think it is bad legislation because the Saudis will react negatively, and hurt U.S. businesses." "All business-related legislation," Senator Sarbanes replied, "has some impact on business, starting with the Social Security Act. Moreover, if you are not complying with the boycott, what difference does it make to Dresser?" Dresser's spokesman did not answer. Not all businesses were opposed. General Mills supported the legislation solely as a matter of principle; they thought the boycott was wrong. I immediately went out and bought General Mills stock.

Q: What was your impression of the whole Camp David negotiations?

MOSES: It was a bit surreal. For 13 days Sadat and Begin did not talk to each other except the first day and the last. Carter did the shuttling. Saunders did most of the drafting. He came out with a marvelous document. I later met with Sadat in 1980 in his home in Mit Abul Kom in the Nile delta. His only regret was that, in his words, Begin did not have the courage to go on with the Palestinian part of the Accords. The Camp David Accords had two parts. One, Egyptian-Israeli, the other Palestinian-Israeli, that called for Palestinian autonomy. Begin signed the document that recognized "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." He went quite far. It did not call for an independent Palestinian state as our policy is today, but it was the first recognition by Israel of the political right of the Palestinians to govern themselves. Sadat was the most impressive public figure I ever met. He was a true visionary and a strategic thinker. It was he, not Kissinger, who orchestrated the disengagement agreements in the Sinai preceding his visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. Two weeks after Sadat was assassinated, I visited Cairo to meet with Hosni Mubarak, Sadat's successor. Mubarak reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to carry out the terms of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, which was important in itself, but in other respects he seemed wooden, lacking Sadat's forcefulness and charisma. From Cairo I went to Jerusalem to meet with Prime Minister Begin who talked at length about Sadat's funeral. The funeral was on a Saturday and, in order to observe the Sabbath, Begin arrived Friday afternoon. He stayed in what he termed "Egyptian army barracks." Lowering his eyes and wrinkling his nose, he said they were "filthy." He then proceeded to recount his walking in the funeral procession and having Sadat's son came up, kiss him on both cheeks and tell him, "I consider you my father." A week or two later I was talking with President Carter who also attended the funeral. He told me what moved him most was when Sadat's son came up to him, kissed him on both cheeks and told him, "I consider you my father." How many fathers can one person have?

Q: Of course at that time we still had sort of the Palestinians with Arafat. They were very difficult.

MOSES: Indeed they were. Arafat had been kicked out of Jordan. He went to Lebanon where he remained until '82, when the U.S. took him by ship to Tunisia. The issue then as now is whether the Israelis should have stayed in the territories occupied in the Six Day War. Following the war, there was a major debate within the Israeli government. Some wanted to withdraw immediately in return for an end to the conflict. But Arafat and the Arab World could not accept the humiliating defeat of the '67 War. A few months later, in Khartoum, they came up with the three

“No’s” -- No negotiation, No peace, No recognition. That killed it until today. Had the Arabs been willing to negotiate and recognize Israel, the Israelis would have withdrawn in ’67.

Q: Unfortunately that whole very sad situation is full of lost opportunities.

MOSES: Lost opportunities, but the Israelis were responsible too, including Sharon. He pushed the settlements. He was the major architect of the settlement policy. The Labor government was much more circumspect. Initially, Labor called for settlements along the Jordan River and in the Jordan Valley, but not elsewhere. Sharon supported the illegal settlements that in time became legal. I think his disengagement plan today for Gaza is the wrong approach. What he should do is dismantle the illegal settlements on the West Bank. Forget about Gaza until there is formal agreement. Israel needs to be a country of law and order. The settlers in Gaza are there legally. The government put them there.

Q: Well, did you in again dealing with the Jewish community, with the Israelis particularly Begin and company help at all or had Camp David sort of been there, done that.

MOSES: No, again it was much more complex.

MOSES: The Israeli ambassador to the United States was Ephraim Evron. He was very clever. He had established a good relationship with Lyndon Johnson years before when he was serving in the Israeli embassy. Eppie worked well with the Carter administration, particularly with Vice President Mondale and Bob Strauss. Truth be known, he brought Shimon Peres, then leader of the opposition, to the White House to meet with Carter. Begin was upset. Eppie was close to the Labor Party, not officially, but in terms of his private preference. A few weeks later I flew with Begin and Eppie to New York. I understand Hebrew. Begin accused Eppie of bringing Peres to meet Carter. Eppie denied it, claiming he had nothing to do with the visit. It was all done on the initiative of the White House, he said. I got a lesson on how people deal with heads of government. He was very nimble politically. In the last two days of the campaign, Ezer Weisman who had been Minister of Defense in the first Begin Government and a hero of the Six Days War came to the United States and campaigned for Carter. It didn’t do Carter any good. The political right in Israel was strongly pro-Reagan. So, too, were some Jewish intellectuals in this country such as Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary*, who had previously been a staunch Democrat. Others, Jewish and non-Jewish *Commentary* contributors, included Jeane Kirkpatrick, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Irving Kristol and lots more. The Democrats in Congress were not very enthusiastic about Carter. They saw him as a political liability, not an asset. They were proven right.

Q: You know looking back on it, the real problem was Carter, not the other thing. He did not present a strong government. He was in the right thing in a lot of things but...

MOSES: As President, he was not as effective as he should have been. I tried to change things, to give him a sense of how to project himself politically, exuding confidence and power. He lost this after our embassy staff in Teheran was seized. I spoke with him about core Democratic Party issues, but at heart he was a populist. He attacked lawyers, accountants, professional people generally, exalting the mythical, primordial man, right out of Rousseau. The American public did

not want to listen; he was too preachy, too glum. In fact, he was a much better president than George W. Bush, but Bush went around the country in 2004 walking and talking as though he were running the world and on top of everything. The American public re-elected him, even though he doesn't have half the candle power that Carter had. Jimmy Carter went around in a mental slouch. He had given his malaise speech in July of '79.

VICTOR SKILES
Deputy Mission Director, USAID
Tel Aviv (1958-1959)

Victor Skiles was born and raised in Idaho. He graduated from the University of Idaho in 1940. After graduation, his favorite professor helped him obtain a fellowship with the National Institute of Public Affairs. In 1942, he entered the Navy and was stationed in Berlin. His assignment to the military government operation was that of assistant to the head of the Food Distribution. He has also served in Germany, Israel, Afghanistan and Italy. He was interviewed by John Kean on December 4, 1998.

Q: Here we are again on Monday, the 11th of December, with Vic Skiles for his third session. So Vic, tell us where you went next after you finished your stint at GTI.

SKILES: I went to Israel, for a number of somewhat peculiar reasons, and it turned out to be a most interesting experience. First let me recount just a little bit the progression of our approaches to these various countries. Both Israel and the GTI configuration had, in a sense, forced us to take a much greater look at the total country situation than had been the case in some of the more strictly Point Four kind of operations. As we will see, this was a pattern which expanded and continued over the years, with considerable refinements, but in my view, not with tremendous changes in the way we approach the problems.

Q: So this was in 1957 that you went to Israel?

SKILES: Yes, that would have been 1957, mid to late '57, I guess. No, I'm sorry, it was early 1958. February.

Q: So the mission had been reopened after the Suez crisis for how long?

SKILES: Well, probably about six months. The real trouble spots were a bit earlier.

Q: But the Suez war in November '56 was what closed the mission down, and it reopened sometime in '57, did it? And you went in at the beginning of '58?

SKILES: That's about it, yes. The military situation in that whole area had changed dramatically during that period, if you recall, but by the time I got out to the mission, things seemed to be fairly well settled down, and in fact there was a space of several years after the dust settled from

the '56-57 fracas until military activities really heated up again in the area. But they were never to be ignored, partly because during that period, considerably more help was coming in from the outside, primarily from the Soviets. The Egyptian political scene changed not once, but consistently. Jordan was regarded as being in a bit of a pickle, but it also had gotten somewhat into the arms buildup race, as had Syria, and Israel felt beleaguered. The U.S., because of the activities in '56 and '57, came to be regarded as much more closely affiliated with Israel than we had been prior to that time, although the immediate effect of the Suez experience was just the opposite.

John, I think you are right - for this discussion to make much sense I had better change my mind and get it into the context of the political-military situation. From the Israeli standpoint the Suez issue was part of a long-term problem in which they regarded Nasser (Egypt) as really bent on a larger campaign of a Greater Arab hegemony with one of the main rallying points being the destruction of Israel - pushing the Jews into the sea. Egypt was engaged in a fairly extensive military build-up with Soviet help and a growing Soviet presence. Nasser's biggest economic project probably was the building of the Aswan High Dam, for which there had been considerable hope of Western financing, but when the U.S. decided against going ahead with this project, Britain and France also withdrew and without those three, the IBRD (World Bank) was in no position to proceed. It was with this background that Nasser announced his intention to nationalize the Suez canal. Nasser's declaration in mid-56 was one of the milestones for Israel, but it also was accompanied by armed intervention in the form of raids from the Gaza strip, which was controlled by Egypt as a result of the armistice in 1949, and the blockade of the Straits of Tiran, and therefore the Gulf of Aqaba (Elat to Israel). This was Israel's water route to the East, through the Red Sea, including Iran from which they got most of their oil. Closure to them of the Gulf and the Suez meant no shipping access basically, except for the Port of Haifa on the Mediterranean. It eventually became public knowledge that there was a degree of collusion between Israel and France and the U.K. over Suez and despite cautionary advice from the U.S. and many others, Israel was the first to move with large-scale military operations at the end of October, let's say November 1956, and they quickly moved to the east bank of the Nile, took Gaza and large chunks of the Negev. The French and British went into Suez a few days later.

Settlement of the Suez crisis, or at least the withdrawal of Israeli troops, was largely on the basis of U.S. and French proposals and maneuvering at the United Nations which resulted in two features which Israel thought to be essential, though neither in their view went far enough in the sense of guarantees that they could be carried to full fruition. One was the end of the blockade, the right of free riparian passage, and recognition of Israel's right to defend such rights of passage. The other was in effect to deny Egypt the right to armed representation in the Gaza strip. U.N. forces were introduced to keep the peace and in effect internationalize both Gaza and the area next to the Straits. Israel had requested and the U.S. responded, symbolizing the first point by a ship of U.S. flag and a cargo of oil past Tiran, through the Gulf to the Israel port of Elat in late April of 1957. This then was the situation in 1957 and it turned out that there were no more raids from Gaza and no more blockades for ten years.

While the U.S. had been, in a sense, a great thorn in the Israel side at the time of the Suez crisis and war, the aftermath of the settlement brought about a considerable change in relationships including stepped up economic assistance and eventually a military relationship.

It is in this sense that I say the military situation in Israel seemed to be reasonably quiet. However, in 1957 things were stirring in Syria, our diplomats were expelled, the U.S. sent arms aid to Lebanon and Jordan and encouraged Turkey to station troops on its Southern border. In early 1958 the United Arab Republic was formed by a merger of Syria and Egypt, and in mid-58 the U.S. Marines landed in Lebanon and the U.K. airlifted a force to Jordan. The calming influence of the U.K. in Iraq was pretty well ended with the overthrow of the king and, in effect, military control of the country. So it would be misleading to say the area was quiet or that Israel had lost its feeling of being beleaguered.

I suppose all this is to say that while we were not so much directly involved in the military or semi-military activities at that time, those never could be ignored either. They had a considerable influence on Israel's needs, and on the economic programs. When a country starts putting more and more resources, whether in terms of local budget, foreign exchange, whatever, into military buildup and military maintenance, then that leaves considerably less for economic development activities. Another point to remember or to take into account in the case of Israel is that, while we had comparatively large money programs going, considerable amounts of aid compared with that going to most countries, the official assistance in fact was somewhat smaller than the private assistance and the informal aid flows into the country. At about the time I arrived the United Jewish Appeal was holding a meeting in Jerusalem, and one of the figures they used was that they had marshaled over \$1 billion by that time in assistance to Israel. Dwarfed in more recent days, at that time a billion dollars was a lot of money. Granted UJA was a major player, but it was not the only one. On the official side, in addition to the AID programs, Israel had obtained an EX-IM bank loan, and was one of the earlier customers for the development loan fund. IMF and IBRD had an interest in the place. And so it goes.

I think this might be a good place to pick up on the "invitation" in the guidance on these sessions, to deal somewhat with the "people impressions" and government relations. It's partly because, in some respects, they were so good in Israel, at least in terms of the local personnel that we worked with. This doesn't mean that relationships were always good; they weren't. There were some points of contention. But as far as I personally was concerned, I certainly was impressed with the Israelis who worked jointly with us on planning and on program problems, and with the level of interest in the government, no doubt prompted in some measure by a strong desire not to let the flow of assistance be interfered with, as it had at the time of Suez, to emphasize its importance to the country, and the importance of this kind of an association with the United States. If you recall, they had had stronger direct ties with France during the earlier period, and to some extent on the financial side with Germany, because of Germany's desire to cooperate in some form of restitution arrangements with Israel, for the damage done to the Jewish people during the war.

But I think it's fair to say that Israel always had desired, sought and looked forward to closer relationships with the United States. Evidence of this attitude is that in our weekly meeting with the Israeli government officials, these often involved the presence, for example, of the Minister of Finance, Levy Eshkol, who later became prime minister. He liked to attend, let's say, on a biweekly basis almost, the consolidated meetings with the representatives of the AID group. And when he wasn't there, the deputy minister was normally the primary contact on planning and the

economic side. The same close relationship existed with Pinhas Sapir who succeeded Eshkol as Minister of Finance - and he was a power in the political structure. Alternate meetings were held on these subjects and on technical assistance. Technical assistance coordination had been retained in the office of the Prime Minister, where our old friend Teddy Kollek was the Director General / Chef de Cabinet. He chose not to attend those meetings for reasons that I would like not to get into, but he had very able representatives who were on a constant coordination basis with us. Mr. Kollek and I had rather warm relations outside the context of those meetings. I called on him in his Jerusalem office fairly frequently and every once in a while these sessions would be interrupted by a burst through the door of the man who occupied the suite just next door - adjoining offices with a doorway between them - and the intruder was the Prime Minister, Ben Gurion. He lived up to his international reputation, in terms of his looks, his fiery demeanor, and his approach to problems, which usually had nothing to do with me or us, in the sense of the Mission, or with the purposes of my visit to Teddy Kollek. This didn't bother the Prime Minister at all. When he came in it was to talk about things he wanted to talk about, and he didn't seem to care that someone else was there, who shouldn't be privy to such conversations. It was all very informal - coatless, tie-less (open-throat shirts), nobody stood in deference to the office. (Actually, I did stand on the first occasion - and was quickly corrected).

Q: Tell us, if you would, about your position and role in the mission, and the things that primarily concerned you in your official capacity.

SKILES: I was the Deputy Director of the mission. The Director left on home leave shortly after I arrived, and I was in charge of the mission off and on during much of my stay. I'd meant to refer earlier to the rather unusual circumstances physically. The mission and the embassy were not in the same building, but they were fairly nearby, and they had the advantage of both being in Tel Aviv. The government, on the other hand, was spread between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but concentrated in Jerusalem. In effect, the government was in Jerusalem, and they had offices in Tel Aviv to accommodate relationships with the representatives of other countries, nearly all of whom followed the United Nations recognition pattern, did not recognize that the government was entitled to have its capital in Jerusalem, and therefore kept most embassy and other foreign contact work in Tel Aviv, with a lot of informal exceptions. In the case of AID, we traded off. We'd go to Jerusalem, almost on the basis of alternate meetings there and in Tel Aviv.

Q: That's about a 30-40 minute drive?

SKILES: About an hour. Milewise it wasn't all that great, but the roads, though much improved compared to the earlier periods when I had been there, were still not avenues of rapid transit, or shouldn't be. Occasionally we drove fairly swiftly between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but it was not a wise thing to do. The road at that time was narrow, with a great many twists and turns to it. Some of the earmarks of the 1948 war still existed, and this was really not by inattention, but by a recognition that people who drove between the two places would do well to abstain from forgetting the kinds of problems that existed during the war for independence.

Q: In the form of what?

SKILES: Demolished tanks, wrecked trucks and vehicles. While several years had passed, these

were poignant reminders of the great, if limited, battles that took place during 1948 as the Israelis strove to keep supplies going into Jerusalem and to maintain a substantial foothold in Jerusalem.

I spent more of my time on the planning and negotiating side of things than on technical assistance, which was relatively small, pointed toward institution building, but not with the same kind of cooperative organization that we found essential in some other places. It was more a matter of the American technicians fitting into the Israeli framework, than it was trying to develop mutually supported institutions to provide that framework. Incidentally, Israel, I think largely under the influence of Mr. Kollek, but certainly not he alone, had started a technical assistance program of its own in some of the developing countries. Israel certainly felt isolated in the family of nations at that point, and wanted to use some of its people resources to establish contact, encourage mutual working relationships, be helpful, gain recognition and maintain relationships with many of the members of the developing world. They did have a lot of technical assistance work going on, stretching from Burma to West Africa. Their program was much more individualized than ours. The central office consisted of only a few people and if they wanted someone from the Ministry of Agriculture to go to Ghana, for example, they simply worked out with the Ministry of Agriculture a definition of the kind of people, then selected the individual and told the Ministry to send him. When he got to Ghana, he didn't find a mission backstopping structure. His job was to work for a local Ministry or a local private enterprise, or whatever the plan had developed in terms of the definition of the need for technical assistance.

That was a bit of a digression, but I think a significant one, not only in terms of our relationships with the local governments, but of what the Israelis were trying to do.

The other basic element of our program is what brought us in constant contact with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Bank Leumi, which served a central role, not only in finance, but in developing national economic plans and providing the national accounts.

Q: Were you in the mission directly involved in the problem of resettlement?

SKILES: Yes and no. Certainly yes in terms of financing, not much in terms of actually working on it. The political problem connected with settlement and housing arose somewhat later, and involved the question of settlement in areas which were not part of the original Israel.

Q: Not building housing or infrastructure?

SKILES: I was going to use this as an illustration. We put quite a bit of money into, for example, construction of prefabricated houses, and the attendant costs of settlement into them, but we didn't have American housing people working in that program.

Q: Was there a housing investment guarantee program?

SKILES: Not at that time, no. But we employed both some of the dollar import funds, and in particular, a considerable amount of the local currency equivalent of the import program and the PL 480 program in things like housing, transportation, irrigation and agricultural development,

and roads. A lot of money went into roads. And railroads.

Q: So, in effect we were a major source, both of foreign exchange and local currency, to expand the infrastructure of the economy.

SKILES: That's a good way of putting it. And to a large extent, that's what the special program was about at that time. You recall earlier reference to the situation where the U.S. was heavily responsible for the creation of the fund, the United Nations Fund, to assist with the interim relief, and hopefully the settlement of Palestinian refugees outside of Israel; and the accompanying authorization, and I believe it's fair to say, not really at the Administration's initiative at that stage, of roughly equal funds for relief and resettlement of refugees in Israel. So the origin of that fund was directly related to financial problems which had arisen and which were continuing to arise because of the pressure of the increase in the population from outside. Much of the immigration came from Europe, but also from Iraq, Yemen, Egypt and other more remote areas. But again, I would say by the '58 period, large-scale immigration had pretty well come to a halt, and in terms of net immigration, basically there wasn't any. There was some limited emigration, which just about offset the new immigration, as I recall the figures. The cost to the economy of settlement and integration did continue, of course, and an expanding economy was the real long-term answer to the problem.

Q: Can you describe a bit the water resources area of activity, which is so critical in that region?

SKILES: Yes, but I don't quite know whether to do it simply in the physical terms, or in the AID impact terms, but let's try the former first. The Negev in the South was a large and very dry area, which in effect had no water, not even rainfall of any real consequence. In the North, the Galilee (and I'll be exercising a little license with accuracy here), on the other hand, is an area with, at least during certain periods of the year, a surplus of fresh water. Naturally the Israelis were interested in bringing these two together. Near the Sea of Galilee, there was a good deal of intensive agriculture, made possible by the presence of water, let's say either from the sea itself, which is really a large lake, or from the Jordan River, which was one of the main sources of the sea; or the outflow from the sea, which again was concentrated in the Jordan. Large parts of the rest of the country also were seized with the problem. They had a belt of citrus-growing which was confined primarily to the coastal area because this is where the beneficial rainfall permitted the production of oranges, the famous Jaffa oranges, grapefruit, peaches and that sort of thing. And right next door you might have some potentially fine agricultural area which wasn't used because of the absence of water. In program terms, I think of some interesting offshoots. For example, a range management program was started not all that far from the Galilee, but on higher terrain, started because it was range land -- dry farm country -- it was good for raising cattle if certain things were done in the utilization of land, but not good for much of anything as it stood. I'd mentioned one other feature which had come down to Israel from historic times, and that was water spreading. There were many signs that people centuries earlier had built or adopted devices to retain the water, largely from rain, by the use of water spreading devices and water retaining devices. In the South near Masada, now a reconstructed memorial to Jewish history, for example, there still exists large, and I mean large, underground cisterns, and traces of systems which had directed rainwater into those cisterns, down the faces of the rock, and into

gathering cisterns. In the valleys around, there were evidences of water spreading devices, where small dikes had been built so that water could meander in a zig-zag pattern down the course of a ravine, spread out in such a fashion that it would sink into the earth sufficiently to maintain the production of crops rather than the fast runoff which otherwise obtains and which accounts for so many “wadis” all over the country.

Now in terms of the larger programs of what you are trying to do about it, the Israelis were building an infrastructure to take water to the south, at least as far as Tel Aviv, and eventually to Beersheba. These were essentially big pipelines to take advantage of the natural flow where possible to obviate the need to use power to move the water through the pipelines to areas where water was unavailable. In the words of some of our more poetic geniuses, to “make the desert bloom like the rose.” This literally was true, but it wasn’t roses so much as it was foodstuffs that they were interested in producing in those areas.

Q: In connection with that, the Israelis were using some pretty interesting devices for maximizing efficiency in the use of water.

SKILES: True, efficiency from the word go, in moving the water and conserving it, and utilizing it. And this naturally created some problems. The sources of the water in the northern part of the country are sources which are not entirely within Israel. So taking of the water, even after it flows into Israel, was always a very contentious problem. We developed a number of schemes along with the local interests, on both sides of the border. The so-called Johnston plan, for example, never got off the boards, but it was a strong effort in 1954 to utilize U.S. assistance and influence toward some kind of settlement agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians and the Arabs which involved repatriation and compensation to, as well as resettlement of, some of the Palestinians, along with major efforts to develop water resources which would be available on both sides of the border. A lot of work was done in this regard, but as a political entity the Johnston plan was not picked up. It became more a source of controversy than of bringing people together. There are a number of things on the Jordan side -- the Yarmuk River schemes and Jordan Development Commission, for example, at the same time that we were helping the Israelis on their side of the border - to develop the infrastructure and bring the water to places where it was needed.

Q: Particularly the East Ghor Canal, drawing on Yarmuk River water.

SKILES: Yes. Further north, between Israel and Lebanon, there is a mountain range which is fairly extensive, and the water from the Litani, for instance, didn’t come over the mountain, but a good deal of it came under the mountain. Springs in Northern Israel, the Yarcon and other sources were indeed the headwaters of Lake Tiberius and the River Jordan.

Q: You mean Lake Tiberius, the Sea of Galilee.

SKILES: Yes, different names for the same place.

To some extent in some places there was too much water. In the early days of the State, they had undertaken a fairly large project at the southern end of Tiberius, partly to reclaim land, but I

think primarily to clear out the swamps and remove the growth so the water could run away more freely from that area and further to the south. I guess it's no secret anymore, but considerable funds were put into a power development project between Galilee and Haifa at that time, and this was largely for the same or related purposes. At that time some of the endeavors, including that one, were kept as well as could be from prying eyes. The Israelis were not interested in having other people, or even some of their own, know about some of the activities that they were conducting and sabotage or destruction from outside was always a danger. But for the sake of the future, these activities were regarded by them as most pressing and essential. You are right in suggesting that a good deal of the assistance went into areas of activity such as water development, transportation, power development, irrigation, dams, and transportation. I recall not being able to avoid transportation in what I would regard as my first major speech in Israel at the time. It was because the facilities for getting around the place while still limited, were so much better than they had been two or three years earlier, that you could not fail to use this as an example of visible progress that had been made with our binational approach. For example, the roads earlier had been narrow, and I think vividly of the rock lining at the side of the asphalt on almost any road that you could picture that had been asphalted. In U.S. terms, this certainly was an inducement to danger, with high speed travel over those narrow roads. By the time I was there with the mission, much of the need for those rock boundaries had been taken away with better engineering, better compacting of the road beds, better design of the roads, improved mixes to provide the hard surface, and in fact to get usable shoulders rather than rock barriers at the side of many of the roads. Railroads had been improved. We had financed some of the diesel locomotives that had been brought in, to put to work on the railroads. The railroad lines had been expanded. By that time you could go from Haifa to Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and somewhat later down to the middle of the Negev. I say you could go, but I have in mind not so much people movement, as the movement of goods. Railroads are great carriers for material, both coming in and going out.

You had asked, John, about the mission organization, how we were set up to handle these various kinds of activities. Actually, it wasn't so different from an ordinary mission in a country. The Controller's Office had a larger than normal function because of the supply program - not only accounting, but such things as end-use examinations and certifications. Of course we put a great deal more emphasis on the economic planning side than did many of the missions, and considerably more attention to the economy of the whole country in which we worked, rather than confining it to those sectors in which we had technicians working. Much of the best work on this side of things actually was done by visiting firemen. We had economic advisors and tried to keep an economic competence in the program office, and we had, for example, in the industry division, an industrial economist. People like these helped to bring about a mission attitude and helped to provide a certain competence which didn't normally exist. But it was a mixed thing. The real function of the industrial advisor, for example, was to work with the Israelis in the industrial field, but, in effect, his primary charge from our side was to encourage the Israelis to do more and more through private enterprise involving a free market economy, as against the tendency to nationalize or to handle activities in state enterprises.

Q: The Histadrut after all was essentially a socialist organization.

SKILES: I was going to say that much of this came up from what was known as a labor

organization - the National Labor Federation - but which also was an industrial enterprise, the nation's biggest employer, and a center of politics. It also was the center of activity for most of the leaders who came early on the scene, many of them long before Israel became a state. Ben Gurion, for example, was an import in the sense that he had not been raised in Israel, and this was true of most of the senior government leaders in the early days. They had been involved in activities such as the Histadrut, which became very strong molders and semi-government operators in the early days of the country. Levy Eshkol was one of the few born in that area and raised as an "Israeli," and he, too, was a long time activist in Histadrut.

Q: *A Sabra?*

SKILES: Yes, and much of his earlier experience was in the Histadrut organization. The Mapai party was in effect a Histadrut party and Mapai was the leading political party in the country for a number of years after independence was obtained.

Q: *Was there a thrust toward export orientation in industry, or was it still largely import substitution?*

SKILES: I think that from the word go it was both, but it was easier to point at import substitution because exports at that time were only about \$50 million a year, and this was almost entirely in citrus, diamonds, tourism, a few other limited fields -- but all of these were important. They all were in our sense good things to help support, the exception being diamonds which was a function of the international diamond industry - I'm tempted to say, cartel. Most of these were also at the cutting edge of one of the main things we were trying to do, which was encourage Israel along the line of free enterprise and market forces, rather than the state enterprise. To refer to some earlier comments with respect to exposure to Mr. Stassen in 1953, for example, this was the main issue in which he became interested, and I suppose, in effect, was the cause of my having been exposed to his personal interest and his involvement in the program. From his standpoint the main thing to do, as he put it, was to make it like a stream of water running over a rock, or drops of water dropping on a rock. Just keep at it, and eventually you will see some marks in the rock and eventually erosion, and eventually success in your approach. But you know this was a sensitive issue which had to be approached with some care. Influence without too much confrontation. I mentioned that the external influences always made a big contribution to our own deliberations on what our advice to the country should be. Not only did we get reputable economists to come over and work with the Israelis, as well as help us define our priorities, such as Dr. Patterson and Dr. Mikesell in the early days, but as the international institutions were developed, we tried to rely more and more on, for example, the IMF and the IBRD, to make their input. We took advantage of it as well as encouraging the Israelis to take advantage of it.

Q: *Did you feel that the Israelis themselves were moving in that direction of a free market liberalized, open economy?*

SKILES: It strikes me that we're talking about conflicting approaches, and indeed there were, and probably still are. One is, in a sense, the necessity for state planning in an area where resources are limited and you are trying to channel external assistance into areas which the state

planning has defined as being the priority areas. And at the same time, talking about a system which to some extent denies that kind of approach. We were trying to carry water on both shoulders, and the Israelis were trying, but with much more emphasis on the state planning approach than on the market economy approach at that time. The confluence of the two, and our continuing efforts to encourage the policy of market economy, and encourage private undertakings at the expense of government undertakings did indeed lead to a number of frictions, not only amongst our own people but between us and the government. You mentioned the industrial sector -- yes, this is a good example of where the chickens come home to roost, I suppose, because the government was trying to encourage industry. It would do so primarily through government encouragement, and government institutions, because this is what they knew. But also they tried to encourage private activity. This was what their contributors knew best -- not only us but specifically the people who were instrumental in the United Jewish Appeal, Hadassah, and this sort of thing. Their influence was great, but alongside this, you had developments like the Weizman Institute, which was essentially a semi-government operation.

Q: Aimed at what?

SKILES: Well, it had a number of functions, aimed generally at bringing science to the forefront of future activities there, and eventually going so far as to help develop a nuclear complex. Here again, you had government influence, scientific input from Jerusalem University and from other scientific factors within the country, and certainly on an international level. When Abba Eban returned to Israel in 1958, I guess it was, that was his first job -- head of the Weizman Institute.

Q: Having been an ambassador in the U.S. up to that time, right?

SKILES: The previous ten years he had spent as Israel's representative to the UN, and during all but two years of that time, also as the Ambassador to the United States. You don't put a man of that background into the job of being the director of the scientific institution without also having in mind some of its other requirements and strong points.

Q: From a strategic point of view, what was your view of Israel's position at that point? Were they seeming to gain in strength in relation to their neighbors?

SKILES: Well John, as you've experienced, it's awfully hard to find anybody who can remain objective about Israel, or on the other side of the line, about Lebanon or about Jordan. But I try to maintain that objectivity and think I've done a fairly decent job of it. I think it's fair to say that after things settled down from about the 1956-57 period, there was remarkable progress, both actually and mentally. There was a growing sense of Israel, a growing confidence in their ability to take care of themselves; there was a growing confidence in their sense of belonging to international organizations, and of closer association with one of the two major powers in the world. Things were looking up. At the same time, they certainly recognized that while the problems had receded for the moment, they were not repressed forever. Israel was to some extent a sort of a pariah in United Nations circles, not only during that period, but during a much later period, when I was exposed to it from a different direction. Among other things, 1958 was the occasion for Israel's 10th birthday party; tenth anniversary of its founding as a state. This didn't produce a sense of euphoria, but it certainly helped consolidate an interest and a pride in the

country, and a sense of confidence in what they had accomplished and what they could look forward to in the future. Of course their success in the Suez War contributed significantly. Now, whether they had really strengthened militarily compared with their neighbors, as they were to do a bit later on, I'm not so sure. Certainly the process had started. Economically they were becoming much stronger.

Q: Are there some other things about the Israel experience that you would like to give some time to? Why don't you go ahead and comment on some of the other aspects of your experience in Israel?

SKILES: Well, I suspect we've paid enough attention to Israel, but let me go back to one point I started to make earlier, and embellish on it a little bit. That is in terms of relationships with the host country nationals, such as Teddy Kollek. Among other things, he was responsible for putting me on to two or three of the committees or commissions that were working in Israel, which might only indirectly have had a relationship with the AID program. For example, the Rothschild family was financing a number of activities within the country. Teddy, in effect, had worn the cloak of the Minister of Tourism, and it was in this sense - as well as in trying to steer the Rothschilds in directions that would be most useful to Israel but would not interfere with activities of other donors - he was interested in some sort of coordination as well as possibly some personal input. Some of the places to visit were greatly improved with Rothschild interest and money.

Q: In particular, which area or sites?

SKILES: Caesaria, Ashkelon, Masada, the country's first and only golf course.

Q: Would Jerash also be?

SKILES: I don't recall Jerash with a personal exposure, but certainly other ancient sites that we were exposed to, some in the Negev. One of the Rothschild family members, for example, was in a small party that made a trip throughout the Negev to the old Solomon's mines and to Elat. This was not, let's face it, all in the sense of altruism. Kollek and his country wanted to make sure that various of us were educated to the needs of the country, to the appeal of certain things in the country, and, if I might say so, to the political problems which the country faced. In this connection, my own experience, and I know yours as well, meant that to some extent in certain circles, our way was paved in areas to which we went after our Israel experience. Later, when I got to Kenya, for example, a call from the Israeli Consul General was one of the first that I received. He explained to me that he had had a note from a mutual friend asking him to facilitate my entry into the scene in Nairobi to the extent that he could. This happened in other places, I'm sure, not only with thee and me but with a variety of people.

Q: Yes, I remember a call from Israelis, including the director general of the Ministry of Finance, who was traveling through Turkey while I was there, and he paid a call on me. So we've certainly shared this kind of experience, where once the Israelis made contact with you, they were apt to try to make the most of that, as well as to be helpful.

SKILES: Yes, and it leads to a point which I think characterizes many of our associations and many of our activities with respect to Israel. It was in a very difficult position internationally, and it was anxious to develop and maintain friendships and contacts. As I suggested earlier I have to assume they were interested in these kind of contacts almost throughout the developing world, and partly because of their concept that the developing countries were more and more coming front and center in world attention.

Q: And the U.N. votes were of significance to them, so they were constantly trying to build contacts and relationships that would help protect them in what they felt was apt to be an increasingly hostile environment in the U.N.

SKILES: Yes, a very important element in what we're just discussing. They wanted good and friendly contacts in a number of countries, and for a number of reasons.

Q: So, if perhaps that winds up most of the coverage of your experience in Israel, maybe we want to move onto your next experience, and how that came about.

MICHAEL H. NEWLIN
United Nations Affairs, IO
Washington, DC 1958-1963

Ambassador Michael Newlin was born in North Carolina in 1929. He received both his bachelor's degree and master's degree from Harvard University in 1949 and 1951, respectively. His career has included positions in Frankfurt, Oslo, Paris, Brussels, Leopoldville/Kinshasa, Jerusalem, Vienna, and an ambassadorship to Algeria. Ambassador Newlin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: Well then we will move back. It became a United Nations affair. You were doing that from '58 until when?

NEWLIN: I did that from '58 until '63.

Q: You know maybe it was later but did you have any feeling about an anti UN feeling in Congress, sort of right wing or not?

NEWLIN: Not in those days because the UN still even with the influx of the 60 newly independent states we were the dominant power. In the General Assembly we could usually get through what we wanted. Dulles invented something that later I guess could have come back to haunt us. When the Soviets would of course keep vetoing anything to do with the cold war in the Security Council, even though we had the majority of votes. Dulles came up with the uniting for peace resolution whereby, if the Security Council could not act on something because of a veto

you could take it to the General Assembly and get it voted on there. Of course it didn't have the binding character of something by the Security Council, but demonstrated a majority view. The UN was deeply involved in the Arab Israeli dispute, We had Ralph Bunche in the Secretariat in New York. We had to pay for all of the Palestinian refugee costs because the rest of the UN said this is your problem. You created Israel so therefore you have to pay for the upkeep of the refugees.

Q: I take it that being assigned to the UN at that time was really quite exciting for a young officer.

NEWLIN: Oh very. Very exciting. You were there, I remember I was up there when the time U Thant was running for Secretary General. That was an interesting thing too that we were involved in later. But I am getting ahead of myself whenever I was assigned to the UN. But I happened to be up there at the UN when U Thant called a news conference in one of the halls. He said, "I have the impression that my candidacy is acceptable to all members of the Security Council." So that was it.

Q: Were you there during the Kennedy assassination?

NEWLIN: No, I will come to that when I get to Paris.

Q: Then how did you find the United Nations it was called what International Organizations in those days?

NEWLIN: IO, The Bureau of International Organizations Affairs. We covered many of the international organizations, but not NATO or the economic ones.

Q: Again here is where somebody with the skill of Joe Sisco, I would think that there would, the United Nations covers all sorts of issues, but the various geographic bureaus feel they have it is their birthright.

NEWLIN: Here come the interlopers.

Q: Yes, so you must have been seeing a significant number of bureaucratic issues didn't you?

NEWLIN: Yes, there were frequent Bureaucratic clashes. I mentioned the problems caused for the European powers by the sudden independence of their former colonies. The founding of Israel created new tensions in an already volatile Middle East. The USSR's support for communist insurgents in Latin America were a major headache. In South Asia the U.S. supported Pakistan whereas Russia supported India. I fortunately was chosen by Sisco to be UNP's go between with EUR. The European Bureau was the one we had most of our problems with. Cleveland got the idea that we would take the Berlin situation up in the Security council. (I thought this was a bad idea indeed, but I was not consulted.) At the beginning of the Kennedy administration Dean Acheson was invited back to the State Department as an advisor to Dean Rusk. Cleveland had discussed the plan in a meeting with Acheson and Rusk. The EUR bureau had not been present so the draft telegram to New York needed the clearance of the assistant

secretary of European affairs. I remember it was late in the afternoon. After I cleared it with Acheson, Sisco sent me over to EUR. When I handed it over the assistant secretary immediately called in his deputy and said, "Look at this." Finally he said, "I cannot clear this, these waters are dark and turbid." So I went back and I said, "No sale." Fortunately EUR managed to kill the idea.

MURAT WILLIAMS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tel Aviv (1959-1961)

Ambassador Williams was born and raised in Virginia and was educated at the University of Virginia and Oxford University. After serving in the US Navy in World War II, he joined the State Department, serving in Washington, D.C., where he worked with the Refugee Relief Program, and abroad. His foreign posts include San Salvador, Bucharest, Salonika, Bern and Tel Aviv. Mr. Williams served as U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador from 1961 to 1964. Ambassador Williams was interviewed by Melvin Spector in 1990. He died in 1994.

WILLIAMS: No I was the number two in Israel. I was the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) in Israel. I went to Israel about the same time as Ogden Reid was appointed as ambassador.

Q: Was Mr. Reid a career Foreign Service officer?

WILLIAMS: He was not a career Foreign Service officer. He was a very young former publisher of the International Herald Tribune in Paris and the New York Herald Tribune. He was a member of the family that owned the Tribune. He had excellent connections within that family. I remember that when Mr. Reid was nominated to go to Israel he had four or five days of very strong questioning before Senator Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee. Mr. Fulbright, in effect, was not pleased with the appointment because he didn't think that Mr. Reid had enough experience in diplomacy, or enough knowledge of the area to have such a delicate job. But Mr. Reid stood up well in his four days of inquisition. I would like to say on the record that during my service with him of about a year and a half he proved to be a very hard working, conscientious, and sincere officer who, I think, made no mistakes and carried on his job as ambassador very well. The Israelis had great respect for him.

Israel at that time was quite different from Israel of today. The dominate political, emotional, cultural feelings were those of European German Zionist. Their principle figure in the country was, of course, David Ben-Gurion – David Ben-Gurion and his Foreign Minister, Golda Meir. I came to admire both of them enormously. I did not know Ben-Gurion as well as I knew Mrs. Meir. But I do remember Ben-Gurion used to warn the Israelis of the cultural and political changes that were taking place in the country. The old European Jews were outnumbered by the Sephardic, the Spanish, North African, Middle Eastern Jews, largely from the Yemen and North Africa who increased their population enormously and who had a different attitude towards the Arabs than the German Jews.

The original Zionists, and I think this is an important point that people may have forgotten in our country, had no quarrel with the Arabs. They bought land from the Arabs, they cooperated with the Arabs, they worked with the Arabs, they were friendly with the Arabs, they spoke Arabic. Most of my friends did not foresee trouble with the Arabs because they thought they could get along with them because they had worked with them so much in the days before the establishment of the State of Israel.

On the other hand, the North African Jews, the Sephardic, and Middle Eastern Jews had been badly treated by the Arabs, or felt that they had been badly treated over the years. They were kind of eager, it seemed to me, to get back at the Arabs – to revenge themselves with the Arabs. As they did this and increased in numbers, trouble with the Arabs increased, relations became worse.

But when I was there there were no serious incidents. Ben-Gurion was convinced that they could get on well together. Mrs. Meir felt the same. So there was no feeling of the need for great expansion of territory. They were content with a Jewish homeland which had defensible borders. There was a particular foresighted and wisdom on Ben-Gurion's part and Mrs. Meir's that they could do a lot for their neighbors in the Arab Moslem countries. Perhaps not so much with the immediate ones as the ones more distant. They had conceived of what was very much like our later Peace Corps. They sent bright young men and women, able and technically trained, out to help other countries develop a particular industry or solve problems.

For example, they sent a number of young men out to Ghana where they helped develop forest products such as ply board. They sent agricultural experts to Iran where they showed how wood for construction could be produced in sometimes relatively barren country using good systems of irrigation. They developed friendships with these countries. I had one particular Israeli friend, Ezra Danin, who was terribly important to Iran because of the help he had been able to organize for them in technical matters.

When these young men went out they were usually received by Ben-Gurion. He patted them on the back and told them what a good job he expected them to do and wished them luck. They went out with much enthusiasm and the work usually resulted in increasing friendship for Israel. Somewhere, about 1959 or 60, I haven't got my hands on it, there was an excellent article in the Foreign Affairs Quarterly about the way the Israelis were winning friends in the Middle Eastern world by this technical assistance. The old Israelis felt that cooperation in economic and technical matters with neighbors would help to strengthen their position.

I might mention also something called Solel Boneh. It was a construction company organized in Israel which did public works in nearby countries – for example, in Turkey and other places – under contracts.

Q: This was a private company?

WILLIAMS: It was sponsored by the Israeli government. It was very important and improved relations. I am very disappointed not to have heard more of this sort of thing since I was in Israel

30 years ago. Unfortunately, Israel has been so preoccupied with its security that the program may have been completely abandoned. I haven't had an opportunity to ask any of my Israeli friends whether any of it is going on. Danin is no longer living. But he was an outstanding example of the kind of technical assistance Israel had to offer. He showed me once an orange grove which he had created in a desert by selecting spots to put trees, in rows, of course, and then digging the sand away from them and pouring in good soil, setting up a windbreak to prevent more sand from coming in and thus building orchards in the desert – making the desert bloom. And that was what Israel did.

I remember particularly how impressed I was with their development and when I said goodbye to Mrs. Meir, she asked me why I was leaving and I said that the President had asked me to go as ambassador somewhere else. And she said, "Where are you going?" I said, "El Salvador." She said, "El Salvador? That is a place where you can really do something." I said, "Yes, Mrs. Meir, I hope we can help do some of the things you have done in your neighboring country."

While I was in Israel there were occasional border incidents with neighboring countries and sometimes Israel had to take measures for its own protection. Occasionally we had to remonstrate with them about something that seemed to upset the peace of the area.

I remember once when I was Chargé d'Affaires going into Mrs. Meir and telling her quite carefully something that the Department had asked me to say – remonstrating with Israel for its action in one of these events, and she just looked at me and said, "Who is going to give Nasser a lecture this morning?" She was quite accustomed to understanding. She understood quite well why a person like myself would be asked to make such a protest. And she received it.

Q: What did the Department feel, that this was provocation by the Israelis?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Occasionally they felt that Israel's defense positions or movements along a border might be provocations to Arab neighbors and we were trying above all to prevent any conflict.

Q: What do you feel were your policy objectives vis-a-vis Israel when you were there?

WILLIAMS: I believed Israel must develop its own resources, become nearly self-sufficient; should have adequate defenses within the territories which had been provided under the Independence agreements; that she should respect the resolutions of the United Nations; and be content to live in the homeland with satisfactorily defended borders. We did not believe Israel should expand its territory. We sought to persuade Israel to be content within those territorial boundaries. In our day we would not have done what was later done – our government seemed to encourage Israel to move into Lebanon. We knew Israel had good armed forces, we had unlimited admiration for their technical, scientific, and military abilities. We thought the rest of the world could learn a lot from them, but we believed that the borders as they were then were sufficient. We maintained our embassy, as we still do, in Tel Aviv because of the interest of other countries in Jerusalem.

Q: You say you feel Israel should comply with UN resolutions. Doesn't that imply face-to-face

talks with the other Arab countries?

WILLIAMS: I can't remember whether at that time it implied that, I believe it did.

Q: About the only Arab country that has done that is Egypt as I recall – Sadat.

WILLIAMS: Yes. One thing that was terribly important at that time was Israel's nuclear research and development. We respected Israel's right to secrecy as far as its own defense is concern, but Israel, I think, did not tell us all we might have known about its nuclear development. There was a reactor near Be'er Sheva and Dimona. One day the Ambassador and I were in that general neighborhood and we asked about those buildings and were told that they were new textile plants. Eventually when that got into the American press it led to a very amusing article by Art Buchwald about the smashing tailors of Be'er Sheva.

Q: For the whole time you were in Israel did you serve under the same ambassador?

WILLIAMS: Yes. I was only in Israel from July 1959 to January 1961. Ambassador Reid was there a few days ahead of me and left a few weeks after I left. We had a great admiration for the ability of the people with whom we dealt. I believe that we were on a very frank basis of relations with the Israelis. We felt we could trust them. I think that that was right. One of our functions was to help interpret Israel to visiting Americans, especially senators and congressmen. I think they found that they were dealing with very straight forward people when they were dealing with the Israelis. One thing that is significant to me is that when we were there, Ambassador Reid and I, we had very little to do with Begin and nothing, as far as I can remember, with Shamir. The people with whom we dealt were the old Zionists and Sabras. Mrs. Meir was our principal contact, I would say, but General Dayan was also someone on whom we depended a great deal. Walter Eytan one of their great diplomats was someone we dealt with. He had been a don in Oxford, I think, at one time. And, of course, Abba Eban, was very influential at that time. For anyone like myself to go to Israel then was an experience of great stimulation. The mental liveliness of the people, their ability to see what had to be done and to do it. Everybody had something to do in developing the country and in the preservation of the country. All of that came with outstanding cultural and literary achievements. The Israeli Orchestra and the Mann auditorium rate as great examples of their cultural achievement. One would expect it naturally. So I suppose of all the places where I have served, there was none where there had been such stimulation to think, to act and to do the right thing.

I regretted very much when things turned out as Ben-Gurion told us it would when the Sephardic Jews began to increase their influence. The Sephardic Jews wanted to get a bit of their own back with the neighboring Arabs. They were the ones who were interested in pushing out the borders. They would have liked to take over a great deal of land around Israel. They were responsible for the eventual occupation of the West Bank, which took place long after my departure.

There is another thing I should mention which was the wise effort to receive and assimilate Jews from wherever they might have come. They had a system of cultural interchange which meant that they would settle people from four or five different countries and cultures in one area. The schools, the businesses, and the offices of these people would be located in the center of the area

where they would all come together to study, work and enjoy entertainment during the day. This is a very brief explanation of what I thought was a very wise way of letting people become Israelis, develop their Israeli national feeling and at the same time not being completely shut off from their old contacts of the old country.

Another thing that impressed me so much was kibbutz life. My wife and I were very interested in learning about kibbutz life when we first started studying Hebrew at the Foreign Service Institute before we went to Israel. We learned the phrases that would be necessary and useful in visiting a kibbutz. We loved the kibbutz feeling. The young men who dominated them were very often those who had been the leaders in the Independence War.

I was really disappointed that my time in Israel was cut short. In late December, 1960 the ambassador called me into his office and said he had a telegram saying that there had been a revolution in El Salvador and President Eisenhower wanted to send me there as ambassador. Would I accept? Of course I accepted. But it meant breaking off almost an education – being in Israel.

When I got to Washington after that, Senator Fulbright was mainly interested not in my going to El Salvador, but in my staying such a short time in Israel. He said, "If you had stayed longer in Israel, you would know about that atomic program they are carrying on. If you fellows would stay where you were for a while you would know what was going on." Some people thought he was insulting me, but I didn't mind it very much. I was, myself, sorry that I hadn't been longer in Israel. I don't know if there is anything else you would like me to comment on about Israel.

BILHA BRYANT
Israeli Cultural Attaché
The Hague, Netherlands (1960-1963)

Bilha Bryant was born in 1934 in Bulgaria. Bryant served in the Israeli Army and worked in the private sector before joining the Israeli Foreign Service in 1959. Bryant resigned from the Israeli Foreign Service and married Edward (Ted) Bryant in 1963. With her husband, Bryant was assigned overseas to Mozambique, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Korea and India. Bryant then began to work for the State Department and served in the Soviet Bureau, Eastern European Affairs and Congressional Relations. Bryant was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: Can you describe the Israeli Foreign Service in those days? We're talking about what, '57, no, 1960?

BRYANT: I joined in 1959 and arrived to The Hague in January of 1960. The Career Israeli Foreign Ministry had been established not too long before. It was a very small selective group of people mostly from academia and the military. They were well educated, many of them in England or the United States, they spoke languages, were involved and enthusiastic and very

smart. The whole of the European division at that time had a staff of about 15, perhaps less. In The Hague embassy, there was the Ambassador, a distinguished Dutch Jew who had lived in Holland before the war. He spoke many languages, but his Hebrew left much to be desired. There was the DCM [deputy chief of mission], an economic counselor, political officer and myself, and that was it. That was the embassy in Holland. And there were so many official visits! When we were in Holland, Ben Gurion came for a visit. You can imagine an American embassy during a President's visit. Here we were, four people; and here he is, Ben Gurion with a large entourage and a lot of demands. The Dutch at that time loved Israel, which made my job so easy. It was not hard to convince the journalists to write good things about Israel. They were so fascinated by the country.

Q: Did you have a lot of Dutch young people going to Israel to the kibbutzim?

BRYANT: Many young Dutch Jews would go to Israel but only for about six months or so. We found the Jews of Holland, the ones that survived the Holocaust, very much like the rest of the Dutch people; honest, decent and always very helpful to the embassy, with money and any other way.

Q: You were there from 1960-

BRYANT: 1960 to 1963. And I remember so well how I met my future husband. My husband Ted Bryant had been a vice-consul in Haifa and lived about three blocks away from where I lived. But since I am younger, I never met him socially in Haifa. On hearing that was being posted to The Hague, a friend in Kaiser-Ilin who used to see him socially in Haifa, suggested that I look up Ted Bryant who was then at the American Embassy in Holland and say "Hi." He could introduce you to young people there. But when I got to Holland I was really overwhelmed. I was worried and scared and excited all at the same time. I was really alone for the first time in my life, and I was too nervous to call him, so I never did. And one day, my ambassador, whose wife was not very social, invited me to accompany him to the "Yakharche Day" celebration. (Flag Day in Dutch). The celebration took place on fishing boats going out for the first herring. Many diplomats are invited and, according to the Ambassador, it usually is great fun. I of course accepted. It was a cold, rough day, and the seas were high, and the wind was blowing hard and yet I found the outing very exciting. I met quite a few friendly and fascinating people. Among them was a lovely Mexican girl who was also a diplomat, and several good looking Australians. And then I met a beautiful Dutch baroness, who was very kind to introduce me to her "man," Ted Bryant. And so we started talking. And I asked, "Were you in Israel?" And he said, yes, he was and oh, how pleased he was to meet me and, of course, "we must get together." And that was the last I heard from Ted Bryant. Weeks later, my ambassador asked me again to go with him to the annual dance at the Club du Jeudi dance since his wife could not go. This invitation was much more difficult for me to accept since I was very poor and couldn't afford to buy an evening dress. I was making very little money, but I did buy a dress. I don't think I ate for about for two weeks. And when we got there, there was a Paul Jones dance.

Q: Oh, yes. This is where you hold hands and sort of snake through and then at a certain point-

BRYANT: Yes, and when you stop the man who stands across from you would be your partner

until the music stops. The first man who was across from me was a small dark man, and, you know, I was young and quite attractive. And so he sort of put his arms around me and started dancing, and said, "From where are your beautiful eyes?" And I said, "From Haifa." And I could feel his hands loosening. Well, apparently, he was the Egyptian Ambassador. When the music stopped next, my partner was a gentleman with one arm, who was the German attaché. And you know the war was still fresh in my mind, so I wasn't happy. I thought to myself, "such a waste of a dress!" Here I was dancing with an Egyptian and a German. My third partner was a good looking clean cut man who promptly started speaking French to me, saying: "Oh, je suis Belge." And so we started talking, and he asked me where I was from. When I said Haifa his eyes lit up and he remembered me. And we re-met, and that was the beginning of our romance.

Q: So '60-'63 was the only time you were in the Israeli Foreign Service.

BRYANT: Yes, and I remember an Israeli assistant secretary of the Foreign Service saying to me when I announced my resignation: "We don't need women in the Foreign Service. If they're attractive, they get married in two or three years. And if they're not attractive, they stay there and become mean and frustrated." He was horrible.

Q: Well, now we're in a much more equal situation, but there really was a problem in foreign services all over. Up until very recently, when a woman officer got married, often to a foreigner, more or less, she was expected to do resign, so it meant that your investment was sort of down the tube. So I mean, it was not just a prejudicial thing; there was a practicality: do you hire somebody who was not going to hang around very long?

Well, these interviews are sort of focused on your time dealing with foreign affairs, but I think we might as well, because later on we're going to talk about your time in the Department of State, talk about your time as a Foreign Service wife. When did you get married?

BRYANT: That's another interesting part of my life. We got engaged in February of 1963, but Ted wrote to say that he could not marry me without prior approval from the State Department. He asked that I make an appointment with the Political Counselor at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv, who by the way was an old colleague of Ted's. I was quite nervous about the whole procedure; for one thing I had been in the Military Intelligence Service, as well as in the Israeli Foreign Service. Nobody believed I was actually a diplomat but thought I was in the Shin Beth (the Israeli FBI), which I really wasn't. After my very pleasant interview with the Political Counselor, I had to meet with the Consular Officer, who looked me over carefully and asked a lot of questions. I had the distinct feeling that he was judging my manners. And then, of course, the security clearance took a while. Finally in May '63 Ted got permission to marry me and in June of 1963 I arrived to the States. We were married in St. Thomas Church in Washington, DC on June 29.

Q: What happened then? Where was your and Ted's first assignment?

BRYANT: Ted was in African Affairs. Now bear in mind that this was 1963, Kennedy was President and Africa was very prominent in American politics. Soapy Williams was assistant secretary of state for African Affairs. FSOs and wives were asked to attend by-weekly get-

together with African Embassies' staff where Soapy Williams called and we all danced square dances. We had wonderfully close relations with Ted's colleagues. In fact, people we met in African Affairs are still our very dear friends, like Tony Ross. I loved it, I really did. According to regulations, I had to remain in the U.S. for three years to qualify for an overseas posting as a diplomat's wife.

ANDREW I. KILLGORE
Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1961-1965)

Andrew I. Killgore was born on a farm in Alabama, and graduated from a small teacher's training college in Livingston, Alabama. He entered the Foreign Service as a Wristonee, initially working as a service staff officer. He has served in Jordan, Baghdad, Iran, and Qatar. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 15, 1988.

Q: I think this is important. We'll be moving on to later stages of your career shortly, but could you discuss how you and how you think some of the fellow officers who came in to Arabic training felt? We've already mentioned "cookie pushers" being a term for diplomat, but also Arabists in the State Department have, ever since I've known about this, been considered terribly pro-Arab, anti-Israeli. How did you and your contemporaries, as much as you can go back to that time, look at the Middle East? Did you call it the Middle East or the Near East?

KILLGORE: Well, it's up and down. Mostly it's called the Middle East, although the bureau is called the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs.

Q: How did you and your contemporaries look at the Middle East at that time? Was there a mind set?

KILLGORE: No, I don't think so. I think we looked at the geography and history and resources of the area; we recognized that it had tremendous geopolitical importance, a great importance for the United States. Actually, Stuart, most Arabists felt like we were a very special bunch. We were overwhelmingly veterans of World War II. That was a camaraderie. It's difficult to learn Arabic. You have to work like hell at it. We were both amused and a bit put out by the term "Arabist," which is actually a euphemism employed by the Zionists to signal, "Watch out for this guy." It means the guy might be an anti-Semite, probably anti-Semitic. Certainly anti-Israel. No, we didn't look on ourselves as being -- in the first place, to describe a complex, brilliant officer in the Foreign Service, in terms of him being anti or pro a particular foreign country is terribly demeaning and degrading. People are enormously complex. We all felt that we had been in World War II, we had helped bring down the Axis, which was the worst of all evils I ever heard about in history. So then because you study Arabic, to be called an Arabist. Is a person called a Frenchist or a Germanist or Chinologist? I have never seen Chinologist.

Q: Somebody who studies Chinese, yes. It's a term that comes from the British, I think.

KILLGORE: I don't know where it comes from, but certainly the use of it all the time, I don't put that on the British; I put that on political forces in this country.

So we felt close to each other. The area wasn't well known, and we thought we were doing a job for our country of reporting back and trying to create knowledge about an important area of the world for us, for the United States. We didn't regard ourselves as patriots. To my mind, that's a stupid term to call someone a patriot, inasmuch as I regard about 99.99% of Americans as very fond of their country, and very strange if they're not. As I say, there was a closeness. Some people refer to it as a club. I think the fact that we were perhaps resented by some groups in this country, including powerful forces in the State Department, contributed in a peculiar way to the excellence of our work, the outstanding quality of much of our work.

I was riding in March of this year from Jerusalem down to the Gaza Strip. The driver was named Kiley, from Ireland, driving a United Nations vehicle. I asked him how could it be that so many great literary figures had come from Ireland, and I started spinning them off, headed by William Butler Yeats, whom I think is the greatest of all poets. He didn't respond to me, but after a mile or so, he said, "Maybe it's the repression." I thought about that, and I have decided that probably Kiley was right. Jesse Jackson has the passion and fire because he is a man who's come up from a great deep ocean of repression against black people in this country. No white politician could talk like Jesse Jackson. It would be impossible for one to be there.

But I don't want to press the point of any resentment we felt too far. We felt that we were doing a good job, a good professional job. We were determined not to be prejudiced, to show any overt prejudice in our official and other acts. We recognized, of course, that the United States is made up of various groups and that we don't claw at each other. Rather, we have to support and love each other. So we understood what motivated the Zionists. We understood the Holocaust. We understood the things that had happened to them.

Q: I would like to single out two posts. I note here you served in Beirut from 1956 to 1957, Jerusalem from 1957 to 1959, and in Amman, Jordan, from 1959 to 1961. Maybe to concentrate just briefly on your Jerusalem-Amman time, because these two tie together pretty much. Jerusalem was, in those days, part of Jordan.

KILLGORE: That's right. It was divided, you know, the new city and the walled city.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

KILLGORE: I was covering the West Bank politically. I did some consular work on the side. When the visa officer would be gone or something, or I would sign a passport if someone was away. But overwhelmingly, I did political reporting, political analysis for the West Bank and Arab Jerusalem for that two and a half years I was there. I hadn't had any experience as a political officer. And you know, the State Department can't quite tell you what to do; you have to figure out what to do yourself. So I decided that I would do a lot of biographic reports, and I started doing biographic reports on well known political figures.

Q: Could you explain what biographic reports are?

KILLGORE: You write a report giving the details of a person's life, how old he is, what kind of a family he's from, where he studied, just a biography. What's this person like? It's a short biography. It may be as little as four or five pages, something like that. How many children he has, how rich he is, what political parties does he belong to.

Q: How do you do this?

KILLGORE: You go talk to the people and you talk to other people about different people. One of the interesting things I discovered there after a while was that there is a Palestinian establishment in the West Bank. Everybody who's anybody is interrelated by blood, marriage, or certainly business. There's a very definite strong establishment made up of business people, lawyers, doctors, professors, journalists, and religious people. These reports were very highly valued. I got all sorts of kudos from the State Department. They loved them. Eventually, a lot of this stuff was stuck into a CIA file, because they had the machinery where you could record the biographic information about various politicians or business people on a computer, and you could punch a button, and it would come out in a second, because the State Department and the White House and the U.S. Government always are terribly afraid something will happen and a new guy will pop up that no one ever heard of. (Laughs)

Q: It is an obsession. Of course, it's important, and often information is rather sparse, but at least it makes you appear that you're on top of things.

I think this is important, because we're talking now in 1988, and there are rather serious resistance movement, both civil and more physical, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. But you were there and dealing with this before it became under the control of Israel. What was the movement then? How did you see things going in the West Bank?

KILLGORE: There was one movement very heavily against King Hussein, against his central government in Amman. There was a resentment that these Bedouin-dominated regimes, lacking in culture, as seen by the better educated Palestinians, were ruling this very talented and highly educated people. It was sort of like Rome and Greece. Rome ruled Greece, but the Greeks looked down on the Romans for a long time. The same thing with the Arabs and the Iranians, when Islam swept over. To this day there's a real resentment in Iran, for example, that, as they see them, the sort of scruffy desert Arabs came to rule what had been the great empire of Cyrus and Darius and whatnot. "We have a superior culture. Also, we had a lovely religion, Zoroastrianism, and Islam had taken it over." As a matter of fact, the language almost became Arabic. That's one thing.

Another thing, there was a deep resentment against the United States, which was reckoned to be supporting Israel. This, of course, was before the Palestine Liberation Organization was begun, which, I believe, was 1964. The Palestinians were keenly interested in education. They would do anything and spend any resources they could borrow, beg, or steal to educate their children.

Q: Were many going to the United States?

KILLGORE: Many, many were going off to the United States.

Q: Was there any problem with this on our part?

KILLGORE: No. On the whole, there was also a conviction on the part of the Palestinians that the Israelis would seize the proper moment to grab the rest of Palestine, which was the West Bank and Gaza. I confess that I argued that they were wrong, that they just would be satisfied with what they had, roughly 78%, 79% of the whole British mandate of Palestine, but it turned out the Palestinians were right after all. It was heavily agricultural, olive growing, Palestinians were already leaving, of course, to seek opportunity in Persian Gulf. Oil was being produced by that time, and the economy, particularly of Kuwait, was growing fast, the economies of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates.

Mostly I found -- as do most Americans who get to know the Palestinians -- them very attractive. They are a bit like the southerners, very much family oriented. They are absolutely enjoined to be generous. You're bound to be generous and hospitable, that's part of the culture, and you're bound to be polite -- all the things that I learned as a boy down on the farm in Alabama. I found them very, very attractive, on the whole. A tremendous emphasis on food. My God, you think we eat in this country? (Laughs) You should go out there!

Q: You had no particular problem getting out and around?

KILLGORE: No. I traveled to every single part of the West Bank. There's hardly a village I didn't go to.

Q: Going back to what you were reporting, you say you received all sorts of kudos. Was there any problem in reporting? Did you feel you were under any constraints from reporting on what was going on in the West Bank?

KILLGORE: No. The '67 War hadn't happened. Things changed fundamentally after the 1967 War, because in the '67 War, Israel lost most of its international friends; at least it aroused a great deal of resistance and resentment in the Western world after grabbing the West Bank, particularly as it became clear that they weren't going to relinquish it.

There was one occasion, particularly, which happened in probably the fall of 1958 or a bit later. It would have been mid-winter of 1958. I was still consul in Jerusalem, living right there by the Mandelbaum Gate. A fellow came through and talked to me, a journalist, a big guy. I can't remember his name. I don't know whether he was Jewish or whether he was Christian. But we talked at great length. I wish, in view of what happened subsequently, that I had been able to remember his name. But I said, of course, that no state or no country in between the great population centers of Egypt and the Tigris Euphrates, Iran centers, or if you go back to the Hittites, from the Turkish plateau, no country in between had been able to maintain independence for very long, and thus, unless Israel made some sort of a peace deal with the Palestinians, her days were numbered, some decades.

I moved up to Amman, the capital of Jordan, in September 1959. After I'd been up there just a few weeks, I got an official informal letter, as it's called, via the diplomatic pouch from Murat Williams, who was the deputy chief of mission at our U.S. Embassy at Tel Aviv, Israel, at that time. Murat said in that letter that, "I hate to send you this letter, but a man who talked to you several months ago apparently talked to the Israeli foreign ministry about a conversation you had in your office, in which you talked quite dispassionately about great historical trends and history of the area, and that you thought that Israel, unless it made a deal with the Arabs, would have a limited lifespan in the Middle East." This man, according to what the Israeli foreign ministry told Murat Williams, had said to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "While you spoke with great dispassion, he sensed (that's the term he used) that the demise of Israel wouldn't upset you unduly," or something to that effect.

This was a shot across my bow, because it was based on the fact that I was an Arabist and I was getting pretty popular and I was well known and I was beginning to get promoted. I was coming in to be a figure of some consequence in the system. I wrote back and I told Murat Williams, "Tell the fellow in the foreign ministry who spoke to you about this that I said, 'Go to hell.'" That's the way I handled that. But I recognized it for what it was.

STEPHEN E. PALMER, JR.
Chief, Political Section
Tel Aviv (1963-1966)

Stephen E. Palmer, Jr. was born in Superior, Wisconsin on July 31, 1923. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and served in the U.S. Marine Corps. His Foreign Service career included positions in Nicosia, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Tel Aviv, London, Islamabad, Madras, Geneva, and Washington, DC. Mr. Palmer was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 31, 1995.

Q: *So we'll move to Tel Aviv, and you were there from '63 to '66.*

PALMER: Yes.

Q: *Who was the ambassador?*

PALMER: Had a very fine ambassador. I have been fortunate in my career generally with ambassadors. Walworth Barbour was the ambassador throughout the time I was there, and a great deal longer. And then after NEA and the system had picked me to be head of the political section in Tel Aviv, I was asked to go up to Gloucester, Mass. where Barbour was summering in his beach house nearby, in order to let him peruse and comment on this Johnston Plan about which I spoke earlier on the Arab refugee settlement proposals. And I hadn't realized until I got there that this was also an opportunity for Barbour to look me over. Apparently he did this with most officers being assigned, or being proposed for Tel Aviv. I remember the first question he asked me was whether I played golf, and I said I didn't. And he said, why not? And I said I hadn't

grown up in a place where golf was accessible for people of modest means, and he said, do you play bridge? And I said, yes, I do play bridge. He said, are you good? I said my wife was very good, and I guessed I was okay. And he said, well that's good. Then he barbecued a meal for the two of us, I think his sister was there too, and retired to read this voluminous plan, a very complicated plan. He said he'd see me over breakfast. I was just amazed at his thorough comprehension of the ins and outs of this very intricate plan just from apparently one reading the night before. A very swift learner. In the meantime I guess he decided that I would be okay for that post, and he said, you get a set of golf clubs and I'll see you in Tel Aviv.

So immediately I arrived the actual negotiations regarding that plan were very much on center stage. Johnston had visited Tel Aviv and the pertinent Arab posts, and now our task was to persuade the Israelis to go along with it, bilaterally persuade them. It was tough sledding. Golda Meir was very questioning of it, and Eshkol who had become Prime Minister, was more open minded but not fully persuaded. They were intensive negotiations, and as you know we were in Tel Aviv and the Foreign Ministry was in Jerusalem so we'd go up there often, the appointments were late in the afternoon and we'd arrive back well into the evening and then I'd have to do the reporting cables. So it was an arduous time.

The long and short of it, without going into all the details, was that the Syrians sabotaged the plan as they had previous plans about sharing the Jordan waters. And that gave the Israelis an excuse, which I think they really wanted, if the Syrians can't buy it, they couldn't buy it. So that was a wash, and that was the last significant initiative of the Kennedy administration in regard to any Arab-Israel negotiation.

Q: What was the feeling in the embassy when you got there -- here was this plan, and you had people in the political section who were experienced in this type of negotiation, knew the Israelis, how did they feel about the plan?

PALMER: Well, as a matter of fact...I don't want this to sound overly proud, you've come upon one of the factors that made it somewhat difficult to deal aptly with the Israelis, and that is because of our policy of generally not staffing the embassy with persons who were steeped in the Near East and the Arab-Israel problem particularly. There had been indeed a kind of a pattern of people going there from wherever they were before, from Turkey, or western Europe, or wherever. And they were really impressed by the Israelis and became, not partisan, but in some cases overly sympathetic to the Israeli point of view. And it was simply because they didn't have experience on both sides. Whereas I, albeit being in Washington then a little bit in New York, had dealt with Arab-Israel issues for almost four years and that was the reason I was assigned there in the first place. So I had in my section two excellent officers, neither of whom had served in Israel before, nor in the Arab world: George Lambrakis and John Leonard. They were just terrific. They handled mostly the internal political situation which was a big thing to handle, and I dealt with the foreign ministry and the international stuff. So there wasn't any resistance in the Embassy. The then DCM who was a very nice man had never had any experience in the Arab world.

Q: Who was that?

PALMER: That was Spencer Barnes initially, and he was replaced by an economic officer named William Dale. I had mentioned earlier that while I was in Tel Aviv, we and my counterparts in the Arab posts, initiated the first ever exchanges of visits, and I went to the Arab capitals of the neighboring states to Israel. I never did get to Damascus. I well remember the first sessions that I went to, Cairo where my counterpart was Don Bergus, and by coincidence the National War College visit was on while I was there, so I was invited to the reception for them. It was very touching when the word got around among the Egyptian officials, most of whom were high ranking military officers, that this was a political officer from our Embassy in Tel Aviv. They all clustered around me and were just so eager to find out my thoughts on things; they were open minded I thought. So all of the counterparts, Don Bergus and Dick Parker from Beirut, I've forgotten who was in Amman, and Dick Murphy from Damascus, subsequently paid visits to me, and I instituted for them, and also used for other occasions, stag luncheons. I found by having a stag affair during the working day I could attract really the top Israelis, for instance, one regular was the head of military intelligence. They were just absolutely frank exchanges between my Arabist friends from the neighboring posts, and these very high ranking Israeli officials, Foreign Ministry as well as Defense. I think it was a constructive small step in the right direction.

Another factor in our tour in Tel Aviv was our oldest daughter attended the American Community School in Beirut. And at that time the Lebanese authorities, on being asked by our embassy there, said there was no problem at all for us to just drive up to the city, and they would arrange it at the crossing point, but please don't use your Israeli license plates. Fortunately I hadn't thrown away our expired Maryland plates so I used those for our crossings, and to take her to and from school. That also worked for our occasional visits to the Old City of Jerusalem and to Amman. We spent an annual leave in Amman, and we spent another one in Beirut. This was another instance of reaching out and trying to get a feel for the other side.

Q: What was your impression of the Israeli government apparatus at the time you were there? It was the Labor Party I gather.

PALMER: Yes, it was the Labor Party and no one gave the Herut party, later Likud, any chance of ever getting into power. I remember people sort of scoffed at me because I called on Menachem Begin once and had a fascinating historical review with him. But you know, why waste your time with someone like that. Yes, of course, they had locked up the whole Labor apparatus which also owns huge companies, which was a huge employer in itself. So you had the situation which still obtains where the religious parties, some very Orthodox, elements, have a swing power much greater than their numbers because they provide the government with its majority. But it was a formidable apparatus. I think the fascinating thing was that there was within each party a wide range of views from doves to hawks in the case of national security and also regarding social issues.

One of the phenomenon that John Leonard, one of my officers, kept an eye on was the growing political clout of the Sephardic immigrants, mostly from Arab countries, which was new. They were sort of preempted by the Labor Party, but they began to become more politically sensitive and sensible of their own numbers. That phenomenon of feeling left out by the Europe origin of Ashkenazim was really one of the factors that led to Begin's electoral victory.

Q: I'm told by people who served in Tel Aviv that it's both a political officers heaven and a nightmare because everybody talks, they're extremely articulate, but overload is the name of the game.

PALMER: That's true, and I think it was particularly challenging for the officers who were focused on the domestic political situation. For instance, George Lambrakis had a very fine relationship with Shimon Peres; I think they were about the same age and they got along very well together. I developed a good personal relationship with Abba Eban, whom I found very straightforward, and honest. So it was really fun.

One little sidelight, by this time I was into my fifth year of dealing with Arab-Israel affairs, and I applied for on-the-job Arabic language training with a tutor. There were plenty of Arabs who could have done it, it could have helped me. FSI turned me down. They said that Israel was not a proper place to study Arabic. My career would have been quite different had I been able at least to start Arabic training there.

Q: In the first place, Walworth Barbour, he was in Israel for a very long time as some of our ambassadors were. I mean, Sam Lewis is another one. I've heard that this is both good and bad, you have wonderful contacts, but the other one is that its very easy for clientitis to take over. Was this reflected in what you were doing, and what he was doing?

PALMER: Wally indeed was very warm-hearted to the centrality of Israeli experience, and they responded with great affection. For instance, on these refugee problem negotiations, my initiation with him and the Israeli establishment. He was very tenacious, he was a darn hard negotiator, and I'm sure nobody could have done any better than he. On the question of Israel's then incipient nuclear arms development, he was very tough. He realized the criticality of that. Nobody in the embassy, to my knowledge -- no other State person at least -- was in on some of the details of that, they were so highly classified.

As you may recall, we collectively in the Department and the embassy, felt that we could at least deter the Israelis from developing nuclear weapons capability if we provided them with conventional arms. It ended up that they had both, but it was a worthwhile ploy. And I know some of the Arab post colleagues thought that would be the end of the world if we provided conventional arms to Israel. Well, it turned out not to be such a bum idea.

Q: How did you view our other posts? I'm particularly thinking of our embassies in Beirut, Damascus, Amman, and Cairo, perhaps Riyadh, as far as how they were presenting the case, and did you find yourself almost having to carry on a defensive dialogue with them in your reporting?

PALMER: No, not really. I think the visits exchanges had helped. I do not recall any degree of clientitis on the part of my counterparts in their reporting. There had been a traditional institutional antagonism between our post in Jerusalem, which was an independent post as you know, independent the embassy in Tel Aviv. During my initial period in Tel Aviv I was struck by the occasional bitterness on the part of the consul general or the ambassador in open reporting; it became almost personal. Some of us worked on that, and we established to both to

them that the other was a worthy colleague, and they began to get along okay.

Q: *Who was the consul general?*

PALMER: Evan Wilson. He was a very fine man, very well versed. He wrote two books on the Jerusalem issue. I found him very helpful. Of course, given the, if you will, the mutual interest, particularly Amman had with us, and Beirut also in connection with the Palestine refugees, on both sides of the border we embassies knew it was important, for instance, for the U.S. to fund adequately the Arab refugee agency. So we did some things in common.

Q: *How did you view the way the Israelis dealt with their internal Arab problem?*

PALMER: I think the most generous description of that would be Uncle Tomism. They were certainly second class citizens, and in some ways they still are. The Arabs who remain, and I don't want to characterize them as being very different from those who left and became refugees, but it's natural that those who remained were people who were not as activist and accepted their fate more easily. Anyway, they were essentially bought off.

Q: *So they didn't represent any movement.*

PALMER: No. There were some Arab party leaders, particularly from the Nazareth area, who were very active in a Martin Luther King sort of way in terms of language instruction and the equivalency and the quality of education. That was going on, and there were some riots in the Nazareth area over what we in the embassy regarded as very unfortunate. Israeli seizures of Arab property. This is an area which my associate John Leonard kept a close eye on, and interestingly, after his tour in Tel Aviv was completed he left the Foreign Service and went into training as a Syrian Catholic and has been ever since in a monastery in Nazareth.

Q: *What was the view of Nasser and Nasser's threats and Nasserists in the Arab world to Israel at that time. We're talking, you were there from '63 to '66.*

PALMER: Well, it was considered very real by the Israelis. By that I mean that they had sporadically pretty good intelligence about some of the more bizarre military threats that he was trying to mount in terms of the Germans working on missiles, etc. So it was serious, and I think we had without a doubt a better fix on the Israeli military thinking, and their foreign intelligence, than our colleagues had vis-a-vis the Egyptian establishment at that time. It was scary.

Q: *Were you getting from your military attachés, your own contacts within the Israeli military, the idea that they were going to strike first if there was a problem.*

PALMER: No. We got none of that. Certainly in terms of preparation we appreciated their capacity to do so. I was not aware of any planning in the back of their minds for preemptive strikes, unless they found, as they concluded they did in Iraq, the beginning of a nuclear weapons development.

Q: *What about the Jewish lobby in the United States? Did you find yourself spending a good deal*

of time dealing with visitors who were coming over who were unofficial but represented Jewish interests in the United States?

PALMER: No. I mentioned earlier that during the time we were preparing for the Johnston refugee initiative, the White House, and Mike Feldman -- I mentioned him earlier -- was very helpful. He was the White House man specifically for the Jewish constituency of the Democratic party. In Tel Aviv it was rather striking that the Zionist leaders, and others who visited Israel from the United States, very rarely had anything to do with the embassy. They meshed right in with the Israeli preparations for them, the government and the Jewish Agency, and others. I remember attending a big session, I mean perhaps a thousand people in a theater that was near the embassy on the waterfront, and I attended because we routinely received invitations to these things from the Israeli organizers, and I noted that Foreign Minister Golda Meir was going to give the major speech, so I attended. And she really gave them a very partisan, a very Zionist pitch. It was quite unbalanced and very spirited and emotional, and then she was just winding down when she spotted me, I was seated down front, and she said, "Oh my, I didn't realize we had a goyim here."

Q: Did you find in your reporting that you were having to keep in mind that any reports that might be disparaging of anything in Israel, as we're always reporting around the world, but in this case that it might get leaked to the press? Did one have to take precautions to report by other means, or be a bit self-censor or not?

PALMER: We certainly didn't do any self-censoring or toning down. It never occurred to us, it really didn't. Historically, of course, there had been the case where the Israeli desk officer had his career ruined after having...well, not the Israeli desk, the Palestine desk officer. This was way back at the establishment, or right after the establishment of Israel, and the pro-Israel lobby had his career. But they knew better than to mess with us, and I think the fact that Barbour himself was held in such high regard gave us some immunity, if you will. Anyway, we reported things as we saw them, and certainly in my reports I never put on kid gloves. I did have a rather voluminous official-informal correspondence with my key NEA contact, Harry Symmes, but that practice was not unusual.

Q: So you left there in '66, before the big '67 war which changed the balance tremendously. What was your impression of whither Israel when you left in '66?

PALMER: Partly because of my professional involvement for so long in the refugee problem, I remained concerned that the people element of the Arab-Israeli problem be ameliorated. Things could become dangerous. In retrospect it was probably an over emphasis of the people element. But anyway, that's the way I felt then. I was concerned also about their attitude and actions with regard to the division, or their non-division more accurately, of the Jordan River waters. The Israeli non-sharing, or not sharing in a fair way. That underlay a lot of animosity on the part of the Syrians as well as the Jordanians. I left after three years there with a keen appreciation for the single-mindedness of the Israeli establishment to be tough, and not to be perceived as weak. And also, generally speaking, their unwillingness to foresee the possibilities of a negotiated settlement.

Q: One last question. Did golf help you? You know in some countries such as Thailand, Burma and Korea, it's almost essential to play golf but I've never heard it said that of Israel.

PALMER: Wally Barbour played golf almost every non-rainy day. So it was a personal thing with him. As a matter of fact, so overworked was I the first few months with these negotiations, etc., and in an exhausted state one weekend, I was trimming some high rose bushes around the place where we lived, and I really put my back out, a spinal disc, and I never lifted a golf club. I sold them when I left.

GEORGE LAMBRAKIS
Political Officer
Tel Aviv, Israel (1963-1966)

George Lambrakis was born in Illinois in 1931. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1952, he went on to earn both his master's degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1953 and his law degree from Tufts University in 1969. His career has included positions in Saigon, Pakse, Conakry, Munich, Tel Aviv, and Teheran. Mr. Lambrakis was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 2002.

Q: You were in Tel Aviv from when?

LAMBRAKIS: I was in Tel Aviv from 1963 to 1966, about three or three and a half years. This was a very interesting time, before the '67 war. We had a political section of three people, four people counting the aide to the ambassador. The CIA there operated entirely as liaison. My personal job was both internal politics and handling the cross border incidents that were taking place regularly across the borders from Jordan, Syria, and to some degree, Lebanon. I got to meet all of the stars that you hear about. I knew Dayan personally, Peres personally, Begin personally, as well as many of the others, such as Ezer and Weizmann. All of these people became even better known later on.

Q: You got there in '63. What was the situation in Israel at the time?

LAMBRAKIS: Well the situation in Israel hasn't changed a hell of a lot except in some ways I can describe. The Arab-Israeli situation has become probably the largest part of my career one way or the other. At that time, '67 hadn't taken place. Brael was still organizing itself as a new state. While I was there Ben Gurion, Eshkol, and Golda Meier, were the three prime ministers. It was still run by the Labor Party. It was still the regional Israel, as it were. A major change in Israeli foreign policy took place with the election of the right wing, the Herut party and Begin only in 1977.

Q: So it was a labor government.

LAMBRAKIS: Labor government internally. While I was there the United States changed its

policy in one major way, to begin selling arms to Israel which only the French, among Western powers, were doing before. It turns out I had a personal hand in it because I wrote a telegram describing how the Israelis were getting very impatient with the way the Syrians in particular were trying to close off their water sources. The headwaters of the Jordan was one of the big issues at the time. I had very good contacts in Israel, and I suggested they might just lash out in time. Interestingly enough, two or three days later, my boss Steve Palmer said, "There is a telegram in. It is LIMDIS, limited distribution, and you are not authorized to read it, but what I can tell you is that your last telegram seems to have tipped the balance, so now the United States is prepared to sell arms to Israel for its own defense." I, of course, didn't know anything about that kind of debate going on in Washington, because I was too removed from it. The amount of interchange has changed so much; the second person in a political section not being able to read a limited distribution cable is unheard of today. But that happened. What else happened then; a lot of different things. I could tell you some stories which have to do with how you operate as a diplomat.

Q: Yes.

LAMBRAKIS: One of these stories: I had a lot of good contacts there with Israeli journalists who, unlike other places, have very good contacts themselves. Israel is a country where you can learn a lot from the press but even more from the journalists themselves, who like to keep you as their contact as well. The issue had been on one occasion whether the Israelis would carry out a return attack for one of the cross border attacks they had suffered. We had sort of set up a record of asking them to restrain themselves every time we saw that coming. So it was not in their interest to let us know in advance what they were going to do. On this occasion, we didn't know whether they would or wouldn't. Just before the ambassador's staff meeting (the ambassador at that time was Wally Barbour who had been there for about eight or nine years. He stayed like ten or eleven, the longest serving ambassador to Israel, although my friend Sam Lewis who was a classmate of mine at SAIS, later became one of the longest serving ambassadors in Israel also. But Wally Barbour still holds the record.) Anyway, just before that staff meeting I had gone down to the commissary in the basement to buy something, and this reporter I knew actually tracked me down, and he told me that unlike what he had told me over the phone, the Israeli military were not going to carry out this reprisal attack. So I went in to the staff meeting, and the military attachés, the colonels, said they had their good contacts in the defense department who said they are going to carry out the reprisal attack. I said I just heard from this contact who says that they won't. Perhaps because my contacts were so good, the ambassador decided to go with me. And they carried out the reprisal attack. So that burned one of my contacts. I never believed him again.

Another such story: There was a very senior ambassador who was in charge of monitoring cross border raids, cross border activities in the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem, which is an hour and a half away from Tel Aviv. I used to go see him. On one occasion, we got a telegram from Washington, unusually brief. The Israelis had just occupied a bridge over the Jordan River which in effect was going into Jordan. Washington said, "Tell the Israelis to get off the bridge." It was basically in that many words. So I was sent up there, and I, a very junior political officer, was sitting before this very senior ambassador. I said, "You must get off the bridge. Washington says you must get off the bridge." He was incandescent. He just blew up. I got back in the car on my

way back to Tel Aviv. It took an hour and a half. By the time I got there, he had called my boss and said, "What is this guy Lambrakis doing?" Steve Palmer said, "Those are his instructions." But again you have to have your bosses back you up in these situations.

Q: Oh, yes. What about, at that time of course, Israel had not occupied the west bank. Was there much contact with, I guess it was part of Jordan at that time. Was there much contact there? I mean how were the Palestinians perceived in those days?

LAMBRAKIS: Well, the Palestinians were perceived as non-entities because, remember, before 1967 while a PLO was in existence, it was not very lively. It was run by a very passive character in Cairo before Arafat took over. And it was the '67 war that really made the PLO active. Mind you there were groups of revisionists, who would attack across the borders. Some of the major problems which historically occurred were due to them. This included the 1954 Gaza raid which Israel carried out as a major reprisal raid for the attacks over the borders from Egyptian controlled Gaza, which indirectly started a series of events that ended up with the Suez crisis of 1956. That was important enough. There was another heavy Israeli reprisal raid in Jordan whose name I forget now, which followed a series of pin pricks across the Jordan River; that again made an awful lot of trouble for the Jordanian King Hussein, the brave young king as he was known in the U.S. There was the Lavon affair hanging in the background. The Lavon affair was a complicated thing that had happened in the early 1950s when the foreign minister, Lavon, I guess at that time he might have been minister of defense.

Q: I think he was minister of defense for some reason.

LAMBRAKIS: That's right. He was blamed for messing up one of the secret Israeli operations that was intended to tear up U.S. relations with Egypt by pinning on the Egyptians some kind of attack on American installations in Cairo, which the Israelis carried out indirectly and were caught. Lavon was the one who was supposed to have given the order. Ben Gurion insisted that it was Lavon's problem, not his. That hung over the Labor Party at the later time when Dayan was minister of defense. Peres was below him in the ministry as secretary general. There was an awful lot of internal political action that we were following in Israel. I can go on now and talk to you about what I did when I came back to the Israel desk.

Q: We want to do that, but how was Ambassador Walworth Barbour seen? Was he seen as being by his junior officers as being in the pocket of the Israelis, or was he his own man?

LAMBRAKIS: Wally, I wouldn't say he was in the pocket of the Israelis, but I would say that he had made a decision that he was quite open about, saying that the Arabs were hopeless. You must remember at the time that the Arabs had tried to carry out a war, invading Israel in '48. Lost it. Their foreign policy under Nasser and others was one failure after another. Wally had been in the UK; he had been in the Soviet Union. He had been through the '56 crisis when he was DCM in the UK. There is no question that he was on the Israeli side. I don't think he would ever have been in line to become assistant secretary or anything of that kind because he wasn't balanced enough in that sense. On the other hand, he was a pro. He could write very good cables when he chose to, and he carried things on as a professional. I don't think he leaned towards the Israelis when leaning meant serious changes in policy, but there is no question that they liked him, and

he lasted so long and in effect, longer than political appointees afterwards, some of them Jewish. At the time when he was there, there were no Jewish officers ever assigned to Israel. But then I don't think there weren't Greek-Americans assigned to Greece.

Q: Did you get any feel that in our embassy as a political officer you were obviously reading the cables that were coming from the other posts in the area. Was it a them versus us idea? I mean you know, the pro-Israelis can see these and the others, the Arabists. Would you consider that they were seeing a different world or something or they were too wedded to the Arabs or something like that?

LAMBRAKIS: Well, in justice I think that the Arabists of the world suspected that the Israelis were up to something, which in the long run turned out to be true, but which at the time we didn't think the Israelis were up to. In fact I remember we went through a whole production. I was part of drafting a cable in which we talked about the fact that Israel because its an industrial nation, would no longer be dependent on territory for its economic future, and had no ambitions to take more territory. Mind you this was under a Labor government, and this was in the early 1960s. There was an awful lot of pressure in the Arab world to throw the Jews into the sea. The Arab posts were reporting this and properly were suspicious of what the Israelis were up to. There was a right wing in Israel which talked about Judea and Samaria and how the Bible required this to be Jewish. We thought of them as kooks at the time. It was a small minority that were writing in a few newspapers, and we thought, you know, this is not who is running the country. Interestingly enough, Ezer Weizmann who was heading the air force at the time was considered the most right wing hawk. He is now president of Israel, and is considered a dove compared to where everybody else has moved. What happened primarily as of '67, but afterwards in '77 as well, is that the whole Israeli political establishment, and with it the majority of the people, moved steadily right, more hard line, after this period.

Q: What about relations with our consulate general in Jerusalem. I know later on they got very strained. At this time was there much of a difference?

LAMBRAKIS: I don't think there was because, again, sure there would be differences at times, and the consulate general always had to protect its independence from ambassadors on both sides, particularly from Israel. But then there wasn't any effort to take that over. I think our embassy didn't consider the consulate in Jerusalem as being terribly important in the way things were going, so you can't say that we worried much about them. As I obviously knew Consul General Wilson and other people in the consulate, they worried more about us than the other way around. Sometimes there was, I wouldn't say bad feeling, I would just say different views.

Q: Well of course, it was really after the '67 war when essentially they became the representatives of the occupied territories.

LAMBRAKIS: Right.

Q: At that time, Israel was a sort of a dead end. You couldn't serve in an Arab country if you had served in Israel.

LAMBRAKIS: I don't think that was entirely so. Of course I was not an Arabist, so that was a problem. Later on as you know, even though I had served in Israel, I went to Lebanon and Iran. I presumably could have gone anywhere else if I was an Arabist. In fact it was brought to my attention later on when I was in line for an ambassadorship somewhere in the area and Roy Atherton noted that I was not an Arabist, as ambassadors there were supposed to be. However, this was a particularly important moment in U.S. policy, because the six day war must have scared the American Jewish community as it scared the Israelis. And I have always wondered in my own mind why the American Jewish community became so strongly pro-Israel after a war which the Israelis won hands down so easily. Up to then there had been a strong anti-Zionist group in the U.S. which disappeared after '67. We on the Israeli desk noticed this because from one day to the next we were dealing differently.

The '67 war personally was important to me because, having served in Israel, I predicted that the Israelis would win the war on the first day when they destroyed the Egyptian and Syrian air forces on the ground. I wrote the first cable. For the first week I was writing the cables all around the world. I remember we got a cable later from Mac Godley, who was ambassador in Laos, saying this is the best coverage I have ever seen in the Foreign Service of any important event. But Roy Atherton asked me, "Do we really want to say the Israelis won this war?" So we tried to cover ourselves. But it was very clear to me from what I had seen of Israeli military abilities that if they destroyed the air force they were going to win. It was only a question of when.

I also did briefings that first week for the NATO embassies. I got a very good friend in the Belgian embassy as a result. Mike Sterner and I alternated after that. We kept this up for several weeks. I think the '67 war made the Israelis feel invincible. One of the interesting things to me was that Abba Eban and others, Abba Eban was then the foreign minister under Golda Meier, came out saying Israel do not want to hold on to any of these territories. It was prepared to return them all for peace. Then within a few weeks we were hearing, "well the exception is Jerusalem, well the exception is Sharm-el-Sheikh..." Then there was something called the Alon plan which was to set up a series of strong points all along the Jordan River, even though the rest of the territory would eventually be returned.

We do know the Arabs didn't help themselves at all by going to Khartoum in November, having already burned one British or American embassy, I don't remember. They attacked several embassies in the Arab world. They went down there, and there they came up with the three or four no's of Khartoum, no negotiations, no recognition, no this, no that which didn't help any with the Israeli public. So within about six months the Israelis were talking about returning some territories, but not many. As you know, eventually there was this compromise resolution, resolution 242, in the Security Council, which I always tell my students about, where ambiguity of language was purposeful and was the only way to get the resolution passed, in which peace and security on one side were to be exchanged for "territories conquered" by the Israelis in 1967, not "*the* territories conquered." Because ever since then it has always been accepted that the Israelis will hold on to some of that territory. The question has always been how much.

Q: Well did you get a feel on the desk about the Jewish community in the United States?

LAMBRAKIS: Oh, yes, sure. Maybe those were different days, but you know, we in the State

Department did not feel that our job was to reflect American political realities. We left that to the Congress and the White House. We called the shots, we thought, the way we saw them. Yes, we did get pressures here and there, but not directly. As a matter of fact, a little side story, when my next assignment came up and I was going to be assigned to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, I didn't mind going as Congressional Intern instead. Roy Atherton, as I recall, said to me, "Why do you want to go as a Congressional Intern anyway? What is there to be done there?" Those were days in which the Congress operated separately from us. While I was in Israel for example, I was control officer for a visit of Senator Tunney from California and Congressman Culver, both of whom were close to Kennedy. We visited various places in Israel, but I never felt political pressure. Nowadays I think there is great pressure on the State Department to make things easier for the White House in the sense that if you report something which doesn't fit political beliefs, it is going to be turned down or twisted, so you might as well do it the other way to begin with, which I think is too bad, but it is the way the world has developed.

Q: Was anybody saying let's watch out for the Israelis because now they have gotten this, I mean this does not look like, I mean this nation which is fighting for its life now, may turn into a monster to gobble up the rest of the...

LAMBRAKIS: I didn't feel that very much. There is a lot of talk about how the Arabists are running the State Department and all that, which as you know, has resulted actually in one case of a Jewish lobbyist becoming Assistant Secretary of NEA.

Q: He was not even an American citizen until, an Australian...

LAMBRAKIS: Right. I don't know his background, but he was ambassador in Israel, and he was Assistant Secretary which I thought was...

Q: He was the head of American-Israeli...

LAMBRAKIS: ...public affairs committee.

Q: And as an Australian citizen.

LAMBRAKIS: Right. Interesting. Well, others you know, Ned Walker, Nick Veliotos whom I served under eventually and others, had to take much more care about getting through the Congress. You know, they had to be acceptable as not Arabists. I never felt the Arabists had that much influence. Frankly, I always thought the Israeli desk carried its proper weight in there, and I still do. After 1967 I think we all thought that Israel would be very secure, just as the Israelis did. So the 1973 war came as a shock. That is another story. We will get to it if you want to later on. You have to remember, there has been a book written about 1967. The Liberty, the attack on this American ship by the Israelis who sank it with the loss of a large number of naval personnel.

Q: I think it was around 30 or something.

LAMBRAKIS: Really?

Q: Yes, but it was significant, and for many people in the Navy and others have never forgotten because you know it is impossible to think it was not a deliberate attack.

LAMBRAKIS: I agree. I remember at the time, and I was on the Israeli desk just before the war started, there was a lot of pressure being put on the Israelis as well as on the Egyptians and Syrians, particularly on the Egyptians, on Nasser, to keep the war from breaking out. I think the Israelis put a lot of weight into who would be blamed for starting the war. As you know, they kicked it off, because, and I can understand why, they had a reserve army. They could not keep their people in reserve mobilized. The Egyptians had a non-reserve army, a professional army. They were sitting on the frontier; they were carrying out maneuvers in the Sinai. There had been attacks there. Nasser had been talking about closing off the Straits of Tiran, which incidentally, he apparently hadn't done. We know that the Israelis had to do something and they did kick off. But because the Liberty had all these acoustic devices, they presumably didn't want the Liberty being able to prove that they struck first. I have to assume that was their reason. I can't think of any other reason apart from possibly the fact that the Liberty was sitting in that part of the Mediterranean over which their air force came to attack the Egyptians from an unexpected direction, and possibly they were afraid that the Liberty would pick this up and somehow pass it on to the Egyptians. It is conceivable. I have forgotten the exact timing because the Liberty was kind of a side show at the time. It was only afterwards that we began to understand what had happened.

One of the interesting things of course was that Nasser was talking over an open telephone line, and we could read what he was saying to King Hussein. He was saying, "We are victorious, victorious. Come join us." This was after his air force had been destroyed, and he was anything but victorious. Hussein bought it partly because he was under pressure from his own Palestinian people, and entered the war. As a result he lost the whole West Bank and Jerusalem.

Q: Was there concern, I mean at the time did we see the conquering of the West Bank and all as being really a temporary thing? Was this sort of...

LAMBRAKIS: I think that is so, especially as Israel was saying it was a temporary thing in the beginning. But of course, along came the Allen plan. I remember explaining it to others in the State Department. Holmes was one of the other people who was then in political military affairs before he later became its Director. He was interested in it. But, you know, because the Israelis were thinking of alternatives, we assumed that they were planning to return most of the territory at some point. On the other hand, you know this was the beginning of a very different approach by the PLO, Arafat, where they carried out really a political mission which could easily be interpreted, if you read the constitution of the PLO, as being "we want it all back. The Jews must be thrown into the sea."

Q: But while you were on the desk, the Palestinians were not seen as a particular factor.

LAMBRAKIS: No, not during that period. We talked about the other Arab countries of course. Nasser was the key at that point. He didn't die until 1970. He offered to resign, as you know, after 1967, but the people said no, no, Nasser stay with us.

Q: How did we view Nasser? I mean did we see him as a real menace or did we see him as somebody who really wasn't very effective?

LAMBRAKIS: Well, I think he was a menace in 1967 in the sense that he obviously called for the removal of the UN force and amazingly the UN secretary general removed them immediately.

Q: U Thant.

LAMBRAKIS: U Thant, yes. In that sense a bit of a menace. It all depends on whom you are speaking to. On the Israeli desk I don't think we felt he was a great menace because we knew how powerful the Israelis were. If you go back and read some of the CIA and other people who served in Egypt in the 1950s, you will see that they object to the American foreign policy under Eisenhower and Dulles going back that far, which made the devil out of Nasser rather than perhaps accepting him as a kind of Sekou Toure who wanted independence from everybody and therefore accepted Soviet assistance. However, he was sitting in a more volatile part of the world. I don't think I would say that he was a menace, but on the other hand I don't think of him as a tame little lap dog either.

THOMAS L. HUGHES
Director, Bureau of Intelligence & Research
Washington, DC (1963-1969)

Mr. Hughes was born and raised in Minnesota and was educated at Carleton College, Oxford University and Yale University. After service with the US Air Force he worked on Capitol Hill and became active in Democratic Party politics. He later joined the Department of State, first as Assistant to Under Secretary Chester Bowles and subsequently as Deputy Director, then as Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, where he served during the event filled period 1961 to 1969. His assignments brought him in close contact with the major political figures of that era. His final government assignment was to Embassy London as Deputy Chief of Mission. Mr. Hughes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: You said there was a connection between the German thing and Israel.

HUGHES: I don't mean the obvious connection. German reparations for the Nazi period were already set in motion. Adenauer had worked out his own arrangements with Israel. Nahum Goldmann had already been instrumental in negotiating the initial commitments for financial compensation. The German and Israeli constituencies in the United States were, of course, quite different—troubled and defensive on the German side and antagonistic and suspicious on the Israeli side. Naturally enough, the Israelis could not be expected to be leaders in the effort to improve German-American relations. On the other hand, the Germans were wary about attitudes

in the American-Jewish community and what effect they might have on US presidents and US policies toward Germany.

What I had in mind was something else. From the outset the Kennedy administration tormented itself with the issue of nuclear weapons, particularly as this issue pertained to Germany and Israel. A State Department group played the dominant role on the German nuclear issue. The group centered on Undersecretary George Ball, his close collaborator Robert Schaetzel, Policy Planning Staff member Henry Owen, and a distinguished carryover from the Dulles days, Robert Bowie. This group conjured up a hypothetical German nuclear menace. They assumed an eventual German determination to obtain nuclear weapons and set about heading off this calamity. Their answer was the famous MLF—a multi-lateral seaborne force composed of NATO mix-manned, multi-national crews. The idea was that this would embed the Germans inextricably in a NATO controlled nuclear project and avert the prospect of a unilateral German finger on the nuclear trigger.

After great American pressure, the MLF proposal was widely agreed to within NATO, the Germans themselves awkwardly being brought aboard. It became the official policy of the Kennedy Administration. Its practicality was ridiculed from the beginning, however, and some of the leading players in the Kennedy administration were only half-heartedly supportive. I remember being summoned to the White House one day by Mac Bundy who was one of Ball's competitors for influence in the Kennedy Administration and potentially a rival for future appointment as secretary of state. "George just insists on being the piano player on this one (the MLF), doesn't he?"

Mac Bundy's thinly-veiled skepticism about Ball's MLF proposal quickly asserted itself after Kennedy's assassination. Johnson turned out to be skeptical as well, and with Presidential support withdrawn, the MLF collapsed before takeoff. Incidentally, throughout the MLF controversy INR's coverage of European attitudes in general and of De Gaulle's role in particular was seen by the MLF proponents as unhelpful. Here was a cameo insight into the plusses and minuses—the ups and downs-- of bureaucratic coalitions. George Ball was already engaged in giving voice to his celebrated skepticism about Vietnam and he often used INR material. Ball therefore found INR simultaneously indispensable in the mornings on Vietnam and retrograde in the afternoons on the MLF, both enhancing and obstructing his own two driving interests.

But there was another counterpart to the MLF saga, one that also was predicated on the Kennedy administration's determination to avoid nuclear proliferation. Just as the MLF was contrived to obstruct a possible German nuclear weapon, so the entire Kennedy administration "set its face like flint toward Jerusalem" in trying to forestall an Israeli nuclear weapon.

I was reminded of this lately when I was reading a new book about Israel and the nuclear weapon by Avner Cohen, who has been working here at the U.S. Institute of Peace. It turns out that the Israelis started work on their Dimona nuclear reactor, excavating for it, in the late '50s. There were U-2 overflights of Dimona and subsequent briefings of President Eisenhower. Art Lundahl was already then the chief photo-interpreter at NPIC (National Photographic Interpretation Center), and he continued in that capacity under Kennedy.

According to Lundahl's account to Cohen, he briefed Eisenhower about Dimona in 1958 in the company of Admiral Strauss. The briefing elicited no reaction, leaving Lundahl with the impression that the White House accepted the development. After the photos were presented, Strauss had asked: "What conclusion do you draw from these pictures?" Lundahl had replied: "The only conclusion you can draw is that Israel is embarking on a nuclear weapons program. That is the only interpretation possible." To Lundahl's surprise, there was no Presidential response whatever to this statement. Eisenhower left the meeting without saying a word. Lundahl's conclusion at the time was clear: "I had the impression that he either knew about, or was acquiescent in, or wasn't particularly concerned about, what seemed to us to be a rather dramatic new development."

Hence the Israeli nuclear issue was another of the hot potatoes bequeathed by Eisenhower to Kennedy, in addition to the more familiar ones of Laos and Vietnam. In fact there was a national intelligence estimate the first week of December 1960, issued by then-DCI Allen Dulles, which concluded that Israel was building a nuclear weapon. Two days later on Meet the Press John McCone, still director of the Atomic Energy Commission, publicly leaked the conclusion of this classified NIE, by announcing on TV that Israel was building a nuclear weapon. Nasser reacted on the 23rd of December, 1960, stating that an Israeli nuclear weapon would inflame the Middle East and might well require Egypt to engage in a preventive war. That same month the possibility of the allegedly anti-Israeli Senator Fulbright becoming Kennedy's secretary of state was shot down by an organized lobbying effort.

In other words the subject of Israel and nuclear weapons was smack on the agenda during the Eisenhower-Kennedy transition December 1960 and January 1961. McCone's opposition to an Israeli nuclear weapon was public knowledge. Moreover, he was no particular friend of Israel to begin with. He was a prominent Catholic (indeed a Knight of Malta), an Eisenhower Republican, and still head of the Atomic Energy Commission. These attributes were well known to Kennedy four months later when he was casting around for a successor to Allen Dulles after the latter's firing. The Israeli nuclear issue itself had to be one of the factors in Kennedy's mind when he selected McCone as his Director of Central Intelligence. (McCone's unhappiness with Israeli nuclear developments also was a factor in his own resignation under LBJ in 1965.)

We then embarked on a tortuous saga in which Israel and the friends of Israel in two American administrations succeeded in outwitting and outlasting the combined forces of the president, secretary of state, secretary of defense, the National Security Advisor, the head of the arms control disarmament agency, and the CIA. For three years in the Kennedy administration all of these gentlemen were united on non-proliferation. They were determined to prevent an Israeli nuclear weapon. Kennedy told Rusk that his highest priority for US-Israeli relations was to curtail the nuclear program at Dimona. Rusk himself kept telling the Israelis that the chief threat to US-Israeli relations was the Dimona reactor. "You are not playing fair and square with us." McNamara was saying we are not going to allow the Israelis to get the bomb. "We are going down the road to a non-proliferation treaty, and we can't permit Israel, which the rest of the world regards as the 51st American state, to engage in this frolic on its own." And during their visits to Washington there were warning sessions at the White House with Ben Gurion and Eshkol about Israel's nuclear intentions.

Throughout the Kennedy administration, and later for years under Johnson, this sorry saga involved constant foot dragging on the Israeli side and repeated efforts in circles inside and outside the United States government to postpone and delay. Inside the Kennedy White House, Mac Bundy's assistant, Mike Feldman, handled relations with the Jewish community. Kennedy put Mike in charge of this issue. He ultimately convinced the Israelis that American inspections of Dimona had to be accepted. Then came the handicapping of the inspections—the arguments about appropriate dates and frequency, the severe time limits, the restrictions on numbers and equipment, and ultimately, at the end of each visit, the suspect results. The inspectors were hobbled and unhappy. McCone was equally unhappy with the inspectors. “Of course the Israelis are developing the bomb. Why do we keep putting out these tepid statements saying that we can't be sure?” INR's Granville Austin thought the benefit of the doubt should be on the US side. “We should assume that the Israelis are developing nuclear weapons, and it is up to them to disprove it, not on us to prove it.” But that formulation was never operative.

Q: Was there a feeling that this was domestic politically?

HUGHES: The domestic sensitivity was obvious. But in the Kennedy administration you had a total lineup including the President and all his top advisors firmly supportive of the anti-nuclear policy-- unlike Johnson who at the end, during the election year of 1968, pulled the rug out from under his subordinates on this issue and accepted the Israeli *fait accompli*. During the Kennedy years, when Presidential overtures to Nasser were also in the works, the whole question of reassuring the Egyptians became important. For a while the tepid inspection results from Dimona served the diplomatic purpose of allowing the State Department to reassure the Egyptians that “we have inspected and to the best of our knowledge” the Israelis do not have a nuclear weapon. But it was not very convincing.

Later on, for public use the Israelis developed the formula “we will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons to the Middle East.” But, we all thought, they will not be the second either. It depends on what “introduce” means. If you have all the components of the weapons in adjoining rooms and it only takes you 20 minutes to put them together, have you introduced or haven't you introduced? This lawyerly argument persisted for years and Paul Warnke and Rabin were still arguing around these semantics in 1968.

The Kennedy administration persisted to the end, but ineffectively, in its serious non-proliferation argument with Israel. McCone became increasingly frustrated because he took the flim-flam of the Dimona inspections personally. With his background at the AEC he considered himself an expert on nuclear matters. He knew he was being hoodwinked by the Israelis. By April, 1965, when he resigned, McCone may also have felt that Johnson was not reliable on this policy. Although Johnson allowed Rusk and McNamara to continue to push the Israelis on Dimona, McCone decided that the inspections were not serious. I think this was one of the factors in his resignation.

It is even possible that the Israeli nuclear weapon was funded by tax-exempt donations from the US. A key figure in this connection in the late 1960's was Abe Feinberg, one of LBJ's major fund raisers and political friends in New York. He was a prominent Democratic lawyer and a big

friend of Israel who helped fund Dimona via contributions to the Weizmann Institute Whether or not private American donations are ultimately going to be traceable to the Dimona project is still unknown. But the story certainly has all the earmarks of verisimilitude—a picture of private American tax-exempt donations subverting official American policy on the hottest issue in U.S.-Israeli relations in the 1960's.

There was another related episode where I was involved. In August 1966, ten months before the Six Day War, Rusk called me in one morning and said “The White House is going to announce your appointment as assistant secretary for Near East and South Asia. at the noon briefing.” I said, “Whoa, nobody has talked to me about this. I'm very happy where I am.” Rusk asked if I had some hidden past they didn't know about, and I said “Well, come to think of it, I was a kibbutznik once in Israel, and that won't go over very well with your Arab clients. I was also chief assistant to Chester Bowles, who is back in India as ambassador now, and that won't go over very well in Pakistan. The Arabs and the Pakistanis are pretty important clients in NEA.” Somehow I also had the feeling that Rusk himself was not the driving force behind my nomination. In any event we agreed that I would stay in INR.

A few days later I happened to have lunch with Eppie Evron of the Israeli Embassy. who said, “You know, you should have taken that NEA job.” How he knew I had been offered it, I could only surmise. No one in the State Department knew about it ahead of time, but apparently the Israeli Embassy did. A year later in another conversation Eppie said “We wouldn't have had the Six Day War if you had taken that job.” I replied, “Are you kidding?”

Q: Looking at this Dimona problem, did people including INR ever calculate “Yes we are against proliferation, but an Israeli nuclear weapon would be a trump card because none of the other countries around Israel were going to develop nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future. So if the Israelis have them, Israel won't go down the drain.”

HUGHES: Of course this was the assumption that underlay the Israeli effort. While they themselves didn't admit they were pursuing the nuclear option, in the discussions with them the US negotiators operated on that assumption. Israel was beleaguered and Israeli nukes would be a major deterrent. Whenever the issue came up in conversations inside the American-Jewish community, or in media speculation, this constituted the main Israeli case. But I remember Rusk as early as 1961 upbraiding the Israelis on this proposition. Theirs was a very short-sighted view. Israel would stimulate others to follow in the Arab and Muslim world generally. There was no way that Israel could remain permanently the only nuclear power in the Middle East. Rusk would say that one day a successor of his would have to explain why an Israeli nuclear weapon was acceptable, but not a Libyan, Iranian, Iraqi or Pakistani one. “I do not envy him.” For years we were trying to get Israel to sign the non-proliferation treaty as a quid pro quo for one thing or another. The story has not been fully exposed, to say the least. Why Senator Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, didn't hold effective executive hearings on this issue, about which he felt strongly and which would have put him on the same wave length as the Kennedy administration, has yet to be explained.

Q: To most people looking at this it seems to be one of those times when we have a definite double standard. Israel can get away with whatever it wants, mainly because of political,

internal domestic clout. Other countries have to hew the line, but Israel can call its own tune and politicians are frightened to cross them.

HUGHES: Certainly the nuclear story has all of those earmarks. I think there is more to the story than we know now from Avner Cohen and others. I'd love to hear what Mike Feldman has to say. He is still around Washington. He was in the middle of this issue in the Kennedy White House.

Q: How can I find him?

HUGHES: He was a lawyer with the firm of Ginsberg, Feldman and Bress. That firm has disbanded, but David Ginsberg would know where to find him. (2007 note: he recently died.)

Later Bob Komer was the action man in the White House on Israeli nuclear issues. He is still with us (2000) but not in as good shape as he once was. He is as irascible as ever. (2007 note: he is since deceased.)

Q: Were you ever tasked with looking at this in INR?

HUGHES: Sporadically. This was another example of compartmentalization inside the intelligence community. The Dimona inspection project was highly classified. I knew about it, as did INR's office director for the Near East, Granville Austin. He was occasionally consulted and volunteered personal judgments. Others, although involved with the Middle East, remained officially ignorant about Dimona. Many analysts working on Arab-Israeli issues were not cleared for this information, at least not fully cleared. Occasionally they would write about the issue based on guesswork, press reports, or journalistic speculation. If they did write about it, they could be met with the riposte "Well, there is an inspection program, and you really don't know enough about it to write about it." Here again was an example of people with higher classifications telling lower level analysts that more was going on than they knew. The result was self-censorship to avoid embarrassment.

Q: I recall in my 30 years in the foreign service there would be a wink, a nod, a nudge, anything with Israel sort of saying "Well, the Israelis have us by the short hairs. They can do what they want." If you do write something it will be leaked to Senator Javits and the next thing you know you'll be crucified.

HUGHES: Still, that doesn't explain the Kennedy administration's complete unanimity on this issue at the top. They all agreed to brace the Israelis on the nuclear question, and dispatch inspection teams. The inspection teams had to be given some guidelines, of course, and apparently this is where the benefit of doubt went to the Israelis. Blandishments and restrictions on the ground at Dimona repeatedly made the inspections unsatisfactory.

Q: Did you feel in INR that anything that was written about Israel would probably be leaked? Did you face up to a question that is often there in American operations? Did you feel there was sort of a dual allegiance of Jewish analysts and Jewish officers?

HUGHES: In the Dimona case, it was the reverse of what you suggest. Nobody wanted leaks. The Israelis surely didn't want stories in the American press about Israel developing nuclear weapons. Israeli Embassy guidance was certainly to keep as quiet as possible on the issue and keep it out of the newspapers. In December, 1960, John McCone had himself been a major leaker. When the head of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission says on Meet the Press that Israel is developing nuclear weapons, this is fairly strong stuff. But as DCI he had no incentive to go public about the Dimona fiascos. They reflected on the adequacy of the US inspection system for which, presumably, he himself was formally responsible. When pressed, Israeli officials would occasionally say "Speculation about this may itself have a deterrent effect."

Q: I thought this might be a good time to stop. We have covered Germany and the Israeli nuclear issue, but let's continue with Israel and the '67 war and the role of INR in this. Then we will go on to do the whole Indo- China business. We've got Africa, India-Pakistan ,and Cuba. Then there was the National Intelligence Survey. Were there other tasks that were being done that were so encyclopedic or peripheral? How did you feel about those?

HUGHES: I can't say much about the National Intelligence Surveys. Soon after he became INR director in 1961, Roger Hilsman gave that responsibility back to the CIA, thereby also getting credit for reducing the number of INR personnel. Roger considered the Survey a waste of time for a serious, policy-oriented bureau, and he wanted to streamline INR to enhance the latter mission. The fact that we dispensed with the NIS shows that we considered it a comparatively unimportant and time-consuming proposition. For the marginal people who worked on it, it was considered almost a lifetime assignment.

Q: I was in INR for part of the time and I volunteered to go to Serbian training to make sure I didn't get involved in that.

Today is the 7th of September 1999. Again I want my time periods again. You were with INR from when to when?

HUGHES: I was Deputy Director from March '61 until April '63, and thereafter Director until September '69.

Q: Actually we had about reached the Six Day War in 1967. Where were we on that? Do you remember?

HUGHES: I think we had just about reached it. This was another intelligence problem-- predicting when the Israelis would move. LBJ had been warning them "Israel won't be alone unless you go alone". But once more the analysts were not privy to all the high level US conversations with the Israelis, nor, for that matter, were many members of the US Intelligence Board.

I remember that Walter Mondale, then a Senator from Minnesota, had asked me to substitute for him in a speech in northern Minnesota on that Monday in June when the Israeli preemptive strike on the Egyptian air force actually occurred and when the war broke out. On Friday morning four days before, I told Rusk that I was planning to go to Minnesota to make a speech. He wanted to

know then whether the intelligence community thought that the Israelis would strike that weekend. I had to tell him that I had just checked around town, and that the considered wisdom of the intelligence community was that they would probably not act quite yet. Embarrassingly enough, the Six Day War started when I was on the platform at Bemidji, Minnesota, making the speech.

Q: Well, what had been the feeling? Was it because the United Nations, under U Thant at that point, was pulling troops out of the Sinai and that this meant war, or that the Israelis were cocked and ready to go, but we hoped that our caution might prevail?

HUGHES: Well, we hoped they wouldn't. US credibility was at a low point. We had been warning the Israelis that we were adamant in our anti-nuclear stand. By then it was obvious to the Israelis that we had not succeeded in deterring them. It was probably pretty obvious to Nasser as well. There was press speculation that Israel already had a bomb in the basement. Indeed Nasser was publicly using the rumored existence of Israeli nuclear weapons as a rationale for an Egyptian attack on Dimona. So there had been threats of preemption from both sides.

The Israelis were complaining that the United States was not supporting Israel the way Dulles had promised to do -- in writing, they said -- over the closure of the Straits of Tiran. There was a big question about what Dulles had promised and what he hadn't. No one on the US side could find the text embodying the Dulles commitment. The lawyers also felt there were legal issues involved, and Eugene Rostow, former dean of Yale Law School and now an Undersecretary of State, could always be counted on to be a special friend of Israel on the seventh floor of the State Department. He was busy bringing his legal talents to bear on the issue.

Later after the crisis had passed, Louis Heren, a British correspondent in Washington, wrote a book that included an account about an official emissary going up to Gettysburg to try to find the Dulles commitment in the Eisenhower archives. He wrote that Thomas Hughes, the director of INR, was the emissary. This was total nonsense, and I promptly wrote Heren a letter telling him so. I asked him where he got his misinformation. He wrote back saying: "We are all getting older, so I forgive you for your failure of memory. You yourself were the source of this information." I wrote back again saying "I'm sorry, but I never went to Gettysburg and I never told you that I did." Anyway, that's the way history is made sometimes. It's in print, and as my Aunt Margaret used to say, "If it's in print, it must be true."

Q: As I recall, the U Thant move of withdrawing troops was done without the usual U.N. debating which would have given you some time.

HUGHES: I'm a little vague at this point about how precipitate U. Thant's actions were. But I am not vague at all about the consequences of the Israeli victory with the capture of Jerusalem and the West Bank. That meant that the problems we had before the war with Israel and its neighbors were intensified. Those consequences are still with us in spades. After the Israeli victory, of course, we were in the running- up stages for the 1968 US Presidential election, and it was pretty clear that the domestic political situation would inhibit any further American moves of a constructive nature.

Q: It sounds like the Israeli establishment called in all their chips.

HUGHES: I think so. Naturally there were degrees of rhetorical toughness. The ambassador, Abba Eban, was a comparatively gentle figure, suave and intellectual. But (later Prime Minister) Rabin was the negotiator on the nuclear issue and his equally astute counterpart was Paul Warnke at the Pentagon. I mentioned earlier that LBJ pulled the rug out from under Warnke as we approached the 1968 election. Even this did not preserve the normal Democratic vote in the Jewish community that year.

Nixon hoped to make inroads in that community. He did in fact indicate, via Henry Kissinger to Rabin, that a Nixon administration would not be as concerned as the previous Democratic administration had been over the Israeli nuclear question. This was a definite signal from the Nixon camp to the Israeli government, that a future Nixon administration would relax US policy toward Dimona. This led Rabin in turn to indicate to important American friends of Israel, that on the whole a Nixon victory would probably be better for Israel than a Humphrey one. This kind of treachery was bound to be hard for Humphrey to accept considering his decades-long support for Jewish and Israeli causes.

Q: How about Nasser?

HUGHES: Nasser had experienced his own ups and downs with Washington. The Kennedy Administration, as part of its interest in the Third World generally and in non-alignment, made a real effort to test the possibilities of a rapprochement with Nasser. A talented and friendly ambassador, John Badeau, was sent to Cairo. JFK and Nasser even had a personal correspondence. This interest and attention lapsed under Johnson, although I think it is fair to say that Kennedy toward the end also became skeptical about improving relations with Cairo. On his part Nasser was certainly disappointed with the new level of arms supplies for Israel which Kennedy authorized. Nasser's press chief in Cairo, all through the '60s, fretted publicly about Israeli nuclear weapons and the American role in giving false assurances and then looking the other way. You can argue that Nasser's preemptive temptations reflected a genuine concern on his part that we were at the end of the road on the nuclear question. That, as much as anything else, accounts for the Egyptian move to take advantage of the UN withdrawal in 1967 and to introduce Egyptian troops in their place.

Q: Did you find, because of this action, within the establishment, at least within the State Department, a change in attitude-- a different feeling about the Arab world and Israel?

HUGHES: There was certainly widespread recognition that the capture of Jerusalem, its emotional grip on Jewish feelings, and the probable Israeli determination to keep exclusive control of the city, added a whole new factor to the explosive Mideast agenda. This exclusiveness was bound to create huge problems for the Arab world and even the Vatican. Of course it also guaranteed that every US political platform from now on would be under pressure to endorse Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. The probability of Israeli settlements in Gaza and the West Bank predictably was another hornet's nest. Israel's attack on the USS Liberty also left a sour taste even with longtime American champions of Israel like Clark Clifford.

MICHAEL E. STERNER
Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1964-1966)

Ambassador Michael E. Sterner was born in New York in 1920. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University. He served in the U.S. Army prior to joining the Foreign Service in 1951. Ambassador Sterner served in Aden, Beirut, Cairo, Washington, DC, and was ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed in 1990 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Now, you were doing what when the 67 War started? I wonder if you could tell how the State Department operated at that time? And your view of this operation as far as it impacted on us.

STERNER: I was a Desk Officer on the Arab-Israel problem and so was one of the first people involved in setting up a Task Force on the seventh floor. Before war broke out on June 5, 1967, there was a three week period of diplomacy to try to head off this conflict. You remember the sequence of events..

Q: Could you go over this and how we were reacting, how we were seeing it at the time?

STERNER: Nasser ordered troops into the Sinai about May 15, as I remember it, and about three or four days later called on U Thant, then U.N. Secretary General, to withdraw the U.N. buffer force that had been in the Sinai and keeping the peace there. Then about the same time, or a few days later, Nasser announced closure of the Strait of Aqaba to Israeli shipping. At that point I think almost everybody felt that unless this thing could be defused very fast conflict was inevitable.

Q: The Strait of Aqaba was where they were getting their oil?

STERNER: Exactly. I can't tell you exactly what percentage but over the years about 60 to 70 percent of Israeli oil requirements came from Iran and certainly all that oil was coming into Elat. We were seized with trying to get the Egyptians to stand down and to think of various face-saving ways where it might be possible to prevent the conflict. We were, of course, worried about the implications of a conflict. No one at the time that this thing was brewing had any assurance that the Israelis could win this war in six days time. The Egyptians seemed very confident and for all we knew could give the Israelis some real trouble; we saw emerging out of that a very serious possibility of U.S.-Soviet confrontation, the Soviets being committed to Egypt at that time and ourselves to the Israelis. Even if we did not have such a confrontation, we saw the possibility of regional conflict unraveling our interests in much of the Arab world. So this was a really serious crisis for the United States. We of course had intensive diplomacy with the Egyptians but not to much avail. However, the Egyptians claimed that on the eve of the war, one of their top people, Zakaria Mohieddine was on his way here and had the Israelis not attacked might have defused the crisis. I tend to disbelieve this thesis because Nasser was too committed in the eyes of his own people and the eyes of the Arab world to the course of action he had taken.

I think he wanted a conflict.

Q: This is an important point. Sometimes it is claimed that this was some kind of bluff on the part of Nasser to posture, but at least in your impression and the people you were dealing with, you didn't feel that this was a bluff?

STERNER: No, I don't think it was a bluff. Of course if he had been lucky enough to get the Israelis to accept Egyptian control over their shipping and the right to determine who used the Strait of Aqaba and the disbandment of the UNEF Force in Sinai as a fait accompli and the reoccupation of Sinai with a large Egyptian Army...

Q: But this was never in the cards.

STERNER: But this was never in the cards. And I think he had to know it. The real error in judgment was what his military capability was in Sinai. And here I think Abdul Hakim Amer, the Defense Minister and Commander of the Egyptian Forces, probably oversold the Egyptian ability to stand up to the Israeli offensive. No one knows exactly how Amer died. The official version is that he committed suicide. Some people think he was poisoned by Nasser. My own feeling is that he had plenty to commit suicide about, so that we need not feel that explanation is totally implausible.

The other thing that we worked on during that period was to get the Israelis in Tel Aviv to hold off from taking unilateral military action. We were telling them that the international community could take effective action to protect Israeli interests.

We attempted during this period to form an international naval squadron that would in effect patrol the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba and insure freedom of shipping. Our own position of course was that the Gulf of Aqaba was High Seas and the Egyptians had no right whatsoever to exclude the Israelis or anyone else from transiting the Strait of Tiran. We didn't have many takers among our allies; at the time war broke out we had commitments from only the Netherlands and Costa Rica, if my memory serves, for contributions to the naval force. Our European allies were not rushing to join us.

Q: They didn't want to upset their interests because of oil particularly.

STERNER: That certainly, and also because they didn't like Washington's pro-Israel policies. In the end, of course, the Israelis decided, number one, that our diplomacy was not going to succeed and, number two, the longer he was allowed to hold these positions, the tougher it was going to be to dislodge him. And also, I think, they decided it would be much more beneficial to them to be the ones to assert Israel's rights rather than the international community. They had something to prove there and they certainly did prove it.

Q: Were you having contact with the Israeli Embassy and the Egyptian Embassy during this period of time? And how were they talking to you and were you sitting in own meetings?

STERNER: The Israelis were at first completely shocked that this had taken place. Secondly,

very determined that we should take action and do something about it. The Egyptians on the other hand were full of bluster about the fact that they had the rights to do this. This was Egyptian territory, the Sinai was Egyptian territory, they waited eight years for the international community to do something about the Arab-Israel problem, and this force had been there all this time, and it was an unnatural phenomenon to have an international force. It was the expected argumentation to support their positions. We were not at all persuaded at any point of the legitimacy of what the Egyptians were doing and did not think they had a good case in international law. In my opinion, Nasser was the aggressor in this war.

Q: Were you getting any pressure or any great demands for information from Members of Congress?

STERNER: Yes.

Q: How did you reply on these matters?

STERNER: We were making almost daily trips to the Hill and I was often the sidekick of some senior official who did the testifying. I remember having my arms full with maps and documents. Congressional committees were very worried at this period, as was the Executive Branch, and very impatient to know what the Administration was doing to resolve this crisis.

Q: How did we see the Six Day War and its outcome?

STERNER: We were enormously surprised by Nasser's action, initially very worried. We were also disappointed with the Israelis, that they had not given us more time. We thought at the time, maybe unrealistically in retrospect, that we had something going in terms of this international flotilla and our diplomacy. Once Israel attacked we were intensely worried about the conflict itself, about the potential for confrontation with the Soviet Union, and we were relieved when it became apparent in the third and fourth day of the conflict that the Israelis were scoring victories all over the place. We realized we were off the hook in terms of prolonged conflict and its impact on American relations elsewhere in the Middle East. There were many people who thought we might have to send troops and certainly would have to send massive supplies of military equipment at the time. But it happened so fast, you could hardly keep the shaded areas on the map moving as fast as the Israelis were taking over these areas.

Q: Well, even at your place, was there a feeling of by this point, I'm speaking of personal feeling, that well, Nasser's got his comeuppance. I say this because I was sitting in Yugoslavia at this time and I felt -- Well, he asked for it. I mean this is just a personal view of a foreign service officer and I think this was reflected by people who were watching these events from some distance away, in an essentially hostile country, including I might add, the Yugoslavs. Not the Government, but the Yugoslav people were very impressed by this.

STERNER: Yes, until this time -- You asked earlier how I felt about Nasser, and as a young man in those days I dealt mainly with young Arabs, and they were all so imbued with the spirit of Arab nationalism at that period, and he embodied that. And then they would say things like, well, you, know, Nasser makes his mistakes; after all he's a human being but at bottom he's the great

leader we need. And I remember feeling that Arab nationalism and the kind of reform Nasser represented might be a positive force, one that did not necessarily have to clash with U.S. interests. I was at odds in this with some of the senior people in my own Embassy who were not Arab specialists and who were justifiably more skeptical. My line of argument got harder and harder to sustain as Nasser took actions more and more inimical to American interests during the sixties. The '67 War was the final disillusionment. And it was a watershed in U.S. policy. If you look back before that time, our policy really was that whoever is victorious in any Arab-Israel conflict should not profit by territorial aggrandizement. In terms of basic principle, we had the same view in '67, but with a very important difference, which was that Israel was entitled to stay in the territories it occupied until the Arabs were prepared to come forward and make peace with it. In other words, Israel was entitled to use its forcible occupation of Arab territory as bargaining chips to achieve its objectives. We were all so disillusioned with Nasser, and so relieved by Israel's victory that I don't remember anybody feeling that this was an unjust policy. I was by this time fully supportive of the view that Nasser had seriously let the United States and the world and his own people down, and that he was going to have to pay the price. Unfortunately the Arabs are still paying the price politically for it.

Q: Well, how did the October '73 War play out from your perspective? How did we react to it and what were you doing at this time?

STERNER: Well, again, I happened to be back -- I mean, I was still back. It was six years later, or whatever, from the '67 war and I was still in the Department. This time I was a couple of notches up the line. But there I was setting up another Task Force. This was a much more interesting, difficult and of course less decisive war. To Kissinger's credit he saw about midway through the conflict that there were major diplomatic opportunities that could be seized, if you could bring this conflict to an end in a way that preserved those diplomatic opportunities. And he charged in. He had just moved over from the National Security position to the State Department as Secretary, so he was in a position to do that. He had all those loyal folks over at the White House still working for him in effect. Brent Scowcroft had been there as his Deputy, and saw eye-to-eye with him on most issues. And now he had all this machinery he could mobilize as he saw fit within the State Department. He negotiated the terms for a cease fire with the Soviets that set the stage for negotiations. He fought the Israelis down when they wanted to persist in the war so as to complete the encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army in the Sinai. He knew if that whole army was captured or destroyed the Egyptians would be so humiliated and so defeated that it would detract from post-war diplomatic opportunities. And in this case the Israelis backed down. In essence, the war ended on a no-victor, no-loser note which was important for what transpired. Kissinger got talks going at Kilometer 101 in Sinai, which led to a more stable cease fire. Then talks began under U.S.-Soviet auspices in Geneva. The Soviets were then firmly moved out of the picture and Kissinger took over the negotiations himself. He achieved three agreements: the first Sinai agreement, the agreement for disengagement on the Syrian front, and finally the Sinai II agreement for a further stage of withdrawal. So it was a notable achievement. But with the Sinai II agreement the potential for further progress along these lines was exhausted. You could not carry this slice-of-territory for slice-of-peace concept any further. The Sinai II agreement was a victory but it had its costs for American policy in the form of an ill-considered undertaking never to deal with the PLO which plagued our policy for the next ten years. Kissinger agreed to that. The Israelis got very tough -- said they were not going to agree to

the Sinai agreement without this assurance and he ended up giving them that. And then I went off to the United Arab Emirates at about this point.

WILLIAM N. DALE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tel Aviv (1964-1968)

Ambassador William N. Dale was born in Washington, DC in February 1919. He entered the Foreign Service in June 1946. His career included positions in Turkey, Israel, and Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to The Central African Republic. Ambassador Dale was interviewed by Dr. Henry E. Mattox on September 19, 1988.

Q: You went directly to DCM.

DALE: Yes.

Q: Who decided that you were going to go to Tel Aviv?

DALE: I don't know. I'd been in Turkey for close to four years, and little feelers began to come out. It was time for Dale to leave. One was a job that I would have preferred to Tel Aviv, but I didn't get it, Director of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs.

Q: So in the time-honored fashion, a cable came in?

DALE: It didn't order me. It said, "Would you appreciate a direct transfer of orders to Tel Aviv?"

Q: By this time, you were of such a rank that you didn't get peremptory orders.

DALE: No, it was very nicely done.

Q: So you decided to go.

DALE: Oh, yes, yes.

Q: You arrived there in September 1964.

DALE: Yes. I had home leave.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

DALE: Walworth Barbour, who had been ambassador for some years before that, and was ambassador for some years after that.

Q: He spent a total of ten years, was it?

DALE: Ten or 11 years.

Q: Let me ask you one or two questions. How did you personally view Israel at that time? Had you ever been to Israel before you went there on assignment?

DALE: No.

Q: What was your personal impression? What was your personal outlook?

DALE: At the time that Israel had won her independence, I thought that it would be a good thing for the world if the Jews had a national state of their own. I thought it would give them something to be proud of, and that it would lead to a state where many of the Jewish ideals could be brought to fruition.

Q: So you supported the existence of Israel.

DALE: Yes.

Q: What was your attitude toward the Arab world at this time?

DALE: I really didn't have any. I didn't know anything about it. I was very confused about it. I expect I would have said that the Arab world was a very changeable, undifferentiated mass of new countries which still, being new, had not developed to the point that you could clearly distinguish what pattern they would form.

Q: A little chaotic.

DALE: Yes.

Q: We're going to come to the 1967 War in a moment, and I'm going to ask you some of your departing impressions of Israel and departing impressions of the Arab world later. Let me get on the record, for the interested person, perhaps, some of the relatively minor matters that came up during your first two or three years there -- relatively minor, I guess; I'm not too sure. The Premier was Levi Eshkol. He was forced to resign in December of '64 over something that was called the Lavon affair. Do you recall what that was?

DALE: Yes. He wasn't really forced to resign, but he was out of office for eight days.

Q: What was that all about?

DALE: Some years before that, I think about 1953 or '54, the Israeli intelligence, the Mossad, hatched a plan regarding Egypt. They would get some Egyptian Jews to burn some USIS offices in Egypt and some British offices in Egypt.

Q: Such as at Alexandria.

DALE: Yes. They would not presumably get caught. The Americans would think that it was those awful Egyptian Arabs who had done it, they would never associate it with Israel, and that would put a wedge between U.S. and Egyptian relations. The only trouble was that for some reason, very unlike the Mossad, it was a sloppy operation and the Egyptian Jews got caught. No one ever doubts that. The Israelis treated it very curiously when we were there. They never put it in the papers, because there is censorship in Israel, which you probably know. This was judged to be too militarily dangerous to be known and printed, so it never got much publicity. The object was to keep the publicity out of the American press, which was fairly successful. So people always called it the Lavon affair, but never explained what it meant. Now it's all in print and everybody knows what the deal was about. That, however, was never really Levi Eshkol's fault.

Q: Why was he ousted then?

DALE: That was because Ben-Gurion made trouble for him, but Eshkol did not leave because of that so far as his major career.

Q: The following year, the Ben-Gurion and Eshkol clashes continued, and eventually Ben-Gurion was ousted.

DALE: I think that's oversimplifying it.

Q: Tell me how I'm oversimplifying. That's why I bring it up.

DALE: Ben-Gurion had retired. He only came back in little forays now and then. He was really officially retired. He was down at Sidi Bakr. Eshkol was a successful prime minister. He was there for the Six-Day War, and it went very well from Israel's point of view, to say the least. He didn't clash very much with Ben-Gurion.

Q: Toward the end of 1965, there was something having to do with the U.S.-Jordanian arms deal which got the Israeli political figures up in arms.

DALE: Yes, that was terrible. Where did you find out about that?

Q: I get leads on what was happening from a publication called Facts on File.

DALE: That was a very difficult situation. The United States wanted to get some tanks to Jordan. By this time, the Israeli lobby was powerful. They also wanted to get planes to Jordan. So we planned to have the Germans send the tanks that were obsolescent, really, from Germany over to Jordan. But we had no chance of keeping anything secret from Israel, so the Israelis found out about it and began to raise the dickens.

President Johnson decided they should be punished for this. This isn't official. So he sent over to Israel, to "punish" the Israelis, Averell Harriman and some other people. The group was headed

up by Harriman. They came over to Israel and talked, had very secret talks, during which they officially reprimanded the Israeli Government for questioning President Johnson's policy. As a result of those talks, Jordan got the tanks all right, but the Israelis got something they had never had from the United States: the first promise of war planes. That began the steady supply by the United States of aircraft to Israel, which goes on today. So you can see what the "punishment" was.

Q: When Harriman came, was Ambassador Barbour included in the talking groups?

DALE: It's very difficult to remember, Henry. I don't think he had a lot to do with it. I think he reached them beforehand.

Q: I was just wondering whether he was excluded in the fashion of the traveling circus occasionally of Kissinger.

DALE: I see what you mean. No, I think he had as much to do with it as he wanted. There was no strain on that. Bob Komer went with him, a working-level guy.

Q: Bob Komer from Washington.

DALE: He was in Washington.

Q: Komer was something fairly high in the agency then.

DALE: Yes, he was.

Q: This was Johnson's idea of punishing. The tactical aircraft were beginning to be delivered the following year, now into '66. In May the following year, also, the United States also began to provide tanks.

DALE: But I don't believe that was part of this deal. I think we had to do that because we were furnishing tanks to Jordan. The normal pattern is if you furnish arms to an Arab country, the American organization wouldn't get after you, provided you gave Israel more and better. That does not hold now. Now you must not supply the Arabs at all.

Q: Did you know personally Eshkol?

DALE: Yes.

Q: This was a very small country.

DALE: Yes. I went along with Barbour when he talked to him, or visiting congressmen or senators. I remember I went with Senator Kennedy to see Eshkol, and Eshkol thought it was a very interesting thing. So I knew him in terms of being escort officer.

Q: How would you describe him?

DALE: A very easy-going, low-key individual, a good conversationalist who said a great many things which I don't think his American interlocutors understood. But if they'd thought about it, they would have been quite shocked.

Q: He said them in English?

DALE: In English.

Q: Could you give me an example?

DALE: Yes. He told Senator Kennedy that American Jews operated pretty much as a group, and during much of the Thirties, "They were pro-Russian because we thought Russia was an ideal country for Jews to live in because it had no barriers on ethnic or racial grounds. We thought that right up into the war period, until shortly after that. That accounts for Rosenberg, Fuchs, and various Jewish spies, who brought atomic secrets from the United States and England to Russia. But then we discovered that Russia wasn't such a fine place for Jews, Stalin, what they did to the doctors, many of whom were Jewish, and things like that. The evidence mounted that Russia was going to support the Arabs at the expense of the Jews, so we have turned against Russia. Now we will do what we can in our worldwide Jewish community to make sure that relations with Russia are kept as difficult as possible."

Now, that's very important, but I don't think Kennedy understood what the man said. I thought it was fascinating. So that is perhaps the most revealing conversation I heard. That was with Kennedy.

I went to see Eshkol with visiting people like Kennedy many times, but that was the only really deep conversation that I recall.

Q: Ben-Gurion.

DALE: Ben-Gurion was retired most of the time I was there. He did not play much of a major role, except in the Lavon affair, and that's because he was a bit guilty. He came to the Fourth of July party, and you know how those Fourth of July parties were. In our case, the ambassador said, "I'm going to enjoy this. You manage it and what you do is you have all the officers lined up, and when somebody comes to the door, they come and say, 'Your name, please? Oh, yes, yes, of course.' And then they take you around and take you out to the garden, where your wife or somebody else's wife is standing around, and you leave them with the women. Then you go around this sort of endless chain. Then after a certain time, you say, 'Let's reverse the flow.' Then the chain works to take people out."

Q: Very tiring.

DALE: Very tiring. So I had to run that thing for four years. I rather enjoyed it, actually, because I didn't have to stand in the chain.

At any rate, when Ben-Gurion came, I realized that it was going to be fun, because my ambassador did not get along with Ben-Gurion. He disliked Ben-Gurion right to the roots of Ben-Gurion's sparse white hair, and vice versa.

Q: Do you know why?

DALE: No, I do not know why. He just said Ben-Gurion was a very rude, ruthless man, but that wasn't the only rude or ruthless man with whom one has to deal. At any rate, Ben-Gurion was very nice to me, and I thought, "In this case, I'll be sure he has a good time," because I wasn't sure that Barbour would talk to him, because I knew Barbour didn't expect him to come. So I talked to him quite a lot, and he said that he thought that we should begin to think about China, that he saw the future of this world as a Chinese future. He said, "You can't say that that population of over a billion people isn't going to amount to something. It's a drag on the living standards and that sort of thing, but there's going to be genius there, and we're going to find that the 21st century will belong to China." And he talked and talked of China. It was very interesting.

Q: At about this time there was something between the United States and Israel on the subject of the Dimona atomic power plant.

DALE: Yes.

Q: Can you describe our interest in the atomic situation in Israel at this time? This was about 1966.

DALE: Yes. Israel being a small country and having suffered through the Holocaust, was and is taking every single measure it can think of to protect itself and, if necessary, to wage war, offensive, as well as defensive. Some years before I got there, they decided they would have a nuclear weapon. [Shimon] Peres, the present foreign minister, was more or less in charge of that. You see, before the United States got involved with supplying Israel's military needs, the French did. The French supplied the planes, for instance, with which Israel fought the Six-Day War, the Mysteres, that sort of thing. So among the things that Peres did was to arrange for the French to help, to advise, to consult, I suppose to actually do the engineering on the Dimona nuclear plant. We had an AEC [Atomic Energy Commission] inspection there in the middle of 1966, several of them.

Q: What was it that we hoped to accomplish or to prevent or to do or whatever?

DALE: The Israelis told us this was a peaceful plant. We did not believe it. We did everything we could, by various means, to find out what it actually was. One of the tests would be whether there was a separation plant in conjunction with the nuclear fuel plant. So we forced, with great pressure -- at that time we were able to exert pressure on Israel -- on the Israelis to accept an American AEC team to come, as I recall, once every six months. I'm not certain of that, but I think that's what it was.

Well, they didn't get there once every six months. The excuses for postponing the visits were

ingenious and multiple, but they had two or three visits during the time I was there. They would bring their equipment. The Israelis have a secure hotel where they put up people they don't want the public to know are visiting the country. They put them up in this hotel.

Q: In Tel Aviv or Jerusalem?

DALE: It's between Tel Aviv and Herzliyya. We also knew what it was, but we didn't ever get into it. So these people would finally get there, they would be shown as little as possible, where they couldn't make very definitive judgments. They never could say that Israel was not making nuclear weapons. I think that's the line they took: "We cannot affirm that there's not a separation plant." Although they couldn't find it. So it got to be a battle of wits.

At the same time, the Israelis did something rather curious. I could never go there, but they let American Jews whom they trusted go, and some of them reported to the United States Government, and they reported that Israel was making a nuclear weapon.

Q: Did they talk to you?

DALE: Some of them did, and some of them talked to other people. Some of them were even State Department people. Because they were Jews, they thought that you could count on their loyalty as Jews.

To go on from there, there was all kinds of evidence that the Israelis were making a nuclear weapon, coming in with some plant, I think it was in Pennsylvania, which Jews owned, which was shipping uranium. There was uranium coming from Australia. The ships got switched. Very clever arrangements, but somehow some people traced it. There was a lot of evidence that this was going on. We had a very active physicist as a science attaché, Dr. Webber, and Webber was convinced of it.

So while I was there, I think it was 1966, we wrote a dispatch to the State Department saying that Israel was making nuclear weapons.

Q: Did we view this with alarm, or we not really care too much?

DALE: We viewed it with alarm in the embassy. Barbour hesitated a short time about letting me send the dispatch out, but he did. The CIA man would not take part in the discussion about the dispatch. But with Dr. Webber and the military, I felt we were on safe ground. The military tried to find out, of course, what was going on in Dimona, and our attachés had more flat tires in that area than you ever saw. When you would ask an Israeli what this huge dome was, with this tremendous smokestack way in the middle of the desert, they'd say, "That's the biggest synagogue in the world," or, "This is a new type of textile plant." So you didn't get anywhere talking to them at all.

The British attaché, who was a very clever guy, developed a great interest in butterflies, and he went out and inadvertently, of course, went over the line he was not supposed to go over, and the Israelis caught him chasing butterflies almost up to the building itself. They doubted his interest

in butterflies, and he had some difficulty from them.

So our attachés and later on Barbour stopped working with the British or the Canadians.

Q: Why?

DALE: Because he thought our relationship with Israel was so special and so important, that we should not any longer put it through combined with our Allies, the British and the Canadians; we should only act unilaterally with Israel.

Q: That's an interesting point. Is that an evidence of "localitis", or was Barbour, who had been there ten years, was that well-rounded?

DALE: It was prescience, because now that's exactly what's happened. The relationship he foresaw has now occurred. Our relationship with Israel is entirely an independent matter, and in many ways closer than our relationship with the British or Canadians. I think Barbour foresaw this and decided it was the way of the future and was one of which he personally approved.

Q: How did Barbour view Israel?

DALE: When I first came, he was a little bit suspicious. I had come, as I told you, very favorably inclined towards Israel. The first thing he told me when I got there was, "Don't send anything critical of Israel or anything about plans regarding Israel through the State Department's radio communications system. Only do it by personal letter, because Israel has friends in the State Department, and they will report it to the Israeli Embassy." I never thought of that before. It came as a bolt.

Q: Are you sure it's true?

DALE: By now, of course I'm sure it's true, yes, because I've had certain examples of things that have happened. At that time, I was completely confused by it, because it didn't fit the picture I had of Israel as a struggling country, setting up an ideal state. So he was at that time, then, a little bit concerned, but he said something to explain it. He said, "I was sent here by President Johnson, who told me as follows, and you're to follow these orders, as well. He said, 'I don't care what happens to Israel, but I care a lot about the American Jews. Whatever you do in Israel, keep one eye peeled for the American Jews and do nothing which would get them on my back.'" And that was Barbour's policy all the time he was there, and it had to be mine.

Q: The demise of Israel as a nation would get the American Jews on the President's back right away.

DALE: Oh, yes.

Q: So the one didn't go with the other, "I don't care what happens to Israel."

DALE: Oh, no, he just meant he was not interested in Israel. This is Johnson. He was not

interested in Israel at all from an ideal point of view, as a place for the Jews and all that. He was only interested in the political ramifications domestically in the United States. Those two things were Barbour's guides, and I adopted them accordingly. From that time on, though I didn't look at Israel quite the same way -- with more circumspection.

Q: A less idealistic outlook?

DALE: Yes.

Q: You mentioned to me one time, way in the past, I think, that you knew [Moshe] Dayan.

DALE: Oh, yes.

Q: He became defense minister just before the war.

DALE: June 1, 1967.

Q: Give me a word description of Dayan.

DALE: He was one of the most complex people I've ever known, one of the few people who could speak good Arabic, Hebrew, and good English. His English wasn't grammatically perfect, but it was very effective. He was a charismatic man. He moved and spoke apparently slowly, but his mind worked so fast and his thoughts were so complex and so compelling, that I've seldom seen a man with the brilliance of expression and brilliance of mind that Dayan had.

I'll give you an example. At one point we had some free scholarships or travel money, I guess you'd call it, Fulbright in origin, to go to see Vietnam. So I asked Moshe if he'd like to go for two or three weeks. He went for four weeks. He said, "Gee, I can write some articles there. That would be fun. I'd love to see how that war's going." So Moshe went off to Vietnam, and when he came back, he said, "Look, why don't you get your friends together. I don't care if they're Americans or Jews or what, but I've got some thoughts. I want to unburden myself." So Moshe came and sat down with his black eye patch and his smile, his forehead always glistened, and began to talk about the Vietnam War. What he really said was, "The Americans are fighting all right there, but it's not their war. The people whose war it is, the Vietnamese, won't fight it. You can't win, no matter what you do without Vietnamese support. For some reason I can't really fathom, the Vietnamese won't fight."

Q: That's just what John Paul Vann was saying about the same time.

DALE: Yes. So he wrote a series of articles on this. We became very close friends. We did a lot of archeology together. He did a lot of things to tease me. One day he said, "Let's get some of your friends from the embassy, and we'll go and look for ancient pots," which he knew I was devoted to, the early Iron Age. So he organized it so that the pretty women went with him, and I got the others and we started out. (Laughs) He was very fond of the women.

We went down and came to a place where the traffic was bad, and then on the other side of this

dual highway which was going the other direction, Moshe crossed over and went down the other side. There wasn't any traffic. He didn't care if it was wrong or not. So he went down. He turned and said, one of the women said later, "Bill won't dare do this." And he was right. I didn't. And off we went and had a very nice day looking for ancient pots.

After the Six-Day War, he called up two or three days after it was over and said, "Bill, I've never been to Qumran, where the Dead Sea scrolls were found. Let's go down there. I'll get some military vehicles and stuff in case there's anybody who wants to shoot us, and I want to go and see some of the Arabs there. We can see what we can find in the caves." We didn't find anything in the caves, but it was a fascinating trip.

We stopped at a very prominent Arab house, a great big farm, the Mussaalami farm. Mussaalami wasn't there, but his rather beautiful daughter was there. I didn't know what they were saying, because, as I told you, Moshe spoke excellent Arabic, but what he said he told them, was, "I want you to be able to do business, to start up and buy and sell your produce, and I'll do what I can to help you. But you must not harbor terrorists." A terrorist, by an Israeli definition, is anyone who takes action against Israel.

So those were two occasions. I saw him a great deal. I complained to him unofficially about some things, like the Israeli forces' destruction of Imwas, the place Christ was seen after He arose from the dead, according to the New Testament. The Israel Army destroyed it during or just after the Six-Day War, and I never knew why. So I complained to Moshe. He looked into it and said it was a mistake. He didn't go anywhere with that, but at least he showed that he cared. (Laughs)

Q: There was a buildup to the war that lasted for weeks, anyway, and then he was appointed defense minister just before. Was that done deliberately?

DALE: Yes. The United States had thought they had extracted a promise from the Israeli Government that they wouldn't go to war. The Israelis did not consider they had made that promise, and they had no intention of putting off going to war within that period, because they didn't think that our plan for what they called the Red Sea regatta, the international regatta, warships going up the Red Sea to test Nasser's claim that he had closed it, the Straits of Tehran, was correct or not. The Israelis didn't think that would work, and they intended to go to war. Once they made up their minds they were going to, they called Dayan back as Minister of Defense. But once they'd done that, that was the signal they were going to war. The only question left was when Dayan would order it to begin.

Q: The embassy didn't see it quite that way at the time.

DALE: At the time, no. We knew they were mobilizing. We would have events such as the British ambassador's daughter coming-out party at a hotel, and you'd give an order to a waiter to bring you a drink, and the drink didn't appear. Another waiter would appear and say, "Would you like something?" And he would disappear as they were mobilizing the forces.

Our consul general, Cliff English, had all kinds of people mobilizing in a vacant field beside his

house, and we were able to put together everything everybody had, so we knew that the war would start. But we couldn't tell from the evidence that we had that it would start as soon as it did. We expected it to start any time. As to the reporting, the ambassador wanted to give the impression that we thought it wouldn't start, as long as he could possibly get away with it, because he knew we thought we had a promise from the Israelis.

Q: Who had arranged this promise, Barbour?

DALE: No, it was arranged in Washington, I think between the U.S. Government at a high level and Abba Eban, I believe. Or at least they thought that they had the promise with Abba Eban, and had arranged with Eshkol. So that it came as something of a surprise to us, and Barbour didn't want to undercut that, you see, until it was absolutely necessary by a war started. So it became very important when it started.

So we had our Israeli-speaking officer down at the embassy, John Leonard, listening. I'd set up a command post there. It was a lot of fun doing that. Leonard listened, but Leonard's Hebrew wasn't all that good. The morning of the sixth came, and planes were breaking the sound barrier, coming and going. They often did that in the past, it was just more intense, because they'd been practicing this thing for months. Finally, the ambassador called and said, "My cook says a war is on. What does the embassy say?"

I felt sort of embarrassed about that. I called John Leonard, and John said, "I don't hear anything on the radio." So I called back and said, "John Leonard (I didn't say we don't think) doesn't think a war has started."

"Well, my cook says that the Israeli Air Force has destroyed the Egyptian Air Force on the ground," which was entirely correct.

Q: Sometimes cooks and taxi drivers are good sources.

DALE: Well, it doesn't speak well for our language program. John Leonard retired and is now a Greek Catholic priest.

Q: He was the only officer we had who spoke Hebrew?

DALE: Someone might have spoken a little bit of Hebrew, but it was his task.

Q: He was the designated language officer.

DALE: He was the designated language officer to take it.

Q: I think in years since, we've had more able linguists.

DALE: He was supposed to be able. But anyway, he wasn't. When the test came, he failed it. It didn't matter very much. When I called up my sidekick in the foreign ministry, Shlomo Argoff, who was later shot as ambassador to London, and asked him if Israel had attacked, he said,

"Well, there was provocation."

I said, "What was it?"

He said, "I don't know yet. I'll try to find out." But that was a delaying action. There wasn't any. They attacked when they were ready.

Q: Is it true that by this time, embassy dependents had already been evacuated?

DALE: No. No, they were not evacuated. That was left up to me. I'll put it this way. We had evacuated one group of dependents, but I had not evacuated all the wives. That's because of what happened at the time of the Suez Crisis in Egypt. The evacuated wives stayed away too long, and a lot of marriage problems resulted, and everybody got together, involving a lot of secretaries. You probably heard about that.

Q: No, but I think I can imagine.

DALE: So I didn't want that to happen. I evacuated non-essential wives and personnel, then I kept the essential ones, the wives, very important ones, until the last minute. Then I put Tezi Currie, who is now Assistant Secretary, in charge of it. There she was in this American community schoolyard with her slip showing, getting all the Americans on buses. I had a terrible time finding a plane, but I found one eventually, which had had its wing repaired. The pilot said he thought it would hold as far as Cyprus. So on the first day of the war, we evacuated, but not until then. Actually, we couldn't have before because we did not know the war would occur that day, so we couldn't have. It takes a certain preparation. We were all ready. The evacuation plans had been updated. I think we probably evacuated about the right time, except, of course, it turned out that nobody needed to go.

Q: Did the ambassador feel betrayed in any way that the Israeli attack broke out, despite a supposed arrangement?

DALE: No, but he did later before the war ended. His main contact was the American desk officer, Moshe Bitan. Moshe Bitan had told Wally Barbour that Israel realized there was a United Nations resolution for a cease-fire, and Israel intended to obey it, but he said, "We had just a little matter we wanted to clear up on the Syrian front." I was there. Now, the Syrians had not attacked in the Six-Day War, as you probably know. I think they fired a few shots and that's all, not participating. But he said it would only take an hour or two and not to worry about it. So Barbour sent some kind of telegram to that effect.

Instead of that, Israel moved all its troops from the Egyptian front who weren't involved, and the central front, because they were beating the dickens out of Jordan by this time, up to the northern front. The Golani brigade went up to Golan Heights and led a major attack, which was not what Bitan had said. This was also the time of Liberty, which may very well have been attacked for the same reason, but they didn't want us to hear all the orders that were necessary to transfer thousands of men. I don't know that; that's speculation on my part. It's not speculation.

Later on, the ambassador got a hold of Bitan and said, "You deceived me." He was, for him, quite angry. He was always very careful, because he always had President Johnson looking over his shoulder, so he never got really angry. But he was as angry as he ever got.

Bitan said, "Yeah, I deceived you, but the Arabs deceive you more than we do."

Q: When did you find out about the Liberty?

DALE: The Israelis called us as soon as they had finished their attack on it, called the naval attaché, Ernie Castle, and told him that an American ship had been hit by mistake by Israeli forces, because they thought it was an Egyptian ship. It had a similar silhouette, a Liberty ship. They said, "Don't you want to go out and see if they need any help?"

So Ernie got his lunch, which he had brought to the office -- we were more or less living in the office -- which was a paper bag, an orange, a sandwich, took out the sandwich, left the orange, and put in a note, "Do you want any help?" And flew over the Liberty, which was sort of listing out there. I'm not sure it was listing; it was almost unguided in the water, smoking like everything. He dropped it on the deck from the helicopter. The personnel of the Liberty waved him away. So Ernie came back a little disconsolate, and said, "They need help like everything, but they won't take it from the Israelis." He didn't realize, nor did the Israelis tell us at the time, that there was a big American flag on that ship. So we didn't know that, and we thought it was a genuine error.

Q: Did Barbour ever become irate about that?

DALE: No. If he did, he didn't show it. He had to be very careful not to show emotion like that which might set the staff, you see, thinking things. So he was very, very quiet about what personal thoughts he might have had. From that time on, though, he was very much more pro-Israeli, from the time of the Six-Day War on.

Q: Why?

DALE: I don't know. He was deceived, they fooled him, the Liberty was not an accident, and he must have known it. Well, he put it this way to me once. He said, "You know, Bill, Israel's relations with the United States is the way of the future. I don't care if the Arabs have all the oil reserves in the world. Our relationship is going to be with Israel, and I'm going to promote it." This was shortly after the Six-Day War. That's all he ever said. I think he saw the strength of the bond between Israel and the United States, which became clear about that time. We did send an awful lot of war material towards the end of that war.

Q: What about your own attitude? You had been there several years by now.

DALE: Yes, I had been there four years. Well, I began, as you know, very pro-Israeli. Barbour told me those two messages that I went into earlier. Then an ambassador from a country which was considered to be very friendly to Israel, Switzerland, said he wanted to come over to see me one day. Barbour didn't see much of the other ambassadors, because he wanted it believed he

was on a special status, which, in a way, he was. So they were left to me to entertain. The Swiss ambassador said, "You know, look at this." He had a newspaper in German, the Jewish newspaper. It was the main Jewish newspaper in Switzerland. He said, "I just finished this. It's all about Swiss Jews' relation to Israel. There's not a word in it about Switzerland. I don't think this is healthy. I think it's worse for the United States, and you should begin to think about it." Later on, he got a decoration from the Israeli Government for his friendly reception there in that situation. But you see, really he didn't.

Then the British and the Canadians began to tell me things. Our Army attaché had two Israeli intelligence girls as mistresses, one in the north and one in the south. When he went north, there was one girl. When he went south, it was another.

I began to see the relationship at two levels: one, the kind of level I believed in at first, of ideals, and then the second level, where the United States was being brought into a kind of Israeli net, in which the American Zionists played a very important role, an increasingly important role.

They came to the embassy from time to time. They didn't always, because they didn't need the embassy. They were a pretty self-confident group, the big givers. We used to go to their parties. One time I went to a party with my wife, with a group of these big givers, and they were saying what a wonderful country they found Israel to be, and how nice the Israelis were to them. They said, "You know, it really wasn't all that expensive because the Israeli Government arranges through the various funds that they had. Say we give \$50,000 to Israel. They put down \$100,000, and then we get a deduction of 100,000 on our American tax. In no other country can you take any deduction." So I saw this second level which, to me, was founded in part on plain deceit in order to make the most of their relationship with America. I became very ambivalent about it, and I still am.

Q: Had you, by this time, developed attitudes about the Arab world, in the middle of which you lived?

DALE: The Arab world still seemed to be very disorganized, very incapable of establishing and maintaining a unified stance in any foreign policy type of crisis or situation. I found I could not work up much enthusiasm for them, and I still can't. I've not changed views on that or on Israel.

Q: By the time you left in 1968, roughly that time, the war was over. There were problems of U.N. resolutions and questions of the West Bank and the refugees and so forth. What were the major bilateral issues that you were dealing with about the time that you left Israel?

DALE: The major one was that at the time of the Six-Day War, a great many more Arabs had been forced out one way or another from the West Bank and from the old refugee camps. We wanted some of those to come back to their homes. We thought that they should, especially family members. We had a great deal of controversy with the Israeli Government, trying to get them, on humanitarian grounds, to accept a large number of the Arabs back who had been forced out in the 1967 War. They did not do that, of course. They let a few back, a very few, enough so they could say they had done something. Because they wanted the land, the houses, just as they did in '48. They did not want embittered people coming back into Israel. That part is

understandable.

Q: You were acting in this regard on instructions from Washington.

DALE: Yes.

Q: What was the rationale for taking the part of the Arab refugees?

DALE: We didn't look on it as taking the part of the Arab refugees; we looked on it as a humanitarian matter, that a good many people had been forced out of their homes, and across the border. They were victims of warfare, and they left homes and presumably going enterprises in what had been the West Bank. Many of them had also been refugees in refugee camps. We thought that by every humanitarian kind of desideratum, they should be allowed back. They were not necessarily going to make war on Israel; they had lived there before. The Israelis said no, but let a few close relatives back, enough so that we couldn't say they didn't do anything.

There was another issue, and that was the settlements. The Israelis began to put settlements in the Golan Heights and in the West Bank almost immediately. By that time, the United States Government was very firm in its stand that those were illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention, and that they would make it very difficult to reach a peace. So I think I was the first officer to deliver the protest. However, it was very noteworthy that Barbour would not deliver that. He had me do it, which downgraded it.

Q: And preserved his position, as well.

DALE: Yes. He didn't say it; he just never mentioned it. I did it, reported back that I had done it. The Israelis said, "Yes, we understand your position." This was Shlomo Argoff, very polite. And that was that.

Q: I recall at the time, in another part of the world, that Israelis diplomats told me Israel would, of course, return the West Bank, given certain questions of Arab recognition, of course. Was that the position of the foreign ministry?

DALE: There was a brief period when Abba Eban was foreign minister, when I do believe the Israelis would have returned the West Bank almost in its entirety. The problem was that the King of Jordan, Hussein, at that point was in such a state of shock, that he couldn't seem to negotiate, couldn't seem to bring himself to enter into the kind of negotiation it would have taken. So for a period of maybe a couple of months, I think that would have been true. After that, the Israelis discovered they had something there, particularly Jews, and I don't think Jerusalem would have been returned anyway, but the West Bank. There were advantages to be gotten from it, so the position hardened and became consistently harder ever since.

Q: Your departing impression of Israel, then, was this ambivalence that you speak of?

DALE: That's correct. Oh, yes, there was one other element. It became clear before I left that the American Zionist organizations were playing a larger and larger political role in the United

States. I was afraid it might not be confined just to Israel, but would affect our foreign policy with Russia and various other countries, because it was power which would be traded. I began to worry about that, and that concern remains with me, because they go to Israel and they plan more or less what they're going to do when they come back. We saw a good many of those "unofficial ambassadors." They're the ones who Israel can send to the President. The President is really afraid of them, and he would very likely do what they want, more so than if, say, the Israeli ambassador does something. So these people play a very important role, and they constantly go back and forth to Israel. Many of them are dual citizens.

Q: Can you name names, or can you cite a couple of organizations?

DALE: Zionists of America, of course; American Jewish Committee; American Jewish Conference; B'nai B'rith lobbyists were in Israel very often, and I saw them when I came back to Washington a good deal. We were on close terms with them, and they keep track of what goes on in this country, and they go back and forth to Israel. The names are a little difficult now; it's a long time ago. If I think of them, I'll tell you.

Q: Had this gone so far as to sour you on your assignment in Tel Aviv?

DALE: No. Oh, no. It was a very interesting assignment. The individual Israelis I knew, I liked. Most of them were in the Labor party. Many of the people I respected. I respected [David] Ben-Gurion. Barbour did not. I thought he was a great guy. I liked [Shimon] Peres. [Yitzhak] Rabin was a great friend of mine, a close friend, and still would be. I'm going to see some of them next week. I'm looking forward to it. So it did not sour me at all, but it causes concern, because I'm afraid that we may be following a policy which is not of our making, but of Israel's making which guides us in the Middle East.

Q: Still, to this day, 1988?

DALE: Yes, more so. I did a poll at one point, just before the Six-Day War, on this, after the Swiss ambassador came, asking whether they thought Zionism in their countries and Zionist as they saw it working in Israel was good for the countries they represented or not. With one exception, the answers were universally "no." Everyone, I think, felt the same as I did, practically everyone. The one exception was Costa Rica, I think.

Q: When you left in 1968, Barbour was still the ambassador?

DALE: Yes.

Q: And Johnson was still in the White House. He didn't leave until January of 1969. So you were there during this period of time when there was no change in administration.

DALE: That's right.

Q: No change in this policy that you mentioned that Barbour articulated to you, to "keep the Zionist lobby off my back."

DALE: That's right. That came true in all kinds of ways. We were very, very helpful to any American Zionist who came over. We saw hundreds of them, although they didn't all come to the embassy, but those who did. Many of them, I enjoyed them very much, but not this aspect.

Q: How, briefly, did you see the Zionists messing up American policy toward Israel back in those mid-Sixties?

DALE: They had a good deal to do under Goldberg in the United Nations, who was a Zionist, with watering down Resolution 242, so that instead of saying, as it does in the French version, "the territory on the West Bank should be returned," to saying, "territory," which has been watered down now to where it means "little of the territory," or perhaps not very much of it will be returned. That was apparently Goldberg's work in the United Nations, and that was a prime example, which all of us felt was a mistake for the United States, because it's never been clear since then. The French version is clear.

Q: Which one is the official one is a question, and that complicated things from then on.

DALE: It has complicated them from then on.

Q: Although, of course, Israel had not agreed to return anything, anyway.

DALE: Well, they returned Sinai.

Q: I take it back. Yes, sorry. I was in Egypt when that was going on. I should have remembered.

DALE: You remember they did return that.

Q: How did you organize the embassy or how was the embassy broken down to cope with the crisis situation such as the Six-Day War?

DALE: Crisis situations arise -- I wouldn't say gradually -- but they do not arise all at once. You have perhaps a week, perhaps two weeks in which the crisis gradually becomes worse. During that time you begin, I think, almost casually to change your organization to fit the requirements of the growing crisis.

In this case, one of the first things we had to do was limit our telegraphic traffic so that no routine or administrative type telegrams would be sent and the wires would be reserved for use in crisis type messages.

Q: Did you keep a telephone line open also?

DALE: We kept a telephone line, yes, but that was of uncertain usefulness, depending on the situation. We also used ham radios at one point. That's how I got in touch with my children.

Q: Who were concerned about your safety, I guess?

DALE: Well, I was concerned about where they were as it was vacation time. And I wanted them to know that we were all right and where to go. And then I had them go to Rome.

Q: Where were they?

DALE: They were in different places in the United States.

So we had first the messages to do, then we had the evacuation plan to put into operation. This became the responsibility, as we organized it, of the consular section. They kept in touch with all American citizens. I'm not now talking about dual citizens. And the consular people implemented the evacuation plan when it became advisable to do so. We gave advice to American citizens to leave well before the fighting started.

As far as embassy personnel were concerned, they went out, as I recall, in two batches. The first batch were wives and children for whom it was quite easy to leave. Then when the fighting actually started, we organized an airlift, with a plane which had just been repaired in Israel. The plane actually had trouble with one wing and they had just finished re-securing the wing to the body of the plane. The Air Force officer who offered the plane, knowing we needed one, said he hoped it was all right and he thought it would get as far as Cyprus. So I called our ambassador in Cyprus, Toby Belcher, and told him we were coming in on a wing and a prayer, and to prepare quarters and food and whatnot for the people who would be coming over. Toby did a splendid job of it, as always.

The person in charge of actually loading the personnel into the buses to go to the plane was Tezi Currie. Tezi, I think, is now Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Economic Affairs. This was her first post and she was said to be the youngest Foreign Service officer. She spoke something like six languages. Her English was excellent on this occasion, but her slip showed. However, I did not mention it to her.

The organization itself began to develop about a week before the fighting started. We organized the conference room into an operations center and the senior staff was organized into a crisis management team. The officers who had no regular duties at this point, like economic officers, were converted into operations officers and it was their job to keep the operations room up to date, to keep all the telegrams that were pertinent, easily available, let us know when new information came in, keep the map up to date to show us where the fighting was and other such tasks. We had shifts so that the embassy was always manned with enough people so we could handle anything that came up, day or night. Some people slept at the embassy, to begin with, and during the entire crises there were at least a couple of people staying overnight. Bit by bit as the crisis began to resolve itself and the fighting grew less, people were allowed to go home at night. I went home at night after the first couple of nights and brought my driver with me, who spent the night at the house, very unwillingly, because he wanted to be with his wife.

Q: You told me earlier that the ambassador was almost never there.

DALE: The ambassador had been invited by the Israelis to go to their war room in the

Department of Defense, which was still located in Tel Aviv, not in Jerusalem where the bulk of the government was located by that time. And Wally Barbour, therefore, spent almost all his time in the Israeli war room. He never explained to me exactly what he did there.

Q: Did he have a line of communication with Washington from the war room?

DALE: As far as I know, he did not. He might have been able to telephone, using Israeli-controlled circuits. But eventually it became difficult to use the phone. When I wanted to get in touch with my three sons and tell them what to do and what was happening to us, I did it by ham radio. And it worked splendidly.

Q: Private individuals who had ..

DALE: Yes, an Israeli friend of mine, who was a ham radio expert.

Q: You knew, or you expected, that the war would be short?

DALE: Yes.

Q: So you never really doubted either the outcome of the war?

DALE: No. There were two factors here. One was the attachés, who knew pretty much what the opposing forces consisted of, and had a high respect for the Israeli military, which was well deserved. They sent in a prediction, which, as I recall, was that if war should break out, the Israelis would have it won at the end of a week, more or less. I had, myself, been fortunate enough to be taken around the central front by the commander of the central front, General Narkiss, about three weeks before the fighting started.

This had nothing to do with, as far as I know, the fact that the war was imminent. We weren't even thinking about that. It was a long-standing invitation which finally came to fruition at that point. And I went up and down the whole central area and he explained what his troops would do, where they would give a little ground, where they would advance, where there reserves were. In fact, you could see them all along that central front area and he explained what they would do to retake Jerusalem, if the Jordanians were silly enough to attack the Israelis. He explained that they would go along the hilltops on either side of the city and pinch it off and that East Jerusalem, with its holy sites, the Wailing Wall and so on, would fall into Israeli hands. But he did not anticipate that King Hussein would actually attack Israel.

As you probably know, the Israelis did send a message by way of General Bull of the United Nations, to King Hussein, saying, in substance, "If you do not attack, we will not attack you," as the war started. And they also let it be known that they wouldn't consider a few stray shells being landed by the Jordanians for the sake of appearances to be an attack. But the Jordanians attacked at Government House. That was the U.N. headquarters at that point, the old British headquarters. There may not have been a tremendous attack, but it was significant enough so that it gave the Israelis the opportunity, quite justifiably, to repel the attack and take the West Bank.

Q: To your knowledge, when did the war break out? What was your first intimation?

DALE: The first intimation? Oh, that is a sorry subject. We had on watch that night, John Leonard, who was one of our Israeli-speaking officers. He had learned it at FSI.

Q: Yes, now I remember. We talked about that the last time. Give me a brief resume again.

Well, he didn't catch it, and the Ambassador's cook told the ambassador that the fighting had started. The ambassador called me, I called Leonard and he said, "Oh, I can't hear anything about that on the radio." He is now, as I think I told you, a Greek Catholic priest.

Q: Yes. About your time in Israel and your participation in one of the most significant, brief, sharp clashes that an American embassy was ever involved in. The only exceptions I can think of maybe were the outbreak of World War II in France or something of that sort. Looking back on it now, have you got any thoughts or any lessons perhaps that you've drawn from those days on crisis management? How to deal if a six-day war breaks out on your doorstep? Things that you would have done differently?

DALE: Yes, there is one thing I would have done differently. When I had heard that the fighting had started, I called my contact, Shlomo Argoff, in the foreign ministry and asked him whether it was really true that Israel had attacked. And he said, "Oh, the Arabs must have done something. I think I heard that they fired at us." I took that more seriously than I should have.

Q: Did you report it?

DALE: I reported it. When actually Shlomo, I think, was making it up.

Q: Making it up as he went along?

DALE: Yes, that's right. As a bit of justification. Later on there was no record of any provocation at all.

JAMES H. BAHTI
Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1964-1970)

James H. Bahti was born in Michigan in 1923. He graduated from Michigan Tech with a B.S. degree in engineering in 1948. Subsequently, he received a M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Mr. Bahti entered the Foreign Service in 1955, serving in Germany, Egypt, India, and Saudi Arabia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

BAHTI: Just a general desk officer, we did not have an economic section in ARN. The bureau had been reorganized slightly at that time. It was kind of holding pattern for me. I had been

marked to replace Ted Wahl as Roy Atherton's number two in Arab-Israeli Affairs. So by the summer of 1967, shortly after the '67 war I moved from ARN to being deputy for Roy Atherton in Israeli-Arab Affairs. I continued with my boycott work which was a good part of my activity.

Q: Let's keep on with the boycott work to begin with. Was the misinformation just misinformation the way it normally comes or was this an effort on the part of those who were trying to break it, particularly the Jewish lobby, to make it seem much worse than it was in order to create antagonism, how did you see it?

BAHTI: Well, it was both but primarily the latter. The Arabs were very inept. There were indeed one or two letters asking whether you have Jews working for you. Very bad PR type inquiries. Those were exceptions, but it became a credo, commonly believed, that this was the way the boycott worked, but it wasn't. There was this effort to build this boycott up as a terrible, terrible thing affecting American business and having strong religious overtones, which was not the case. That was the purpose of my study, to show the way it really worked.

Q: Did you have problems or attacks on you by the Israeli lobby?

BAHTI: I was never personally involved to that extent. I remember briefing congressmen in a sort of adversarial sense, or groups of people sponsored by congressmen who would present these huge petitions asking us to do certain things. I was more involved in some of the classic cases, the Ford boycott, the Coca Cola boycott, the Xerox boycott, all of which were unbelievably stupid cases. I say stupid in the sense that the Arabs should not have boycotted these firms in the first place, but once the ball started rolling, they could not stop it rolling.

Q: I heard a story when I was in Saudi Arabia that there was a small factory producing punch cards for IBM in Israeli so that at one point the Arabs decided to boycott IBM until the Egyptians said, "Cut it out fellows, our whole mobilization plan is based on IBM punch cards!" Can you talk about how you dealt with one of these boycott cases?

BAHTI: Let's take the Ford case which was fairly simple; the Coke case is much more complex. Ford had agreed to permit semi-knocked-down kits, which is in effect an automobile minus its wheels, which reduces shipping costs, to be assembled in Israel. This was described by some Arab representative as a big assembly plant like the Ford plant at River Rouge, or Dearborn, in Israel. Ford did the same thing in Morocco, sending these knocked-down kits to a distributor where he would bolt the wheels onto the frame, and there was your car. That was the amount of the assembly, but somehow the Arabs got the notion that this was a big, big assembly plant. So they said that if you do that in Israel we will boycott you. Well, Ford said, "What do you mean? This is not an assembly plant."

We spent months and months, the embassy there, and I dealing with Arab embassy officials here, primarily Egyptian, trying to explain what this was all about. They said, "Yeah, yeah, we know, but there is no way we can stop it." Ford was boycotted. There had been a Ford plant in Alexandria, Egypt in which they had done the same thing for awhile, which Egypt closed down. I was in almost weekly contact with the Ford people on that matter.

The Xerox case: they had sponsored a TV film which was adjudged by the Arabs to be favorable to Israel and they boycotted Xerox. The Coca Cola case, briefly; an Israeli bottler had wanted to open up a bottling plant in Israel. Coca Cola said he did not have enough money, the means, he was not financially strong enough to do this, so they refused. The bottler in Israel planted the story that the U.S. had caved in to Arab pressures and therefore had refused to let him bottle in Israel. One thing led to another; Coca Cola did not concern itself about being boycotted by the Arab states; that was just a tiny part of its sales. They were concerned about the supermarkets in the United States -- about Coca Cola being boycotted there in response to their refusal to permit the bottling of Coca Cola in Israel. So they said, "O.K. we will let you bottle in Israel." They were boycotted by the Arabs. A few years later the bottler went belly up; the Coke people were right in the first place, but the damage had been done. It was said that Nasser had a few thousand cases of Coke stashed away in his basement because that was his favorite soft drink.

Q: Did you find that it was maybe the Arab dealers in Land Rovers or the like who were starting the rumors about the Ford cars? Was this getting involved in souk [Arab marketplace] politics?

BAHTI: Yes. This was probably inevitable. People would plant notions. You can recall the story about the local Coca Cola distributor planting the story about Pepsi Cola that it came from pepsin which came from the stomach of a pig. This caused Pepsi to lose a lot of business until they got that straightened out. The Arab dealers are not above such dirty tricks. I am not sure this was the case with Ford.

Q: How did the 1967 War, between Israel and some of its Arab neighbors hit your office and your operation?

BAHTI: It did not really put us out of business but it certainly had a real impact. One of my closest Arab friends in Washington was the economic officer of the Egyptian embassy. We had had social contact, professional contact. I remember the day of the war calling him and saying, "Abdul, this is about the saddest day of my life". I really like Egypt, Egyptians; I liked Abdul Rahman Hammoud and he said it was a very sad day for him too. We saw very little of each other after that although it became clear that the initial allegations of our participation were untrue.

Q: We had severed relations at that point.

BAHTI: Although they had an interests section here, I may have seen him after that. I can't recall specifically the impact on our work. Since I was dealing with Israel and Israeli affairs my focus was largely on the aftermath of the war, what we could and could not do, there was an almost daily demand for briefing papers on Arab-Israeli affairs.

Q: Did you have the impression that the 1967 war came about in a step by step manner -- Nasser asking that the UN troops withdraw etc. It was not a sudden crisis. Did you have the feeling that we saw where this thing was headed?

BAHTI: I did not and many of my colleagues did not. There were those who were privy to some intelligence not available to me who probably saw the inevitable sequence of events that was

developing, and we did set up a task force about a week in advance of the June war to sort of generate control of the distribution of documents, keeping a round-the-clock watch on matters, what was the latest news, keeping the Secretary fully informed. He would drop in on the task force at unannounced times just to check on things. Once the war started we had a tremendous problem of keeping people out of the task force work area, these were people who were just personally or otherwise interested. We had to physically bar them from coming in and messing through the flood of papers that were coming in. Then there was the whole matter of the sinking of the *U.S.S. Liberty*, a Naval vessel sunk by Israeli aircraft which took a lot of attention.

But to get back to your question, I must blush when I say I told Roy Atherton that there was not going to be any war. I could not have been more wrong. I just did not have access to information that he had. I was convinced that Nasser would tell the UNEF (United Nations Emergency Forces) to take their time getting out or that the Secretary General of the UN himself would do something. You know he rolled over and played dead, I think he could have stopped this thing.

Q: Many people feel that way. It was U Nu at the time. They feel that there was far too much cooperation in getting the forces out which meant that there would be just the Arabs and Israelis facing each other.

BAHTI: I guess maybe after the Secretary General retired he wrote that he had no choice in the matter, but I thought he moved with undue haste.

Q: That was the feeling at that time, surprise that they were scurrying out of there.

BAHTI: That may have been the time of our setting up this task force. I don't know what extra intelligence was available. I certainly did not have access to all of it.

Q: You then became involved in Arab-Israeli affairs.

BAHTI: IAI - Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs.

Q: What was the difference between this focus and other areas?

BAHTI: Dealing with Israel is quite a different kettle of fish than dealing with the Arab states. You had a very competent bureaucracy in Israel. You had statistics, you had data generally available with which you could work and be generally confident about because they had very, very good people. With the Egyptians you never could be sure what they told you was statistically correct. It very likely was exaggerated -- talking about trade union membership, percentage of a vote that went to so-and-so as compared to so-and- so. The Israelis have an open press, not too much censorship. You had more to work with, you could make, in my view, a better analysis, make certain statements with a higher degree of certainty that what you were saying was correct. For instance our economic assistant programs, we just gave them the money, they ran the programs. Whereas in Egypt we had what was then a large but nowhere near as large as today, economic assistance mission. There was a lot of currency available for an awful lot of projects. There were a lot of research projects going on in Israel. One of the things that I did was to review these proposed projects for political sensitivity. Not only the project itself, but where

the project was to go. Was it right near the armistice lines, for instance.

Q: Were we very concerned at that time about the West Bank?

BAHTI: The question of settlements had not become very important at that time. It subsequently became much more important. Just keeping up, what are they doing in East Jerusalem? Where was the parade going to be held this year? What can we do to stop them from taunting the Arabs by going through the Arab sector of the occupied areas. We would get daily calls from parents of Jewish kids who were in Israel, maybe working on *kibbutzim* or wanting to go to *kibbutzim* or *moshavim*, which in many cases were in areas we considered dangerous. I felt quite free to tell the parent, "Look, if he is going to Israel don't let him go to that *kibbutz*, there have been terrorist incidents in the area with some frequency. Have him go somewhere else where it is safer. We don't want another death case to report."

Q: How did you see the effect of the Israeli lobby and how did it operate?

BAHTI: It is one of the most effective lobbies in Washington. They have a great deal of money and we had a fair amount of contact with the Arab-Israel Public Affairs Committee [AIPAC]; they put out a good, although quite biased, newsletter, the Near East Report. The head of it, Si Kenon, was a very fine gentleman. There was no question of where he stood, but you could tell him things in confidence and he would keep them in confidence; he would not blab them around. Or he could tell you things quite frankly and say, "look, this is what is going to happen if thus and so happens" and that is the way it would work out. He was well plugged into, not only his own organization AIPAC, but most of the other pro-Israel lobbies in Washington, and of course with Congress. One of our big jobs was responding to Congressional correspondence, which in turn generally reflected constituent correspondence. A constituent believes thus and so happened, please advise me, give me a report on the subject. We had Congressional correspondence you can't believe. The volume was such that it took much of our time. Although sometimes you could send out a fairly boiler-plate type letter, it more often had to be tailored to this special case. We would get letter writing campaigns, thousand of identical text letters, generally mimeographed. One such case I remember came from Philadelphia. I had to keep count of them, as though this were going to affect our decision. I told one group that if they were at a horse race and their horse is losing do they think that their yelling makes him go any faster? This was the time the Iraqi Jews were being executed and we were being exhorted to "do something" about this. Nobody ever said what. In this particular campaign from Philadelphia I noticed after awhile that all the letters were signed with about four different types of handwriting, in other words four people were signing all the letters, but with different names. They were using a phone book, a synagogue list or something. So you can imagine that had much less impact; when I pointed this out to the Assistant Secretary, he was much less impressed by the volume of such letters.

A member of Congress sponsored a visit of his constituents who came in with bales of letters and petitions. I briefed them on the particular issue; I don't remember what the issue was. Finally someone said, "What impact will these petitions have on what you are doing?" I said, "I told you I would be frank. The impact will be very little" and gave them the analogy of the horse race. The Congressman was furious. I said, "I am encouraged by your interest in this subject, but I would much rather see your efforts directed towards some other activity, such as promoting

better relations between the Arab and Jewish communities, or study seminars; there are any number of things you can do." Well that did not go over too well. It is kind of fun to collect petitions and come to Washington with a bale of them and be briefed by a State Department officer.

I was very active in public speaking around the country. A lot of my colleagues did not like to do that, but I got a big kick of it. After the first talk that I gave to a men's synagogue group in Brooklyn, which was trial by fire, I realized that "Hey, you know a hundred times more about this subject than almost anybody in your audience. And I felt perfectly at ease. First of all you knew what the questions, most of the questions, were going to be and you had a nice, neatly tailored answer for them. Second, you could cite facts and figures that they simply did not have. It was not always Jewish groups, it was high school groups, university groups. At that time the State Department was sending around teams for a while explaining about Vietnam, Arab-Israeli affairs, South African affairs, various touchy subjects.

Q: Did you have the feeling at that particular time, we are talking about 1967-69, we were trying to keep a fairly even hand in the whole Arab-Israeli thing, or for political reasons siding more with Israel?

BAHTI: I think in theory we were trying to keep an even-handed approach, and many of us tried to keep the approach from tilting too much. As a matter of fact it was my view that domestic pressures were such, pressures from Congress were such, that we had no real choice but to lean in favor of Israel, which was described as our only dependable ally in the Middle East, and things of that nature -- the only practicing democracy. We kind of retched at some of this stuff, but when I spoke to people I told it like it was. I got a lot of hostile questions, but I was able to defend myself. In answer to your question, yes, I think we bowed to Congressional pressure on much of this. There were all these resolutions and so on, and sometimes legislation - the anti-boycott legislation was one of the dumbest things we have ever done. We fought it tooth and nail because, a) we knew it would not work, and b) we were shooting ourselves in the foot, just surrendering the whole field to the Japanese and the Germans and the British and so on, who did not really care at all about the boycott regulations; they went along with them because it meant business. The Chamber of Commerce fought it, but the pressures from AIPAC and Congress were such that we got this anti-boycott legislation. That is the kind of example of slanting U.S. policy because of Congressional and domestic pressures.

MARK C. LISSFELT
Staff Aide/Commercial Officer
Tel Aviv, Jerusalem (1965-1967)

Mark C. Lissfelt was born in Pennsylvania in 1932. He received his BA from Haverford College and his MALD from Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1959. He served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1956. His foreign posts included London, Tel Aviv, Bamako, Brussels, Bonn, Berlin and Paris. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 22, 1998

LISSFELT: Well, we went to Tel Aviv, and it was very much engineered through the wizardry of Findley Burns, who knew how to get the personnel process to be a little flexible so that I could go in "temporarily" as a commercial officer. We were interested in Tel Aviv, frankly, because particularly my wife was interested in going there. She was just fascinated by the Israeli experience and she prompted me, if I had needed any prompting, to see if we could get an assignment there, which we ended up happily getting and, after some training back here at FSI, went out there in January '65.

Q: And you were there to '67.

LISSFELT: Yes, through the Six Day War. My family was evacuated ahead of me - we could see the war coming - seven days before it happened, when Nasser ejected UN troops from the Sinai, I stayed there with our Welsh Corgi dog.

Q: I'd like to go back. When you arrived you went what? As a-

LISSFELT: This was my second overseas assignment. I was still quite a junior officer. I arrived as the acting commercial officer. I didn't know anything about commercial work, but I soon learned, and I did that for a period of time after which I was to go into the Political Section, a three-man Political Section, where I was to be the junior person. Well, what I didn't know was this wonderful ambassador, the late Walworth Barbour, took the junior officer from the Political Section to be his staff aide! So I ended up moving into another staff position, which was not something that I necessarily sought, but didn't have much choice. What I was doing for a while was doing the commercial officer job in the afternoon and being Staff Aide in the morning for Barbour a good part of my first year in Tel Aviv.

Q: What were our commercial interests in Israel at the time?

LISSFELT: Well, this was before we were shipping lots and lots of airplanes. Phantom (F-4) aircraft became the big thing. My successor claimed credit for increasing the exports of the United States to Israel a thousand-fold, but it was the shipping of Phantom aircraft that made his statistics surge. It was before we had really supplanted the French as a source of military equipment for Israel, so it was all sorts of things: finding agents for American firms who wanted a local person to sell their goods; organizing a trade fair, which we did, featuring, among other things, automotive repair equipment, which - believe me - Israel needed in the worst way (that was quite a success; in fact my successor saw that through to the end); dealing with visiting American businessmen with one request after another; running a commercial library, which was a standard thing done in most commercial sections of embassies perhaps even today. Dealing with the U.S. Commerce Department from afar and with some of the minions that they sent abroad also was one of the, frankly, less desirable parts of it. Although I didn't know much about commerce, I didn't find that they knew much more than I did, unfortunately - the ones that I had to deal with. I've since gained a lot more respect for them, from my experience--for example, later in Paris.

Q: I would have thought that at that time there were a lot of Americans of Jewish origin who

were involved in Israel one way or another, but also you're dealing with people, who along with the Lebanese and others, are known as being some of the most disputatious traders - sharp, very good traders - there, coming from the Levant. And having sort of the New York-Tel Aviv circuit and being a commercial officer, I would have thought you'd be in the middle of all sorts of things.

LISSFELT: Well, the truth of it was, at least my experience of it was, that the really effective high-rollers, if I can call them that, didn't come near the embassy, had nothing to do with the commercial officer and didn't want to have anything to do with the U.S. government. And they didn't need any advice or counseling on how you find an agency in Tel Aviv. They had their contacts; they had their friends; and they didn't need us. I wasn't, therefore, terribly impressed by those - I don't want to call them "dregs;" that's not fair, but they were not very sharp people who wended their way into the embassy seeking help from me. And I helped them as much as I could, but I soon realized that even a few of them were so lazy they weren't doing their own research about any of the laws and things like that and we were able to help them do what they should have done on their own. It was a very mixed bag, but this was again another eye-opening experience about the U.S. government abroad, believe me, something I knew nothing about before and certainly was not qualified for.

Q: Let's talk prior to the Six Day War. How would you characterize the embassy - I mean, this was a country under siege, I mean, just by its nature, which it remains basically today, I guess, but changed quite a bit at that time - the people in the embassy and how you looked at it when you first arrived, how they looked at the world around them?

LISSFELT: You knew you were going into a hot spot, if you will, but it wasn't one where one felt physical danger. We lived north of Tel Aviv, where the U.S. PL-480 (Public Law 480) funds, which were generated by assistance given over the years, were used to build very nice housing, which was a heck of a good investment, by the way. My wife and I were a young couple with two young children, a third born when we were in Tel Aviv - and our reception couldn't have been more cordial. The dealings day in and day out had to do often with frictions - for instance, up in Jerusalem access to Mt. Scopus, the UN convoys running supplies up there when that was an enclave, no longer an enclave. Palestinian refugees were also a problem, but that was mainly dealt with out of here and out of Beirut - Washington and Beirut. But it was a very lugubrious climate to land in in '95, and we felt ourselves, indeed, very lucky. I consider it still one of my most interesting assignments, to be there at that stage in our lives.

Q: Can you talk about - was it Ambassador Barbour?

LISSFELT: Walworth Barbour had been there three or four years at least before I arrived, stayed a total of 11 years as ambassador there, and was a wonderful, taciturn, extremely smart bachelor, who was joined often by his sister, who came out to be his companion in the summer months. She came from Gloucester, from her home. He was a career person who had come from being the minister in London and had a distinguished career behind him. I think he was respected immensely, even, by Golda Meir, who was foreign minister then prime minister while we were there; by Prime Minister Levi Eshkol; by the Foreign Ministry, because he was known, I believe, as an objective career person with no particular axe to grind, who replaced, if memory serves me,

a young American politician who was sent out there because of his connection with the American Jewish sympathizers in New York State.

Q: *Was this Reed?*

LISSFELT: Yes, Ogden Reed. Herald Tribune newspaper connection, I believe. But Barbour was just a very nice but quiet, self-contained man who knew the meaning *pas trop de zèle* - "don't be too zealous" - in trying to manage our relations with foreign governments and how they deal with us - I think he was immensely respected and honored, for example, at the Weizmann Institute, where he did a lot to help them get money from this Public Law 480 pool of funds. He also knew how to talk turkey to the powers that be and to keep people like Assistant Secretary Joseph Sisco cognizant of some realities in Israel. Cool man, absolutely never saw him flap.

Q: *Did you ever get any feel for the attitude of our embassies in the surrounding Arab countries, because-*

LISSFELT: Oh, yes.

Q: *--there was very much the feeling from people in those places that Barbour - and this was true of almost any ambassador to Israel - was following the Israeli line too much?*

LISSFELT: Yes, all the time, and at least some of this was reflected in exchanges of telegrams. People were indiscreet. But for whatever reason, Walworth Barbour thought he was looking out for the American interests and realized the extreme American interest in things going on in Israel. Now he probably suffered from his share of "localitis," or addiction, if you will - or sympathy is a better word - for things in the host country. You can't escape it, particularly in a place as intense as the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem atmosphere. I think the Jerusalem consulate - which was not subordinate to the embassy, but was subordinate directly to the Department of State, and they were in the heart of things Israeli and Arab - thought that the embassy was hopelessly pro-Israeli, and they said as much, and it was a rather tense atmosphere between us and the consul general up there, whom we used to refer to as "Lord Mandlebaum," because the Mandlebaum Gate was the controlling point through which you had to go to get to the Arab side of the then divided Jerusalem. He lived on the Israeli side, but he was supposed to be looking out for the interests of both sides, but it was an impossible, still is, an impossible situation.

Q: *We have a solid number of interviews with people who served in Jerusalem, and this feeling of opposition to the embassy in Tel Aviv is one of the classic cases.*

LISSFELT: Well, it was painful because the consul general up there at the time wanted to be an ambassador, I strongly suspect - in fact, I know. After leaving he didn't become ambassador, but he had to figure out how to get an endorsement from Walworth Barbour, the ambassador in Tel Aviv. And I was witness to some of these rather painful conversations, and it was a rather eye-opening experience to see what matters. And I don't think he ever got an unvarnished endorsement. For whatever reason, he never got an embassy, poor man. He wrote a good book about Jerusalem since. I was just last night with a friend who served in Jerusalem on the Arab side, who was the second man in that consulate; the strength of feelings of that guy to this day

against Israel are remarkable.

Q: *Who was that?*

LISSFELT: Donald Kruse. You may have interviewed Don. He's a good guy. He's resident right here and does work with Freedom of Information stuff. He'd be an interesting guy for you to talk to.

Q: *I have. I've never served in Israel, but I'm told that one of the both delights and it wears you down is the intense debate of the political life that everybody gets into. I mean, it's a place where you'll sit around a dinner table and you'll find yourself having a very intense debate with Israelis, and this is a way of life there.*

LISSFELT: Oh, it certainly is, and as I said earlier, it's an intense cavern that one lives in there. But, you know, we were young and extremely junior people in the embassy, and I had to be discreet as the ambassador's aide, because I was privy to certain stuff that I had better keep my mouth shut about. But I would never go out and tell anybody what I thought the ambassador thought about a given issue. I was discreet, to put it mildly. And we found our friendships there really centered on our neighbors and children because we had young children and they were going to the school there and living out in this Herzliya, a northern suburb of Tel Aviv, and our friendships really related to these wonderful people who were all around us there, just typical. Some of them were Americans, some Iranians. Their problems with their young kids were the same as ours, so it was all very friendly and seldom disputatious.

Q: *I found there was a problem dealing with German-Americans who came back to Frankfurt - this was when you were there; this was '55 to '58 - who would know it all. They wanted everybody to listen to the words of wisdom because they'd been from the United States. I'd think this would have been even a worse problem with American Jews coming back to Israel.*

LISSFELT: Well, I think you're right. There was certainly plenty of friction between them and the Israelis, who received the bulk of this whenever this occurred, but there was a very unfriendly attitude among these Americans toward the embassy, and particularly towards representatives of the Department of State, who were considered the enemy. I can remember going to visit the Weizmann Institute, which we used to do every year. They'd invite us down for a buffet dinner - the whole embassy staff was invited, and President Meyer Weisgal, who as a great friend of Barbour and the embassy and who knew the smart thing was for the Weizmann Institute, which was down in Rehoboth, in the south, to be close to the embassy. But I spent some of the most unpleasant evenings of my life down there on the receiving end, where these young Americans, who happened to be Jewish, were giving us you-know-what for what they considered an unsympathetic attitude toward the State of Israel. And I was just dumbfounded, because I knew, for example, the benefits that the Weizmann Institute was receiving in terms of U.S. public monies. It was enormous. I can remember some of these young women who were absolutely insulting to the embassy staff. It was very shocking, and very unpleasant.

The worst experience was at the time of the Six Day War, though, and the most embittering experience was the invasion - that's too strong a word - of these very same people who had come

to live in Israel, and suddenly there was a crisis at hand, which might have endangered their lives and their future, and they poured into the embassy to get out of there, to get their documents in order so they could leave. And the people working in the Consular Section were the most bitter people I knew, the staff, processing these people through. There were lots of them; there were thousands of people who wanted to get the heck out of harm's way fast - not an endearing memory.

Q: *What was prompting this, do you think?*

LISSEFELT: Fear for their lives.

Q: *No, no, no, I'm talking about this feeling about the embassy.*

LISSEFELT: Well, I think it's traditional among Israeli supporters, and I know this from my later experience working on the Israeli Desk back in the Department, to have a hostile feeling toward these "Arabists" - with a quote around it - who populate the Department of State. Particularly the Middle East Bureau, particularly those who work on things Israeli are seen to be very unsympathetic - if not prejudiced against the cause of Israel - because of their Arab sympathies. But you know, it was such a joke because as you well know from your own career, to have served in an Arab country, for example, like serving in the United States, is to see the great side and to see the flaws, and you soon don't have blinders on about the weakness of any society.

Q: *I spent two and a half years in Saudi Arabia, and I sure didn't come out as an Arab-lover. I mean, au contraire [French: to the contrary]. Did you find that with the Israelis you would meet, did you feel that you were being tested? I'm told people do this. I mean, "Is he anti-Semitic? Is he pro-Israeli?" This type of thing.*

LISSEFELT: Oh, yes. But the funny thing for me was my name, Lissfelt. It was not clear what my religion was. I could have been a Jewish-American. It happens I was born, and have been ever since, a rather bad Episcopalian. But I never wore a sign saying, "I'm not Jewish," or "I'm an Episcopalian." But it was even amusing to the point of dealing with people when they were trying to figure out where you belonged. Are you with us? Are you one of us? I mean, there were conversations that were hilarious in this regard. We used to live in Tel Aviv, and we used to go to church with our young kids down in Jaffa to a Catholic church - my wife's Catholic - and a not so amusing thing there was to come out afterward and find agents of Mossad, Israeli intelligence, writing down the license plates of all the cars that were attending Christian service in this harmless Catholic church. But we were aware of that, but that didn't... I think I stayed pretty objective in a situation where it's hard to be objective. I don't know if anybody can in the Middle East.

Q: *I know. Did you run across problems with particularly the Americans of the extreme orthodox faith and, you know, all sorts of laws?*

LISSEFELT: No, on the contrary. The experience that we had with Americans that came over visiting and happened to be Jewish - this happened to the father of a roommate of mine, for example - was that they were very upset with Israel. The didn't like what they found at all. I

admit this is anecdotal and not substantiated by statistics, but these people were upset by, you know, the taxi drivers. They'd come from New York and find Israeli taxi drivers rude! Well, I found that rather amusing. Certain rudeness in the shops. They're not a shop-keeping nation, as you will learn five seconds after you're in a shop, and people coming from America who've donated all their life to the United Jewish Appeal often expected deferential treatment. They had no right to it, but some of them thought they did. And that led to certain disillusionments and people leaving very unhappy with the experience. Anecdotal again, and I don't know what percentage that might have been.

Q: How about with the officers particularly in the Political Section? I mean, was there a certain feeling of treading on eggs as far as reporting on Israel?

LISSFELT: Oh, sure. One was very cautious. One assumed that everything one put down on paper somehow was going to be read by the host nation or their representatives.

Q: Or even worse, by a pro-Israeli senator in the United States.

LISSFELT: That too, but one was always very careful. But again, when Barbour wanted to weigh in on something, he just said what he thought. But there was that feeling, and you know, again, I worked on the Israel Desk, and I became subjected to some of the pressures, if you will, of the sympathizers, which wasn't always a pleasant experience either.

Q: How did you feel at the time about the Desk? I realize you weren't reporting, but it wasn't that huge an embassy-

LISSFELT: A small embassy.

Q: -so you're a young officer, and you're around other young officers, and so you're picking up probably more of the gossip and the feeling. What was the feeling about how things were going with Israel back in Washington, at the Department of State? Was it a feeling of support, frustration?

LISSFELT: Oh, I think that everybody was cognizant - and there's a certain amount of exchange, people having worked in Washington in the Bureau - and they knew this first-hand - that the pro-Israel lobby is very strong. And every nation on earth has a right to organize and lobby our legislators and everyone else. It's just that the Israelis did it more effectively than probably any other single nation and still do to this day, be it information, be it money, be it energy, be it involvement. And one knew, if one knew that the sun rose in the east, that this was something very special. They had much more influence in Washington than any individual Arab nation or the Arab nations as a whole. One interesting thing while we were there, by the way, is that this was an embassy where the staff never contained an American Jewish member. Just like women weren't sent to Saudi Arabia to certain positions, American officers of Jewish origin, Jewish religion, were not sent to Israel. This changed while I was there, by the way, and the first American Jewish official, who happened to be an assistant Army attaché, came to Israel. I always had the impression that for him personally it was an extremely unpleasant experience because people tried to - exploit is too strong a word, but that's maybe what they wanted to do -

exploit his dual loyalties. And I never had the feeling that this guy was intellectually strong enough to cope with the stresses and strains. He lived - a living hell is far too strong a word, but it was uncomfortable. Since then, as you know, this is routine. People of Jewish faith are sent there routinely.

Q: *Well, let's talk about the Six Day war. This was in the summer of-*

LISSFELT: June.

Q: *-June-*

LISSFELT: June 6th.

Q: *-of 1966.*

LISSFELT: 1967.

Q: *Can you tell about what was, sort of, the political and strategic atmosphere prior to that, and particularly from your perspective?*

LISSFELT: Well, there was sort of a calm before a storm. I remember making a trip with a visiting official from Washington down to the Egyptian-Israeli border on the Sinai and writing a telegram when I came back, and I still remember the title of it, which was "All's Quiet on the Sinai Front." This was a matter of weeks before the outbreak of this war, but what really sent a warning rocket in the sky a week before the war started was Nasser's decision to instruct U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations, to get the UN observers out of the Sinai, out of the way between Israel and Egypt, a request to which he promptly acceded.

Q: *It was considered to be sort of a political bluff by many, and U Thant was a little too quick on the trigger.*

LISSFELT: Well, there was that criticism, of course. Why did he accede so fast? Why didn't he try to delay? It was taken as a clear warning signal, and it was at that time that the embassy right away began to think about what might be coming. The Israelis were certainly thinking about it, and you know what happened. But we began right away to offer people who were going - for instance, we were going on home leave, and my family was given the chance to advance their departure, and I would stay behind, just rather than go in July. The invitation was: "Why don't you just go along a few weeks and take the kids and go? You're going anyway." That was the first trickle out, then voluntary departure of all dependents, you know we've been through this probably with the downsizing of an embassy and the question of essential personnel. We were really downsized before this thing started.

I'll never forget the first day. I was a control officer for the visiting mayor of Philadelphia, whose name I've long since forgotten, sitting in the Tel Aviv Hilton Hotel, probably the tallest building in the Middle East at the time, and certainly the biggest target, if there was going to be a war, on the Israeli side. On the Monday morning when this war started, the mayor and I were having

breakfast, and suddenly everybody began to head for the underground bomb shelters in the Hilton basement.

Q: It started with an Israeli air attack on the Egyptian Air Force.

LISSFELT: Well the Israelis would say it started with Egyptian feints and the prospects of their attack. You could debate that, as to when it started, but as far as we were concerned, it started with the destruction of the Egyptian Air Force that Monday morning within a matter of three hours on the ground in the airfields across the face of Egypt. It was a just a brilliant preemptive strike. We knew this by the end of that first morning, by the way. By Monday at noon, we were sort of breathing a little easier. We had the feeling that one was in the middle of a war but there was no question that we, unlike our colleagues in Egypt and other places, were going to be on the winning side, i.e., in the victorious nation.

At breakfast, though, when the sirens began to sound and everybody was evacuating the Hilton and this mayor of Philadelphia insisted on finishing his breakfast. We were alone in this restaurant. I said, "I think we should get out of here. I think something's happening, you know. The staff are running and they came and warned us to go downstairs." Something happened to the mayor's mind. He became irrational. We went back to the embassy and went down in the underground garage and he wouldn't go. He was demanding his "civil rights." (sic!). He kept saying, "I demand my civil rights." We didn't know how that applied to the prospect of an imminent air attack, down in the basement with the embassy staff. In the event, we were never attacked. We then got that man out of town as quickly as we could. He was a senior public official who just went a little screwy. We heard horrendous stories from our friends in neighboring countries later. People in Egypt, I remember this, had to run a sort of gauntlet to get on trains to go up to Alexandria to be evacuated. It was horrendous for them. My family had gone ahead, fortunately, so I felt very free and confident and safe for myself, particularly after we saw what happened that first morning. On it went, and I left July 1st, when the war had long since ended and the Israelis were exultant and had hold of territories now which they have been ever since trying to figure what to do with.

Q: You mentioned that a lot of the Americans, who were some of the most ardent supporters of Israel, wanted to get the hell out as soon as the going got tough.

LISSFELT: It was distressing to watch that. I mean, it was something that left a very bad taste in one's mouth, and the people who worked in the Consular Section, who were on the receiving end of these insulting demands for prompt issuance of passports that had long since expired. They were on the receiving end. And this sudden exodus certainly didn't go unnoticed by the Israelis. I would have lunch with the staff afterwards, and they would come in shaking their heads. It was a very human reaction: the American Jews were frightened, they wanted to get out of there, and they thought they could; but the whole loyalty of many of these people to this state that we thought they had adopted - they thought they had adopted - suddenly evaporated in the face of this fear for their lives.

Q: Were you also having to deal with an influx of American Jews who wanted to come in to be in Israel at the time?

LISSFELT: Well, no we weren't, but I don't know anything about the statistics, but I am sure some came, but they would do it through the instrumentality of the Israeli officials, be it with the embassy in Washington or consulates elsewhere, to find out how to plug in. Probably some of them joined the armed forces and fought. Sure, there was that other element; that's important to balance with the story I've just told you about the people who wanted out. There were people who wanted in immediately and wanted to serve their friendly and maybe their adopted country. This was a time when you lost your citizenship, by the way, automatically for serving in the armed forces of a foreign country.

Q: *What was Barbour doing during this?*

LISSFELT: Well, Barbour was following his routine, which was to come to the embassy in the morning and stay late into the early afternoon and go home for lunch and not come back unless there was something pressing. I knew something was serious one day when he came back one afternoon. I asked myself, "What's Barbour doing back in this embassy?" I knew him very well, and this is not said with disrespect, because he was effective. But when he appeared at that embassy, something had to be up. But he was being taken to the Defense Ministry and getting briefings, seeing the Israeli military briefings. I never went along. He always went alone. They wanted to put him in the picture on this, that and the other thing, and were probably making requests for American help. We had our communications equipment flown in from the Sixth Fleet, so that we could communicate with them when they were over the horizon, out in the Mediterranean. We felt very reassured by that, in case of an evacuation.

Q: *This wasn't when the Liberty was attacked then.*

LISSFELT: Well, yes, the *Liberty* was attacked during the course of this Six Day War. I'm not sure which day. I've forgotten that, although I did have the dossier for the *Liberty* case when I went back on the Israel Desk. That was very confusing at the time we were there because it was still maintained that it was mistaken for an Egyptian tanker of some sort and there was confusion about to whom it belonged. I know that our naval attaché at the embassy was flown out in a helicopter over the ship after it had been hit. I remember him telling me the story that he dropped his card down in a little bag with his name, saying, "Can we help in any way?" And there he was, hovering over this hulk that had been shot to pieces. That was a terrible moment.

Q: *I was wondering how this affected. The Liberty was an American naval communications vessel that was attacked and sunk with a very high loss of life by sustained attacks by the Israeli Air Force--*

LISSFELT: --and, the ship maintained, in the face of a huge American flag flying on the stern.

Q: *To this day there are many in the United States who will not forget the Liberty. I mean, this is not something that has gone away, and I'm curious about the embassy reaction at the time.*

LISSFELT: Well, at the time we were preoccupied with other things, like destroying classified documents and getting ourselves ready to be evacuated if it came to that. Of course, by the time

we were ready, it was already a foregone conclusion that we weren't going to have to go, by the way. But I don't remember a preoccupation out there with the *Liberty* event. The *Liberty* was an intelligence monitoring ship, which I think the Israelis, rightly or wrongly, assessed was trying to listen to the communications - which of course these ships do all the time out there, as do aircraft - and the analysis at the time was that the Israelis wanted to limit the U.S. government's ability to gather independently intelligence by shooting up that ship. Now they maintained that a horrible mistake was made and since paid millions of dollars. I think a lot of people were killed and many people wounded from that. It was a terrible event. War is a terrible thing, and if this was done with intent, which everybody seems to think, it just shows you the determination - or maybe desperation - of a state under siege.

Q: What about the acquisition of the West Bank and all of Jerusalem and all of that. How was that playing? I mean when you left there, not too long after the war-

LISSFELT: There was exhilaration on the part of the Israelis, particularly on the taking of the Golan Heights, which was done the last day, on Friday. I'll never forget that Friday sitting in my backyard in Herzliya north of Tel Aviv and seeing the Israeli Air Force flying back from their attacks on it. They were bound and determined not to let the Syrians escape scot-free from that war. It was clear. But particularly the taking of the Golan Heights - from which *kibbutzim* below were shelled periodically. You had to look up at the Heights to appreciate the military advantage. There was exhilaration on all Israeli hands. My neighbor was a young man of American origin but living in Israel, an insurance executive, who was fighting - he was just my age - fighting the third time in a war for his country as a bombardier on a plane. And these people were walking six feet off the ground. I recall our having the temerity to suggest: "Now is the time to be magnanimous. Be magnanimous in victory when you have whipped these nations. It's an opportunity which will come maybe once in a lifetime." But that certainly fell on deaf ears, and I don't recall how persistently the U.S. government pursued that. The idea was, now is the time to settle Jerusalem; now is the time to settle the West Bank, give it back, establish relationships. You're the victor. Be as magnanimous as you possibly can in victory, and it might settle the Middle East problem forever. But you suggested that and hardly got to the end of your sentence before sensing that the person listening to you, an Israeli, was *so* relieved by what they had accomplished in six days - I mean, with reason. He was intoxicated.

Q: Were you aware of anyone in the embassy saying, "Yes, this is great, but what are the Israelis going to do with the West Bank and all these Arabs?"

LISSFELT: Oh, sure. Everybody knew the population increase potential for the Arab populations they were swallowing. Could they swallow this meal, or would it choke them? Idle chitchat, but again, I left the 1st of July and never went back, so I don't know anything about the efforts to pursue this idea of magnanimity in victory as an opportunity to settle something with people who will be your neighbors for the rest of eternity.

Q: Did Menachem Begin cross your horizon?

LISSFELT: Not then at all. I think he was a member of Parliament, but he hadn't risen to become prime minister, and this was very much the days of the Labor régime, and it had been for years,

and you had giants like Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan, Levi Eshkol, not to mention Ben Gurion, who was still alive and still a force out there. I remember visiting Ben Gurion. I told you of this visit to his apartment up in Carmel in Haifa with Senator Joseph Clark, a very simple, humble apartment. There was Ben Gurion in his elegant black suit, talking to Clark; and his wife--I think her name was Paula, wonderful woman--had a box of chocolates, and all the time they were talking - we were four people together--and she kept looking at me, and she tried to size me up and finally she hit me with an elbow and said, "You want a chocolate?" Then she decided to share these chocolates. It was really a moment. I had a chocolate with Ben Gurion. It was great, one of those moments in the career that you just cherish. Giant of a man.

Q: What was your impression of Golda Meir?

LISSFELT: Well, a tower of strength, just a person of reason. And I would see her later back in the Department when I worked there, and I mean, this woman was just incredible. She was so tough and so persistent and so smart, and she was head and shoulders above her cabinet colleagues. There were other people like Egal Alon, who was quite an impressive gentleman, as was Moshe Dayan; and Yitzhak Rabin, at the time, was the chief of staff of the Army, and he was already head-and-shoulders above the crowd, to put it mildly. But Golda Meir was something unique, I'm sure, in the history of Israel. They don't make them like that very often.

Q: What was your impression, when you arrived in Israel, of Nasser?

LISSFELT: Well, Nasser was the arch-enemy. He was the threat, the biggest Arab country and that's what they worried about most. Lebanon was quiet, you know; nobody worried about the Lebanese frontier. The Lebanese, everybody always said, will be the second to make peace with Israel. There will be somebody, they'll wait for somebody else to take the move, and then the Lebanese will move. Syria was a real worry, but not a military worry, because the Israelis thought they could handle them. A pinprick all the time - more than a pinprick: there was shooting from the Golan Heights, as I mentioned above. Israel was upset when the king came into the Six Day War. As you may remember, he entered the war in spite of Israel doing everything they could to keep him out, they say. Nasser was the threat, the problem, this giant state, the big army, and Russian support all over the place and Russian equipment. They were very worried about him.

JUSTICE ARTHUR J. GOLDBERG
Ambassador, United Nations
New York, NY (1965-1968)

Justice Goldberg was born and raised in Illinois and educated at La DePaul and Northwestern Universities. He served in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, after which he persuaded a career in Law. He subsequently became a major figure in the United States government, serving as Secretary of Labor, Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court and finally as US Ambassador to the United Nations. Justice Goldberg was closely involved in major issues at the United Nations, including the

Vietnam War and the 1967 Arab-Israel War. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1978. He died in 1990. Justice Goldenberg was interviewed by Ted Gittinger in 1983.

Q: Let's talk about that 1967 war for a minute. From your vantage point at the UN, how did you interpret Nasser's moves?

GOLDBERG: I knew a war was inevitable when Nasser moved his troops into the Sinai and Sharm el Sheik, evicting the UN. It was impossible for Israel to mobilize its troops and keep them mobilized for an indefinite period. They have a civilian army. Indefinite mobilization would bankrupt the country. Therefore I anticipated, as the record proves, that Israel would have to launch a pre-emptive strike. They couldn't indefinitely continue with complete mobilization, giving Nasser the option to launch an assault when he chose. And the Israelis always said that blockading the Straits of Tiran would be a casus belli. I told this to [Abba] Eban when he called on me after seeing President Johnson on the Friday preceding the outbreak of the war on the following Monday. Johnson twisted his arm at the Friday meeting. Eban saw me after he saw Johnson, went back to his cabinet, and said, "Well, the President of the United States says he's with us provided we pursue our diplomatic endeavors." When he came to see me after seeing the President -- I knew him; I always called him Aubrey, he changed his name to Abba -- I said, "Aubrey, tell me" -- he was dead tired, he really wasn't functioning. It was the Friday before the war started on Monday morning. The Israeli cabinet always meets on Sunday. I said, "What did the President say to you?" He reported, "The President said to me, 'Subject to our constitutional proscriptions, we are with you.'" I said to Eban, "You owe it to your government, because lives are going to be lost and your security is involved, to tell your cabinet that the President's statement means a joint resolution of Congress before coming to your aid, and the President can't get such a resolution because of the Vietnam War."

I have always believed in candor. I reported my conversation with Eban to the State Department and to the White House. Well, the Israelis debated Eban's report and my comments in the cabinet meeting on Sunday. [Levi] Eshkol, Israel's Prime Minister, sent a flash telegram to Johnson on Sunday in which Eshkol said -- he didn't refer to me -- "Our foreign secretary says that you made a commitment to really stand by us. Please confirm." Johnson then called me. He said, "Do you understand I made a commitment to go to war with Egypt with the Israelis if Nasser doesn't get out of the Sinai?" I said, "No. Look at my telegram to you." He said, "I haven't seen it." I said, "Get it, Mr. President. It says that you used the words 'subject to our constitutional provisions,' and it further says in my opinion, I don't see that the House and Senate are going to agree. You were very careful." He said, "Thank you." He said, "What do I do about Eshkol's telegram?" and I said, "Don't answer it."

Q: The memo that I have seen has the President saying, "Israel will not be alone unless she decides to go alone."

GOLDBERG: Yes. That's the language. They interpreted that to mean that the United States would be at their side and straighten it out. Well, Rostow, Gene Rostow, is very well intentioned but, in this instance, was impractical. He tried to organize, as [John Foster] Dulles did during the Suez crisis, an international force to force passage through the Straits of Tiran.

Q: The Red Sea regatta, was that -- ?

GOLDBERG: Yes. I was against it. I said, "That's nonsense. We're not going to get any help." And sure enough, you know who we got? A Dutch admiral, that's all. All our allies faded away and it fell apart, as I knew it would.

Q: Do you have any insight into the stories circulating that at lower levels in Washington Mr. Eban and the chief of the Israeli intelligence service, who I think came with him, were told, perhaps in not so many words, "We wish you would go ahead and clean this mess up"?

GOLDBERG: No. No. I have no information on that. The only information I had was the presidential statement reported to me in the manner in which I indicated, and my response. I wanted to protect the President and our country and also be accurate. So the Israelis could determine what was required for their own security. I didn't want them fooled. When I heard those -- after all, I had been a former justice to the Supreme Court -- when I heard the words "subject to our constitutional requirements, we are with you -- "

Q: That's a code word, right?

GOLDBERG: Yes. Subject to our constitution. Are you aware that most of our treaties contain that provision? Except NATO.

Q: Really? Well, I wasn't aware.

GOLDBERG: Yes. NATO is a firm commitment. The Congress approved it, it's a treaty, so it doesn't contain that language. NATO action does not require approval by Congress. But most of our other treaties of alliance and so on contain that provision.

Q: I see. Were you in contact with the Egyptian Ambassador during the build-up of the crisis?

GOLDBERG: Oh, yes, continuous. And more important, the foreign minister of Egypt, [Mahmoud] Riad who was here, and King Hussein of Jordan.

Q: Were they cognizant of the fact that Israel could not sustain a mobilization over -- ?

GOLDBERG: Well, no -- Riad came later when we negotiated Resolution 242. El Kony was not conscious. He was a very smart man, but he was being fed a stream of telegrams, false telegrams, from Nasser that they're winning the war. It was only after a few days that they recognized that the war was determined the first day when the Israeli aircraft knocked out virtually all of the Egyptian airplanes.

Q: With reference to the couple of weeks or month before the war actually broke out, Nasser took a number of moves, made a number of statements, which were regarded as inflammatory. Did he act in the belief that the Israelis were not going to make war?

GOLDBERG: I don't know. Nasser's rhetoric always had to be taken with a grain of salt, as is customary with Arab rhetoric. It's pretty high-flown stuff. I did get most of the intelligence reports. I did not get the Mac Bundy reports, which evaluated the flow of intelligence, although Mac and I are great friends. There was no intimation in the fragmentary reports furnished to me that Nasser was planning what he did do. I recall the circumstances when I received real intelligence very well. I was taking all the UN ambassadors on a Circle Line tour of New York. My wife and I were tired of formal dinners, so we took the UN ambassadors on the Circle Tour. We had an old accordion to provide music and we served our guests hot dogs and the like. In the midst of the tour, which took place about the middle of May, a Coast Guard cutter hailed me and said I was urgently required to go to the U.S. mission, the President wants to talk to me. To the applause of the passengers, I had to climb down a ladder to get on, and it was then that I learned from the President that Nasser had moved into the Sinai, and that he had brushed the UN peacekeeping force aside.

I always faulted U Thant for not playing a waiting game, and also Ralph Bunche -- but Ralph was getting older and sick -- for acceding to Nasser's request. Instead of immediately acceding, they should have said, "We must first obtain the approval of the [General] Assembly or the Security Council." We had a letter which was given at the time of the 1956-57 war, from Hammarskjöld to Dulles saying that, at the insistence of the U.S., the UN peacekeeping force in the Sinai would only be withdrawn when their mission was completed, which translated means it would not be withdrawn absent a peace treaty. Interestingly enough, because Bunche's eyesight had failed and his memory somewhat, he didn't recall it. I had to bring him a copy of this letter. He didn't remember the letter.

Q: Did anybody ask the Israelis to accept the peacekeeping force on their side?

GOLDBERG: Oh, yes. Since Nasser was the aggressor, there was no discussion about this. Egypt withdrew from the Sinai by force of Israeli arms, and the terms of the deal were that the Sinai would be demilitarized. So that it was not logical to have a discussion about a peacekeeping force on the Israeli side. What was involved was the demilitarization of the Sinai, which had been agreed to with DA Hammarskjöld. After all, the Israelis in 1956-57 pulled out at our insistence, General Eisenhower's, and part of the deal was what I told you, a letter that the peacekeeping force -- which [David] Ben-Gurion was reluctant to accept; after all, he had to pull out. The quid pro quo was that the UN peacekeeping force in the Sinai would not be withdrawn until its mission was complete.

Q: Let me recount a couple of things that we both are perfectly aware of. One was that the Israelis could not maintain their armies in the field indefinitely. The other is that Nasser began to remilitarize the Sinai.

GOLDBERG: Yes. He breached the understanding.

Q: He closed the Gulf of Aqaba, at least declared a blockade.

GOLDBERG: Yes, notwithstanding that Israel had to have access to Africa and to the port of Eilat.

Q: Nasser apparently accepted spurious reports that the Israelis had mobilized on the Syrian frontier.

GOLDBERG: I don't know about that. **SANITIZED**

*Q: **SANITIZED***

GOLDBERG: **SANITIZED**

*Q: **SANITIZED***

GOLDBERG: It was a complete canard [that we were bombing on the first day of the war]. I answered it in the Security Council.

Q: No, I have seen reports that claim the Russians were feeding Nasser intelligence.

GOLDBERG: That is correct. But on the first part, I did what our navy went up in arms about, but I said I had no choice and the President, I must say, supported me. In order to put to rest this canard, I invited UN observers to go on board our carriers and see their logs to demonstrate our planes did not participate, you see. Now about Russians -- it's a most peculiar thing, never explored in depth. The Russians certainly knew that the Israelis were not going to launch a pre-emptive strike, certainly Against Egypt. They were always worried more about Syria. Syria was ideologically closer to them. Although, during the fighting, the Soviets seemed to get fed up with Syria. Would it interest you to know that for some reason of Russian policy, when the Israelis started to move to El Quneitra and were thirty miles from Damascus, the same Syrian ambassador who had insulted me, came to me and said, "We need a cease-fire." And I said, "Go to your friend, the Soviet Ambassador." The Syrian Ambassador said, "He won't listen to me." We thereupon proposed the cease-fire resolution at the behest of Syria. I said, "We don't want another war and we don't want Damascus invaded." So I was the one who offered at the request of Syria, a cease-fire.

I remember further instances of Soviet behavior during this crisis. Khrushchev sent a threatening telegram to the White House similar to the one Kissinger got all excited about during his tenure. Johnson called me and read it to me. I was in charge, as I have mentioned. The President asked, "How do we answer this?" you know, over the hot line. And I said, "Very simply. It's a phony. The Russians logistically are a long way away, and the Israelis have a pretty potent army." So I said, "Why don't you answer --" He said, "I'll put my secretary on." I dictated an answer and the President sent it. This, in essence, was the answer: "I suggest your Ambassador at the UN communicate with Ambassador Goldberg, who is in charge of this matter, and discuss it." This was the last I heard about it.

Q: It seems to me that Nasser either had very bad judgment or a very poor intelligence service.

GOLDBERG: There's no doubt the Russians told him of their suspicions, whether genuine or fabricated I cannot say. It is significant, however, that before Nasser mobilized and occupied the

Sinai, the Russian Ambassador to Israel woke Eshkol up and said, "Our information is that you're going to strike Syria." And Eshkol, in his pajamas, three o'clock in the morning, according to all accounts I've read, said, "You come with me to the Syrian front and I'll show you it's not so." And the Russian Ambassador said, "We have our own means and I'm not going to accompany you."

Now, it's true there were some belligerent statements by Israel, but those were not enough for any country to base its policy on. Now why the Russians fed the Syrians and Egypt with suspicions and highly provocative intelligence and removed their personnel has always puzzled me. Did they want to stir things up, create instability? This may be the only explanation. Because they must have had better intelligence.

Q: That would be my point. Surely the Egyptians had sources of their own, didn't they?

GOLDBERG: Well, but you must remember the extent to which, at that point, Egypt relied upon the Russians, a great deal. There were thousands of Russian specialists in Egypt at the time, and thousands in Syria. So, whether the Soviets were the motivating factor for Nasser, I cannot say.

Q: Some people have made much of the fact that we had no ambassador in Cairo for about two months prior to this time.

GOLDBERG: The State Department, just before the outbreak of the war, sent an untutored fellow as our new ambassador to Egypt. I tried to brief the fellow, and along with the briefing I gave him a copy of the 1956-57 memoranda -- I've forgotten the exact date -- by Hammarskjöld. This fellow thought it was a contemporaneous memorandum of our desires. It referred to a lot of concepts which we no longer subscribed to. He gave that to Nasser as our present political wishes. Fortunately, his foreign minister and some others of course recognized the document as the old document. They knew he had made a mistake. And they told Nasser. It was a subject of great laughter. Their ambassador in the UN told me about it, and we had to pull our new Ambassador out.

Q: That's astonishing.

GOLDBERG: That is an astonishing faux pas.

Q: How difficult was it for you when the Israelis apparently took advantage of the cease-fire in order to -- ?

GOLDBERG: I had to ride herd on the Israelis all the time. I remember one time I wouldn't take Abba Eban's call. They played games about accepting [Resolution] 242. First they accepted it and then they started to back away. I remember one night my wife woke me up about three o'clock in the morning and said, "It's Mr. Eban." After I got acceptance. "Will you talk to him?" I said, "Don't take his call." They had internal political problems, and they were waffling, but I had a commitment and I acted on the assumption that they accepted it.

By the way, it was our resolution. The British had about as much to do with it as you. I must say

for Johnson, he gave me great personal support. For example, we were having trouble with the Argentinean Ambassador about his voting for 242. I called Johnson and asked him to call the President of the Argentine and instruct his ambassador on the Security Council to go along. Johnson did. I also asked the British to have their ambassador weigh in. He never did. All you have to do is look at the documents. You will see that the resolution we offered, then withdrew, is basically 242, with a few additions. The British did offer a troublesome addition, which we had to accept, because they showed it to the Arabs. It is a preamble statement about recognizing the inadmissibility of force to settle international disputes. This is not international law. If so, we ought to give up Texas and New Orleans. The Russians ought to give up the Kuril Islands and part of Poland, and Poland ought to give up part of Germany. International law unfortunately recognizes that to the victor belongs the spoils. Look what we almost did to Germany. We were almost going to make them an agricultural country.

Q: Was that Mr. Morgenthau's suggestion?

GOLDBERG: Yes. We were the victors, and our troops are still there, after what, forty years. So you know, the whole theory of it's a violation of international law for a victor to occupy territory is unfounded. We didn't ask the Germans for permission to station our troops in Germany, nor did the British, the French nor the Russians. We all did it as victors. We defeated them. As far as I know that's still the rule of international law.

Q: Vae victis I guess is the term.

GOLDBERG: Yes.

ANTHONY J. PERNA
Air Attaché
Tel Aviv (1965-1969)

Anthony J. Perna was born in Jersey City, New Jersey in 1918. He attended Syracuse for two years and then decided to join the Air Force in 1940. He served in the Air Force for twenty years and was involved with the nuclear weapons tests on the Bikini Atoll. In 1960 he was sent to Paris and given the Strategic Air Command post with NATO. He also served with the National War College in Washington D.C. Mr. Perna was interviewed by Francine D. Haughey in 1992.

PERNA: I went [to Israel as Attaché] in 1965 and came back in 1969. I had about four and a half years. I retired in the first of the year 1970. Then I became a farmer in Browntown, Virginia. And here I am.

Q: Right. Let's talk more, if you don't mind about your stay in Israel. How were the relations between the Arabs and the Israelis when you arrived there?

PERNA: First, I want to fill you in on the background of what had happened previously; the war

of 1948, and then the war of Suez were backgrounds to the time I arrived in 1965. The Fatah was the primary arm of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The PLO was established, and chartered, and headed by Arafat.

Q: Already at that time?

PERNA: He was in the hierarchy. Whether he was in control, I'm not sure; he was in control in '65. I think so. But the Fatah was running raids against the Israelis and the Israelis were retaliating and it was a series of events that went on until the beginning of the Six Day War. The relations between the Arabs and the Israelis were poor. The Palestinians were under the control of Jordan. They had large numbers of refugees in camps on the West bank. Two camps out in the Jordan Valley, a big camp between Hadera and Nablus and another camp near Nablus, another camp north of Jerusalem and large camps in the Gaza strip. These camps were populated by the people who ran away during the war of independence in 1948 and never got back. Thus from '48 until '67, almost 20 years, a whole generation of people lived there. However, the ones who had education, and the ones who had contacts, and the ones who had means got out and went to work in Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, and in other Arab countries and a lot of them got integrated in Jordan and in Lebanon. These Palestinians were skilled and they were well educated by comparison to the other people, so they didn't have trouble finding jobs in these places. In modern times, in Desert Storm, they had large numbers of Palestinians still working in Kuwait. Anyway these refugee camps were being run by the United Nations who fed, housed, and educated them, and ran schools and health clinics. The people who were in there were the people who had no skills to sell, who were economically and socially down the ladder, and interested in going back to Haifa, and back to Jaffa, and back to the farms where they had been before. It was very sad with miserable conditions. Why they stayed was in part because of the hostage policy of the Arab governments to keep them there in order that international opinion would be on their side. The Arab governments believed that these people must be given the opportunity to go back where they came from.

The terrorists came from these refugee camps. It was a place where people had nothing, and the kids joined radical movements. It wasn't like someone who had a business and who had a lot to lose, he was not going to let his kid go out bombing an Israeli train or a bus because he'd have a great deal to lose. The ones in the refugee camps didn't have much to lose. Recruiters looking for terrorists got them from refugee camps. Anyway, it was not a good situation and the tensions were high and the Israelis were on guard all the time around this green line border. I want to say something about the question of how the Israelis managed to prevail when they were so small in numbers against these vastly superior numerical forces. At this time the Arabs had large inventories of Soviet munitions, aircraft, tanks, and artillery. The policy of the Soviet Union was to spread communism by using military sales. They were deep into Egypt with large numbers of Soviet advisors. They had equipped the Egyptian Air Force with MiGs and the Syrian Air Force with MiGs.

Q: And the Israelis as well?

PERNA: No, the Israelis had all French aircraft. De Gaulle had sold them trainers, he had sold them transports, he had sold them helicopters and fighters. They had numbers that were

numerically inferior. In the case of airplanes, the Arabs outnumbered them like five to one. And in tanks, they were outnumbered four to one numerically. If the Egyptians had one thousand, the Israelis had several hundred. Well, how could the Israelis succeed with these kinds of numbers. They succeeded in my judgment because they had no alternatives. If they didn't succeed, they were finished. So they had to win. This motivated the people to be ingenious, to be brave, to do their homework, and to work like hell preparing for the worst eventuality. They got junk armaments left over from World War II and brought them to Israel with the help of Jewish friends in Europe and in America, and they refurbished them. And they used them in the Suez war.

Q: They were buying this in different countries?

PERNA: Buying them from junk dealers and there was no prohibition on this. And we didn't care. As a consequence, their determination made up for their inferiority in numbers. And they prevailed in these two wars, the War of Independence and the War of Suez. When we get to 1967, the Arabs were now heavily armed with Soviet equipment. The Egyptians and the Jordanians had large amounts of British equipment. Some American arms were in Jordan. The Syrians had almost 100% Soviet arms and the Lebanese did not have much of a significant force. There were the Saudis equipped with British and American arms. The Iraqis were equipped principally with Soviet arms. The events that led up to the Six Day War were the frictions of the Palestinian problems, the refugees wanting to get back and the fact that the military were getting stronger and stronger in each of these countries. Nasser caused the war by moving a number of divisions, armored divisions, into the Sinai. He came across the Canal and brought them down as far as the Gaza strip and the southern border of Israel and scared the Israelis. The Syrians who had been allied with the Egyptians in the United Arab Republic were now separate at the beginning of the Six Day War, but they were also mobilized.

Q: Weren't they talking about the Golan Heights at that time?

PERNA: Yes. The Golan Heights were the mountains overlooking the Jordan Valley where the Syrians had gun emplacements and tank emplacements and periodically fired onto the settlements down below. The settlements had air raid shelters where they all spent lots and lots of nights when they were being bombed. But the crowning blow was when the Egyptians closed the straits of Tiran. The straits of Tiran are at the bottom of the Gulf of Aqaba, where the Israelis have a port called Elat, and that's where their shipping went out that dealt with Africa and dealt with Southeast Asia. Next to Elat there's a Jordanian port of Aqaba, and the gulf is called the Gulf of Aqaba. The bottom end of it, the straits, are a narrow passage that control access into this gulf of Aqaba. The Egyptians told the UN, who had a contingent there, to leave. These were UN hangovers from Suez days, and also told the UN to get out of the Sinai. They scared the Israelis sufficiently that they mobilized. Everybody in Israel is in the army, women and men. The women go for two years and the men go for three years and then they are on reserve duty until they become 50 years old. And after 50, they become letter carriers and air raid wardens, and other quasi-official helpers. But they mobilized and they took all the buses and they took all the trucks and all the civilian equipment and they put together a force in the Negev, facing the Egyptians across the green line. The Egyptians called on the Jordanians to come in and the Jordanians came in. and the Israelis were frightened enough that they fired the first shots. They preempted the

Arab forces that were mobilized. In the north, Syrians and Iraqis, Saudis, Jordanians, and the Egyptians in the South. In the series of air strikes on June 6th, they caught the air forces of the Arab neighbors on the ground and destroyed 95% of their air power on the ground. With control of the skies and air superiority, they then proceeded to beat up the Egyptian armor and the Egyptian tank battalions that were in the Sinai. Their forces crossed the border and they had a big engagement there, and with control of the air they had mastery of the battlefield.

Q: You were there at the time, and these were French aircraft they were using?

PERNA: The Israeli were using all French aircraft and they were using their trainers as well. They armed the trainers with rockets, used these "fougas" as tank busters ...

Q: I'm sorry, I don't know what trainers are?

PERNA: A trainer is a plane that you use for training pilots, not normally for combat, but they armed them with machine guns and with rockets and augmented the Mirages, Oregans, and Mysteres. They engaged the Arab armor because they had no enemy in the air. They shot up all the armored forces that were on the ground. And they made quick work of the Egyptians in about 3 days and then they went to the north and started up the Golan Heights and advanced to within about 35 miles of Damascus; they finally got a cease fire and stopped.

Q: Who called the cease fire then?

PERNA: The US was pressuring them to stop and world opinion was pressuring them to stop. They agreed once they had control of the Golan Heights. Once they had control of the Sinai and they had conquered the Egyptians, they did not want to go to Cairo, they did not want to cross the canal. They had driven the Jordanian forces back across the Jordan River and they had control of the West bank. Now they had gone all the way over the Judean hills and down into the Jordan Valley and they had everything. The Golan Heights, the whole Jordan Valley down to Elat, all of the Sinai...

Q: They felt protected? Their settlements were protected?

PERNA: There were settlements in the north, but the Golan Heights could no longer bother those because they had pushed the Syrians back, and this was a stunning military success. I was there all the time. They wouldn't let me fly. I had an aircraft that I leased most of the time. They made me take a baby sitter with me when I flew, and I flew a lot, but I always had to take an Israeli along with me, so that he could see what I was doing. They had areas where they wouldn't let me go. I was in a car most of the time and on the road, watching as close as I could get to the fighting. I was under fire a couple times when they were bombing, and I burned up the engine in the car one day running like hell at high speed.

Q: In the other direction?

PERNA: Yes, I was running away from some Syrian aircraft that were trying to bomb Nazareth. I was right at the edge of the city.

We had sent our families to Rome when we saw what was going to happen.

Q: Was that the whole Embassy?

PERNA: No. It was an optional evacuation. A few wives stayed who didn't have kids, but the ones who had children took them and went to Rome. The Embassy did not come under attack, Tel Aviv did not come under attack. A few shells landed in Tel Aviv when it started. The Jordanians shot some artillery to Tel Aviv, but it was not consequential.

Q: What were you doing then, aside from being shot at? You were reporting?

PERNA: Our job was observing and reporting. We had all of our Attachés watching what was going on. We were getting briefed by the Israelis and we had messages from our Embassies in Lebanon and in Amman and in Cairo, and we were comparing notes and we were reporting to Washington about what was going on. We had been asked when the mobilization started, what we predicted. We got together in our office, and with the Ambassador's approval, we said we did not think it would go more than 10 days or two weeks at the outside. This was our estimate. And we were very proud of the fact that we had said not more than two weeks. Actually it was over in 6 days. Our reports were going in daily. Everything that we could see and everything that we could hear. The Israelis were giving us briefings which were canned and what they wanted to tell us. We took that and repeated them and sent them in saying this had been given us by the Israeli Air Force or the Foreign Liaison office or whoever gave the briefing.

Q: And then you say that the Israelis were pressured to have a cease fire. Did that come through the Embassies?

PERNA: Yes. The mechanics of why they stopped can best be answered by the fact that they had achieved their objectives, that is to get rid of the threat of the forces that had mobilized on their borders, and once they got rid of the threat they had no reason to go on. They had no objectives of going to Damascus, or going to Cairo. So they had achieved their objectives. We were of course trying to stop them before it ever started. It was against our interest to have war anywhere, and we tried to inhibit them. It had little effect. But once they achieved their objectives, they stopped.

Q: Now, they were in the Sinai, and they had the Golan Heights, and they stayed there?

PERNA: Yes, and the West Bank up to the Jordan River. And unfortunately, large numbers of Palestinians fled during the Six Day War across into Jordan, and into Syria, and into Lebanon, and into Egypt and they further populated the refugee camps. A case can be made why these countries didn't move those people out of the camps and absorb them. However, they wanted them to go back to the land where they had come from. This has been the source of friction down through the years.

The period following the Six Day War was complicated because De Gaulle didn't want them to go to war, and De Gaulle had told them that if they began fighting, he was going to shut off all

their supplies. Their tanks, their aircrafts, and their supplies were French. He said: "You will get no supplies if you go to war." And they went to war. He shut them off and set up an embargo on all supplies. Following the Six Day War, they could get no French supplies. This is when they came to us and begged us to sell them arms. We had given them some help with anti-aircraft missiles; these were Hawk missiles, to intercept aircraft, low flying aircraft. We had sold them some Hawks, and subsequently we sold them some A4s, which were fighter bombers.

Q: There were no nuclear weapons at that time in the area?

PERNA: We don't know the Israeli nuclear capability. Let me put it aside for a minute, and I'll get to it in a little while. But on the arms situation ... because they were dependent on French supplies, they had no way to get arms from anybody, once De Gaulle had shut them off, so they came to us, and we did not want to sell them arms. We did not want to sell them because we had friends in the moderate Arabs countries, and we didn't want to destroy the sources of our oil, and our other strategic interests in the area. We were reluctant to arm the Israelis with American equipment. However, the American policy had been that, from the time of Truman, in 1948, when we first recognized them, we supported the concept that the US believed in the integrity and supported the integrity of the state of Israel. This was from the time of their declaration of independence, when the country was partitioned between Arabs and Jews, and we said that we supported the territorial integrity of the state of Israel. Our concept, strategically, how we would support them, was to try to prevent wars, and if the war started, we would try to stop the war by interceding. This was a bankrupt policy. There's no way you can get in between the forces that had large amounts of Soviet armor and the Israelis with their armor, and try to say: "Stop boys." It won't work. The Ambassador discussed this at length with the Attachés and we convinced him that if the United States wanted to preserve the territorial integrity of the state of Israel, we needed to give them the opportunity to buy weapons in order to take care of themselves, so that we didn't have to try and come at the eleventh hour to try and help them. The policy changed after the Six Day War when De Gaulle put an embargo on things they needed. The Russians rapidly rearmed Syria and Egypt, with airplanes and tanks and artillery. The Ambassador recommended that the US supply arms and the State Department and the Defense Department vetoed it. However, the White House approved it.

Q: So this came from the Embassy in Israel?

PERNA: In Israel, yes. We recommended it, and the State Department and the Defense Department disapproved it, but the White House approved. And we began a program of selling them selected weapons. The first big sale was the F4 fighter. A lot of things happened at the end of the Six Day War. We were fighting in Vietnam and we wanted to know as much as we could about Soviet armament, and we were successful in getting access to a whole series of really important weapons that our Army and Air Force, and Navy wanted to know about. The SA2, a surface to air missile that had high altitude capability. The Soviet tanks, their modern tanks. In this period, they were equipping the Vietnamese, the Viet Cong, and the Chinese. The Israelis had radar, and artillery and a lot of stuff that we were interested in, that were captured during the Six Day War. We were successful in arranging for Americans to exploit this material and to know how it worked. Some of it was sent to America and some was examined and exploited in Israel by teams that came in. We were extremely busy in the hardware business. Not only in

setting up a procurement program for American stuff to be sold to them, but by exploiting the Soviet equipment which the Israelis had captured during the Six Day War.

Q: Did some people come over from the States then?

PERNA: We had teams, Army and Navy and Air Force teams that came, and they examined the captured material. Some of the material, we shipped back to the States. They examined it, and studied it at centers that we had for this purpose. It was a bonanza for the army in particular to get access to these Soviet radars, and Soviet missiles, artillery and armor.

Q: And so the Israelis released this to the US?

PERNA: Under a great deal of pressure and bargaining, by very tough business deals. "Yes, we'll let you have it, but we want this, and this, and this in exchange." They would have a lot of trading that went on and a lot of it got to the point where I couldn't help, and sent them to Washington. They went over there, and thrashed it out. Because all I could do was to be a messenger boy and take the messages. "Would you give these guys a certain kind of radar, and they'll give us a MiG 15?" I couldn't make these decisions. We got the thing going and sat back and watched, and it worked well, exchanging vast amounts of materiel. The Israelis also took all of this captured equipment and refurbished it and put the Israeli Star of David on it and they now are still equipped with Soviet tanks which they captured.

Q: It was an exciting time.

PERNA: It was exciting. The sad part of it was that the refugees who were now, probably doubled in numbers because of the number of Palestinians who ran away during the Six Day War. These poor, unfortunate, poorly educated, low skilled people were the ones who got trapped, often with large families and they're now in the camps since 1967. The UN passed a number of resolutions, 242 was the big one. 242 said that the Israelis should give back captured land from the Six Day War, and that the Arabs should recognize secure borders for Israel. Well, the Arabs wouldn't even recognize the existence of the state. They had boycotted any business that did business with Israel. They would not recognize there was a state of Israel. There was a whole series of events going on at this time in the UN, passing resolutions about how you do this and you do that in terms of trying to clean up the aftermath of the war. The Israeli occupied the Golan Heights to about 18 miles. And the UN put a buffer zone between Syria and the Israelis, and set up observation posts ...

Q: UN observation posts?

PERNA: Yes, and they were staffed by people who were non-partisan, so to speak, a lot of Danes and other Scandinavians. They established a border with the Egyptians along the Red Sea, in the Sinai, and the UN was there observing. The Israelis held the Sinai and of course they held it until Sadat and Begin, many years later in 1978 agreed at Camp David to give back the Sinai for peace with the Egyptians. That's another chapter, but the immediate aftermath of the war was a great flurry of UN activities. There were hardliners who wanted to kick all refugees out, forever, and there were others who said, this is no good, you've got to live with them, you've got

to let them come back; they fought the thing on a case by case basis. Sometimes families were reunited and came back...

Q: Palestinians?

PERNA: Yes.

Q: Was there terrorism at that time, had it started?

PERNA: After the Six Day War, there was a quiet period.

Q: It hadn't started yet?

PERNA: Yes, there was terrorism in '68 and '69, and there were a number of things connected with the war that should be mentioned. One was the fact, that we had a communications ship like the Pueblo, which was captured in Korea. We had a communications eavesdropper, a spy ship called the Liberty which was in the Eastern Mediterranean and which the Israelis bombed and strafed and killed several dozens Americans, I think 35 or 36 Americans on this ship. This was on the second day of hostilities.

Q: This was an American Navy ship?

PERNA: This was an American ship. Actually it was run by the American intelligence people, NSA. They had staffs of Navy people and they were from the agency that was involved in listening, not only to the Soviets, but to everybody. That was their business. The Israelis claimed that it was mistaken identity. In the heat of battle, the heat of war, they thought it was Egyptian. They did not think it was American. They thought it was Egyptian and they had some bad "snafus" in their control center, one team changing and another team coming on, failed to tell the team coming on that there was a plot of a target out there that had been recorded previously. And in the confusion, the next time it was sighted they said it was unidentified. And the Israeli Air Force attacked it and before they stopped, they had shot it up and killed some 35 people. The Israeli government apologized profusely, and said it was a mix up, it was not deliberate. It was an error, they were sorry, and they promised recompense, etc. This has been a bone of contention down through the years and journalists have tried very hard to make a case both on television and in the printed journalism that the Israelis did it deliberately. Our position at the Embassy after sending my Naval Attaché out there and flying over in an helicopter and doing everything that we could, and checking with the Ambassador, we reported to Washington that we had no grounds upon which to dispute the statements that the Israeli government made. It was an official government position that they had made a mistake and that it was an error in the heat of war, and that they were sorry. They admitted it and said that they would pay the damage, which they ultimately did. But the case has never ended. There are still a lot of people, including families of the wounded and of the fatalities who believe that it is legitimate to make a case that this was done deliberately. I accepted the Israeli position.

But in saying that I accept their explanation on the Liberty case, I would make this kind of a general qualifier. The Israelis could do anything, no matter how bad it embarrasses us, and no

matter how bad it insults us, if they think it's in their own national interest. If they think it's a big enough issue, even though we get a black eye from it, they will do it. And so will we, and so will any country. This is not restricted to the Israelis. But it was a bad episode. The ship limped off west under its own power, and they got the casualties off, and the Navy came to rescue them, etc.

The period following the Six Day War was equally deeply involved with the UN resolutions: "Would they give back this? and would they give back that?" etc. And a quick synopsis goes like this. The Arab countries would not recognize any boundaries other than the original green line that existed when the Six Day War began. The green line was decided on the island of Rhodes in 1948, and the Israelis said no way will we go back. They have an area in the middle of the country where there is only 11 miles from the green line to the ocean and this separates Haifa and the Galilee from the plains of Sharon and down to Tel Aviv. The plains of Sharon is the coastal area going down to Tel Aviv and then further south towards Beersheba and Jerusalem. But that 11 mile area they will never have again.

Jerusalem, they will never have divided again. Jerusalem, they have made their capital and they have built big apartment complexes all around in areas which had been Arab. We don't have our Embassy in Jerusalem. Our Embassy is in Tel Aviv. Most other countries have their Embassies in Jerusalem. But the Brits and the French are still in Tel Aviv and I think the Germans and some of the other NATO allies are there. The Soviets of course left at the beginning of the Six Day War and they're just now reestablishing diplomatic relations. They haven't had them since 67, but they're about to renew them.

But the city of Jerusalem is never going to be divided again. The Israelis will go to war over it. And although there are large numbers of Arabs living in Jerusalem, there's a whole Arab sector in the old city; Bethlehem is Arab completely. To my knowledge there are no Jews living in Bethlehem. But in the area of Jerusalem there are large populations in areas where they have apartment complexes, shopping centers, libraries, swimming pools, hospitals, schools, etc. There are about six of these areas around the city.

The West Bank has the Israeli settlements, as you know, for various reasons. Those zealots who wanted to force the Arabs out are trying to do it by building settlements and pushing them. Those who are militarily oriented want the settlements to be in positions to stop any attack that might come in the future, principally on the high ground, strategic positions, and along the Jordan River. Since Rabin came to power, (and I know him well, he was Chief of Staff during the Six Day War. I entertained him at home lots of times, traveled with him) he's more of a dove than Shamir who was a hawk. He's talking now, and there's a possibility that he will negotiate an interim government for five years, give the Palestinians some kind of a police force of their own and permit them to run their own infrastructure. Presently, the Israeli military takes care of the roads, and the communications, and the electricity and all that. They will give that over to the Palestinians and they will give them some measure of self rule. They won't let them have military defense, military self-defense, although they will let them have a police force. We're talking about a three thousand man police force. The Israelis will control foreign relation. They won't let the Palestinian run foreign relations. But everything else, they will let them do themselves. Run their own jurisprudence system, run their own tax system, run everything themselves. And they've stopped construction on some six thousand housing units. And it looks

now like Rabin is going, hopefully, to push to get these talks going. Baker was just there a few days ago, and the prospects are that if the zealots on each side don't take too much control that there can be a period of relative quiet, and this will keep the factions from raising hell. There will be terrorist attacks, and there will be bombs, and there will be this kind of stuff going on, still, but an interim plan is possible.

Q: This is the future?

PERNA: Yes.

Q: Who was Prime Minister when you were there?

PERNA: When I first got there, Levi Eshkol had the Prime Minister's job as the head of the Labor government. Their politics are interesting. They have 21 parties and the only reason they don't have more is because there are only 21 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and each have a letter that designates their party. So if you get two Jews together, you have three opinions, and this is the way it is with their politics. There are extreme left idealistic communists, who have some kibbutzim who are communist. Really. I mean working communism you can see. Each person according to his needs, each person gives according to his abilities. Then you have extreme conservative capitalists on the other side, who own cement factories, and automobile factories, aircraft factories and munitions factories, who are extremely well off. And in between these two, you have a whole number of grades and shades. The big party had been historically under Levi Eshkol, the Labor party. He had Abba Eban as his Foreign Minister. Subsequently, when he died, Golda Meir came to power, and she was a Labor party candidate also. Dayan was the Minister of Defense at the time of the Six Day War. He had been their representative to the peace conference in Rhodes in '48. Then he had worked his way up to the Chief of Staff. He was a capable, personable, effective Minister of Defense. The Chief of Staff was Rabin. He was not as effective in my judgment, as a number of his Generals. Particularly Tal, and Ariel Sharon, and Eleazar who ran the northern operation against the Syrians. There were a number of very, very proficient and effective generals at the two star level who made Rabin look very good. But he was not that broad gauged, but he had some very good people. One of his abilities was to surround himself with good people. Ezer Weizman had been the head of the Air Force and built the Air Force. Rabin brought him in as an Air Force officer on the General Staff as Chief of Operations. A fellow named Motti Hod became Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He was a skilled tactician and very good leader. Rabin's forte was the fact that he picked really good guys, but he was, on a scale of one to ten, a 5 or 6. But he had generals who were 8, and 9, and 10, who were doing the real things. I wasn't in on it, but the scuttlebutt was that he had had a nervous breakdown in the first few days of the Six Day War.

Q: Rabin?

PERNA: Yes. He has recovered nicely and has become the Prime Minister. Previously, he became the Ambassador in Washington. And he got into some kind of disgrace when he was the Ambassador because of an honorarium being paid to him and to his wife for speeches and what they were doing with the money, and so on. But he's weathered all that and he's now the head of the Labor party again and they won the majority with their coalition, and believe me it's a

coalition. It's a wall to wall coalition from the extreme right to the extreme left. All these different parties, including the extremely religious guys who have a few members and a few votes. And there's an ex Chief of Staff who has a party, with about 6 or 8 votes, and he's got his people with him. And there's a lot of problems in getting a majority, but although I haven't been there in a few years, the feeling in the country seems to be that they want to find some way to solve this problem of Jews and Arabs living together.

Q: Going back to an earlier question then. Did the Israelis have nuclear weapons? How did they get them?

PERNA: OK. We essentially have ended the talks on the Six Day War and the post Six Day War period. We didn't dwell very much on the Yom Kippur War. I wasn't there at the time, so it's second hand information that I have. We brought ourselves up to date. Now, to go back and talk about the Israelis' nuclear capability. To begin with the Israeli government developed a nuclear reactor at a place called Dimona in the Negev desert. This is about 80 miles south of Tel Aviv and about 30 miles southeast of Beersheba. It is out in the middle of the desert. They built a compound there to develop a nuclear reactor, ostensibly for the purpose of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Throughout the world, many of the nations who have the capability have built nuclear reactors. OK. With this as a start, their problem was to get enriched uranium or heavy water or the ingredients to make weapon grades uranium. We had an inspection procedure worked out with the Israelis as well as with a number of other nations where on a reciprocal basis, they were allegedly opening nuclear facilities so the world could see that these were not to proliferate nuclear weapons. The Israelis participated in this program. Prior to my arrival in '65, there were American teams that went in to the Dimona reactor and from what they were permitted to see, they concluded that it was a peaceful use of nuclear energy. They don't have any power plants that are nuclear powered in Israel. They make their power with coal and oil. In the period from '65 to '69, I tried very hard to find out what the Israelis were doing.

Q: Did you get to visit the plant?

PERNA: I did not ever get inside the plant. I flew near the area. It was a prohibited area to fly over and I drove around it as close as you could get without being obvious. But there was an ambivalent attitude on the part of the US government which reflected itself in the policies of our Embassy. Rather than pursue an aggressive spying operation to try and develop some really good, hard knowledge about the Israeli capability, it was my feeling that Washington was just as happy that we didn't bring this subject to a head and cause incidents and cause bad feelings, etc. So I had my staff essentially lay off trying to penetrate the subject overtly. This doesn't mean that we didn't do a lot of collecting of ancillary and correlated information. We knew that they were building missiles and we knew of certain details connected with the development of the program on the Jericho. The Jericho was an intermediate range rocket capable of carrying a nuclear head.

Ok, having said that, it develops over the years that the Israelis obtained weapons grade materials from several unknown sources. Journalists have alleged that they got most of their help from France. The reactor was built with French technical help during the period when France was a principal supplier of all of Israel's armaments and supplies and equipment. The French technicians who lived in Beersheba and worked at the plant were numerous. There were some

leaks by French civilian employees which were picked up by journalists and other sources suggesting that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was not the primary mission of Dimona. It was also believed that they had gone deeply underground in order to build laboratories and facilities for production that were not evident when inspection teams came from the International Atomic Energy Commission to look and see what was going on. It was easy for them to hide. This has been speculated on by a number of journalists and other technicians. There were investigations conducted about possibilities that they got some weapons grade material out of the United States. A number of prominent American Jewish leaders' names surfaced during this investigation. I don't think it is useful for me to cite names because I don't have definitive backup to support presumptions in this area, so I will bypass that. The sum and substance of it is that they got the material either from America or from France or from some other source to give them the capability to develop weapons grade material. They have never admitted that they have nuclear weapons. The policy of the Israeli government has been from the very beginning and continues to be enunciated in a statement that goes like this: "The government of Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East." They have been consistent in that policy all the time. Well, so what? What do I think. I think that they ran a test program with the South Africans in the Indian ocean somewhere, probably in the mid to latter '60s...

Q: When you were there?

PERNA: Yes, when they detonated a device. This was never confirmed by either government. However, there are means of collecting the bad news about people blowing off big explosions in space, and the collectors got an indication that something went off down there. I surmise that it was a joint Israeli-South African test and I surmise that the Israelis and the South Africans have cooperated closely, possibly in the area of obtaining weapons grade uranium and other source material for making bombs and for making plutonium and the ingredients. I give them credit from a gut feeling of having worked and lived with them of being capable of delivering nuclear weapons by several means. I think they're capable of delivering them by air, I think they're capable of delivering them by rocket, and I think they're capable of delivering them by artillery. This knowhow is not the sole property of the Soviets, the Americans, the British, and the French. The scientific community knows how to do this and I think the Israelis have developed their own capability in these areas. If I had to guess I would say that they have an arsenal that probably numbers in the dozens of nuclear devices. I also think that they are very prudent about the consequences of employing them, and although we used the bomb on Hiroshima and on Nagasaki, it has become apparent to both the Soviets and the Americans during the cold war as well as the British and the French, and the Chinese, that it is a no win policy to start detonating nuclear devices. The consequences are so horrendous to the planet that this is not a good idea. We used nuclear weapons by the thousands to deter the Russians and they used them to deter us, and unfortunately now we are faced with the prospect of the Russian Republics having some thirty thousand plus of these things, under new independent republic governments, and we're trying to get treaties engineered with the Soviets to get these things under control. But the Israelis I think realize that it would be as impossible for them to use it as it was for us to use it.

Q: It is a...

PERNA: As a deterrent it is a good gadget. But it would be at the eleventh hour when all else

had failed and the Arabs were at their throat that they would employ nuclear weapons, in my judgment.

DAVID A. KORN
Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1965-1967)

Political Officer
Tel Aviv (1967-1971)

Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1972-1975)

Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1978-1982)

Ambassador David A. Korn was born in Texas in 1930, and received degrees from University of Missouri and Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. After service in the U.S. Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1959. Ambassador Korn's career included positions in Beirut, Tangier, Nouakchott, Tel Aviv, Calcutta, and Washington, DC, and ambassadorships to Ethiopia and Togo. He was interviewed in 1990 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: I can't think of anyone who had both Arabic and Hebrew studies.

KORN: The way that came about was that, I think it was Ned Schaffer who was a personnel officer at that time and came around looking for somebody who had studied Arabic and served in the Arab world to go to Israel and study Hebrew and serve in the embassy there. This was a new program. There had been one or two officers in the embassy in Israel who had been trained in Arabic there, but nobody who had experience from the other side. So they were looking for that and nobody in NEA would touch this because it was considered sudden death for your career. If you went to Israel and served there you were contaminated as far as the Arabs were concerned. While I was in Beirut I went down to Israel on my own and spent a couple of weeks touring around and I found it a very interesting place. So when this came up I thought it was magnificent opportunity. So I put my name in. Nobody else put his name in. So I went to Israel. FSI did not have a program for Hebrew set up at that time. I simply went into a school for immigrants and studied Hebrew there on my own for three months before going to work in the embassy. It was a fantastic experience.

Q: How did you find Hebrew after Arabic? Was it difficult?

KORN: Hebrew was not very hard really. I didn't find it very hard because they are both Semitic languages. They are much more different than French from Italian, or English from German, but still the basic structure of the languages are the same and there are a number of words that are

similar. Arabic was a fine preparation for Hebrew.

Q: Did you find going to the immigrant school also an experience you could draw on later on as a political officer?

KORN: Well, it gave me a much better appreciation, I think, for the place and the people than if I had studied Hebrew in Washington. This was the very best time as far as the Israelis were concerned. They had just had this war and unbelievable victory so there was launched a kind of momentum and a time of great optimism.

Q: I see. You were there from '67 to '71. First, what were you doing at the embassy after you completed the language?

KORN: I went into the political section first of all and at the end of '69 when Stackhouse, who was head of the political section left, I moved up into his job.

Q: The ambassador was Walworth Barbour. He had been there for a long time hadn't he? How would you describe his operating style?

KORN: Barbour had been there since 1962 and he was in ill health. He was a very intelligent man, but by the time I started working for the embassy in 1968 he was increasingly out of commission. He came in the office around 10:00 o'clock and left around 1:00. If I were to accompany him to the Foreign Ministry some times I would write the cable. But he left the running of the embassy to Owen Zurhellen who was a very active, energetic, and capable officer. Barbour did not take a great hand in things. He was known to be very pro-Israeli, very much inclined to make the Israeli case in Washington, but also, I think, the American case to the Israelis when that was required.

Q: Were you working with internal politics?

KORN: At first, yes. Afterwards, I became involved in the external affairs as well.

Q: Those were the days when the Labor Party was in power. How did we get along with it?

KORN: Oh, I think they were the days of closest collaboration between the United States and Israel. Before the Six Day War relations had not been bad but there had been a conscious effort for quite some time to keep a distance from Israel. After the '67 war, that largely disappeared. We didn't start giving Israel massive aid until during and after the 1973 war, but the program of supplying arms, selling arms, particularly aircraft, to Israel began after the 1967 war.

So relations were very close and there were various peace efforts going on at the time. Joe Sisco had negotiations with the Soviets. There were disagreements. The Israelis were very unhappy over our talking with the Soviets about a peace settlement. But basically collaboration was quite close.

Q: Did you find the Israelis easy to talk to re political subjects?

KORN: Yes, very. It was a very interesting place. You never went to a dull dinner party or after dinner party, or whatever. Unlike a great many diplomatic posts where there was nothing to learn or say, Israel was a place where you could find interesting and lively conversation.

Q: Did you find yourself in a position of trying to give the Arab view to people since you had served in Beirut, Mauritania and on the Saudi desk? Were you placed in the Arab expert field by both the Israelis and the embassy?

KORN: No, on the contrary. I had the feeling that the Israelis, at that time anyway, were very much interested in meeting and talking to somebody who had been on the Arab side and did not regard you with any particular suspicion for having been there, which, of course, is entirely the contrary if you were on the other side.

Q: This was a time too when the Israelis felt they could sit back, things were going their way and eventually the Arabs would come around, wasn't it?

KORN: Yes, they thought that for a while.

Q: At the embassy in Tel Aviv you get these reflections of each embassy thinking well if you are in opposing camps that all those people in the Cairo Interest Section there or in Syria and the like don't understand and are too biased or anti-Israeli or something like this. Was there any of this feeling?

KORN: In NEA I think the embassy at Tel Aviv was not in the mainstream. There wasn't anyone in Syria because we didn't have representation at that time, but from the embassy in Beirut we got a lot of cables that seemed to place the blame for everything on Israeli. There were different points of view reflected from reporting from Beirut and Cairo than from Tel Aviv. No question about it.

Q: At that time there was the feeling that Israel had proven itself in the Six Day War and was here to stay. It was not an iffy case of a country...

KORN: That was very definitely so.

Q: Did you have any contact with any of the Israeli leaders? Can you characterize any of the meetings?

KORN: I was not at the level where I could deal directly with Dayan or Eban, or Golda Meir, but I was in meetings with them frequently while accompanying somebody -- the ambassador, Sisco, George Ball, etc. I often took the notes of the meeting.

Q: Was there the feeling that the Israelis were doing a number on the many delegations that came through? Did the embassy feel it had to put things a little more in perspective? Sometimes this is not only true of Israel, there are a lot of countries where...

KORN: Well, certainly that was not the Barbour view of things. At that time things were different than now. I don't think the administration felt there was a conflict between our views and the Israelis.

Q: So there really wasn't a feeling that we thought we might be going in one direction, while the Jewish lobby as well as those who were interested in Israel and the United States, were pushing us in another direction.

KORN: Things were still under the shadow of the 1967 war. The feeling was that we had some moral commitment to the Israelis. We left them to go alone. We didn't fulfill on this commitment. We arranged the withdrawal from Sinai in 1967 and the UN forces and all that and gave some commitments there but they were not hard and fast. When Nasser sent his forces into the Sinai in 1967 and closed the Straits of Tiran, the Johnson Administration flailed around. It was too heavily committed in Vietnam to be able to mount a real effort in the Middle East. Then finally the Israelis took things into their own hands. This had a lasting impact -- at least for several years. It really meant that the United States was not pushing the Israelis very hard on anything.

Q: One last question on Israel. How about the Likud? Was this a factor or was it sort of peripheral?

KORN: At that time it wasn't the Likud, it was the Herut which was a liberal bloc and were a minority. They were viewed as a nuisance but not of great consequence. And this is another reason why Israel and the United States did not have any big clash because the prevailing views of the Labor Party were for the most part liberal and broad minded. Settlements in the occupied territories were not an issue at that time because the Labor Party was not advocating them. The greater Israel move was beginning to develop but it was not something that the government, itself, was encouraging. In fact it was doing its best to break it. Begin was viewed as a kind of nuisance, but not a serious threat to the Israeli government or a problem for the United States. And had it not been for the '73 war and the losses of the '73 war the situation might have continued.

Q: By the way, did you find your study of Hebrew paid off there?

KORN: Very much so, yes. You can get along perfectly well in Israel in English, but what goes on inside Israeli society is very important and, of course, all the newspapers were in Hebrew except for the Jerusalem Post which was in English and geared to the foreign community. The Israeli press reported on everything that went on in the country. The deepest darkest diplomatic secrets would appear in the Hebrew press. You could read them in telegrams and then see them in the Hebrew press. But often they were in the middle of something that was totally off base. But you could read along and see a lot of information about reports that were absolutely false and right in the middle would be a couple of sentences reflecting what was going on in the diplomatic discussions between the United States and Israel. In any case you could circulate much better in society with Hebrew.

Q: You moved in '78 to Director of Israeli Affairs. Was that sort of right in the middle of the

process?

KORN: The summer of '77 to the summer of '78 I was in Policy Planning and, of course, this was the time when, first of all, we were trying to get the Geneva Conference reconvened. The idea was to reach an overall settlement there. This proved impossible. Sadat made his speech and went to Jerusalem and immediately thereafter there began an effort to parley this visit to Jerusalem into something broader -- basically into a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. There was a conference in Cairo between the Israelis and Egyptians and all the other Arabs were invited but no one else came. Vance went out to Jerusalem and I went on this mission in January of 1978 for a meeting of what was called the Political Committee -- in other words, sit down and try to lay out the terms for an agreement between Egypt and Israel. So, although I was not playing a leading role, I was involved with what was going on -- working with Atherton, Saunders, etc. I went to a conference that was held at Leeds, England in July of 1978 -- again between Israel, Egypt and the United States. All these were efforts that didn't really go very far.

After Sadat went to Jerusalem our effort was to build on it and make it into something. As Begin refused to make any serious concessions, the Egyptians became more and more disenchanted. Sadat was under increasing pressure from home and from other Arabs. The Saudis were offering him a lot of money to pull out of it. Finally in the late summer of 1978, Carter decided the thing was going to collapse unless he did something. He decided to go for broke. He sent Vance out again to the area, I went on this trip, to talk to Begin and then Sadat and invite them to come to Camp David. This was not announced until afterwards. After the trip was announced, Vance dispatched Atherton to Saudi Arabia and Jordan to explain to the governments there what the purpose was -- what we hoped to accomplish at Camp David -- and to try to get their support. I accompanied Atherton on this trip.

Q: Do you have any feeling how Begin felt about this proposal of Carter's?

KORN: Begin couldn't refuse the President of the United States inviting him to come to Camp David to talk with the Egyptian leader. It was clear that the Sinai didn't mean a hell of a lot to Begin and that that was basically a security issue and if security could be worked out there the Israelis would not quibble over it. The real problem was the West Bank and Gaza on the Palestinian side. There Begin was pretty much unyielding. He was ready to go so far as to say that Israel did not have sovereignty over these areas but his position was whenever the question of sovereignty came to be settled, Israel would make its claim to sovereignty.

Q: How about the Egyptians? The Sinai was more interesting to them because of geography?

KORN: The remarkable thing on the Egyptian side was the extent that Sadat was dragging his advisers along with him. They were going kicking and screaming. They didn't want to go in that direction. The Foreign Minister, Mohammed Kamel, had several nervous breakdowns. Sadat sent him to Jerusalem in January of '78 for the Political Committee meeting and I remember the poor man remarking to me that he was in Jerusalem for two or three days and didn't sleep the whole time because it made him so nervous to be in an Israeli city. He broke into tears at the Leeds Conference in July of '78. Osama El-Baz was there and reminded me of Goebbels in his demeanor. All of them were just dead set against it but they had to go along. They did go along

but at every stage they tried to torpedo the thing.

Q: Then you moved to Director of Israeli Affairs?

KORN: Yes, but things didn't change very much; I just moved into another office.

Q: How were we acting from our various embassies as things came in? Sam Lewis was our ambassador then. Was he a strong advocate of Israeli? Were we getting the same thing from Hermann Eilts in Cairo?

KORN: There wasn't much of that although obviously they were presenting various concerns. In my experiences this was one of the better groups...

Q: Was this sort of a feeling with, say, the professionals in the business of, "By gosh, although we didn't think it would happen with Sadat making this move, here it is and if there is ever going to be a chance this is it?"

KORN: Yes, I think so. The President was not only behind the effort but he was fully involved in it. So there was a feeling that you were participating in something important.

Q: Was there a unhappiness over the coincidence of having Sadat in Egypt but Begin in Israel? A feeling that had there been someone else there it might have moved a little bit better?

KORN: There were hopes, in some respects exaggerated and in some respects not so much, that Begin would turn out to be the person with whom you could make a deal. That he was strong enough. You know what one does in a situation like this when you are stuck with someone you don't particularly like, you do your best to make him into the kind of person you would like him to be. And that was basically how Begin was treated by the American side.

Q: How about the NSC in this? Did Brzezinski get involved in this at all or was this outside his purview?

KORN: Carter was the driving force in all of this and he would get up at 6:00 in the morning to read what the Egyptian Team had said that day. After Camp David he would bring the Egyptian and Israeli legal advisors together on some minor point that was still in disagreement. So, you get from that the picture of how much the President himself was personally involved. Vance was his emissary and did all the talking. Brzezinski, I'm sure played some role, but Quandt was always a member of the team working with the State Department. Although Vance and Brzezinski had a very well-known rivalry, on the Middle East there was not a great deal of jockeying. I think this was because Carter was playing such a dominant role.

Q: Were you feeling a new power or ambition, whatever you want to call it, on your work as director of Israeli Affairs because of the increased importance of the Israeli lobby in the United States? You had been in and out of this whole business for a long time. Did you see this as an increasing factor -- particularly in Congress? Or was it just a natural growth?

KORN: Well, there was no question that the Administration wanted to bring along with it the Israeli supporters and friends in this country. Carter was, of course, distrusted by what you call the Israeli lobby to some extent, but it was also the feeling that he was doing something that was very much in Israel's interest. So he was able to have their support in most cases. He had a good man in the White House as liaison with the Jewish community and he was very effective in bringing the Jewish community along.

Q: Outside the Camp David process, did you get any reflections from the situation in Israel from what happened in Iran with the Shah, etc. Were there any repercussions that particularly affected you?

KORN: The major thing after Camp David was the peace treaty; then we began working on the autonomy issues. There we ran into a stone wall. First of all, Carter had expended so much energy and time on the Middle East that when the peace treaty was finished he wanted to go on to do other things. He had many other things on his agenda and, at the very least, was fed up with all these difficult characters. The autonomy agreement was the other half of the Camp David framework. The peace treaty was one half, the autonomy agreement, the other half.

Q: Autonomy refers to the autonomy for the West Bank.

KORN: Yes, that there would be a autonomous, self-governing entity set up there. This was sketched out in the Camp David Accords, but there was a lot of filling in to be done. So first of all you had Carter out and you had the harder part of the Camp David Accords to put into effect. The peace treaty, although very difficult, came close not to be signed. It came very, very close to there not being a peace treaty. Still the peace treaty, by far, was the easier part because the Israelis saw the advantage of it -- peace with Egypt would put the main Arab enemy out of commission. Dayan was transfixed by the idea that Israel and Egypt could be at peace. He brought Begin along. But when it came to the West Bank and Gaza the Israelis didn't want this. They figured the West Bank and Gaza would become very quickly an independent Arab state. Carter wasn't involved in pressing them. There were several meetings -- Robert Strauss was there. He felt nobody resisted his charm. He spent two months on it and realized that he was way over his head. Then Linowitz was appointed and he was a much more savvy negotiator. But it dragged into the summer of '79 and then in 1980 which was an election year and the Israelis knew that in an election year there would be no serious pressure put on them. So the meetings just petered out. The one thing that was accomplished was the setting up of the Sinai Multinational Force. Mike Sterner was the one who did the negotiating, I worked with him on it. Atherton was in Cairo by then. Saunders by that time was taken up almost entirely by the Iran situation and hostages. So Sterner took over the Multinational Force and I worked with him on that. That did get set up.

Q: One last thing on this. How about the situation in Lebanon at that time?

KORN: Well, Lebanon was not much of a concern of mine. Lebanon was in various stages of crisis, but I was not concentrating on it.

ARNOLD SCHIFFERDECKER
Staff Aide
Tel Aviv (1966-1968)

Arnold Schifferdecker was born in 1934 and attended the University of Missouri. After service in the US Navy, Schifferdecker joined the Foreign Service in 1964. He served overseas in Turkey, Israel, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Morocco. Schifferdecker also served on the Board of Examiners for the Foreign Service. Schifferdecker was interviewed by C. Edward Dillery in 1996

Q: Did you go directly to Tel Aviv or have home leave in between?

SCHIFFERDECKER: I went directly to Tel Aviv from Istanbul taking home leave later.

Q: What was the situation in Israel at that time?

SCHIFFERDECKER: Very peaceful at the beginning of my tour, except for a few border incidents, incursions by Palestinians along the Jordanian/Israeli border and later along the Syrian/Israeli border. Those incidents were at the time we thought pin pricks. Of course, Nasser was in power in Cairo and there were constant fulminations and threats against Israel and the United States. Less than a year later the situation changed dramatically. Israel and Syria exchanged artillery fire in the Golan Heights in the spring of 1966 and there were air battles. This led to a closing of ranks among the Arabs and Nasser's crossing of the Suez, ostensibly to aid Egypt's Arab brethren. He forced the UN peacekeepers to evacuate the Sinai which had been virtually free of military forces. When the Egyptians began moving toward Israel's border in large numbers with heavy armor, the Israelis became very alarmed and, as you know, struck preemptively in what was called Six Day War.

Q: So, you were there throughout that tense period. How about some reflections on the job of aide to an ambassador and what you learned about the ambassador's jobs and aide's jobs?

SCHIFFERDECKER: Well, my job was mainly pushing the paper, making sure it was ready for the ambassador's review and sign off. It was the typical staff position which occurs in Washington as well as in the field. I was required by the ambassador to translate his handwriting, which was sometimes difficult to read, into cables when there was no secretary to take the dictation. Occasionally I was given special assignments by the ambassador to go to the Foreign Ministry. Basically it was delivering things which he had promised Abba Eban or the head of the Israeli MFA's American Section in Jerusalem. Of course, with the embassy in Tel Aviv and the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem, it involved a trip of about 45 minutes to an hour each way.

One of the demarches I delivered was a demand for financial restitution after the Six Day War. You may recall that during that War there was a bombing of an American ship, the *USS Liberty*, a communications ship, manned by the National Security Agency. A number of Americans were killed and wounded in that attack. Israel claimed it had been a mistake, they said they had thought it was an Arab ship. Some people later said the Israelis knew exactly who they were

bombing, i.e., they didn't want us monitoring what they were doing. But, in any case, we were called after the attack by Israeli Defense Minister Dayan to come to the aid of that ship, saying that the ship had been disabled and there were probably casualties on board. They flew our military attaché out by helicopter to communicate with the ship. This communication was by flashing light as it was night and because the bombing had knocked out all of the electronics. So, we found out that there were around several dozen Americans killed or wounded in that attack. Somewhat later I presented to the Foreign Ministry a bill for the damages suffered by the ship and indemnity for the families who had lost loved ones. The total, I believe, was around ten million dollars. That was presented to the American Section in the Foreign Ministry. The recipient, an Israeli named Shlomo Argov (later Ambassador to Mexico and the UK), said that he would refer the matter to the highest levels in government and eventually, I understand, compensation was paid.

Q: It was interesting being the person who was the messenger in that case, I am sure there was a lot of tension. I do remember that there was a lot of tension about that case. During that period were there any special meetings or events between the United States and Israel, prior, during or after the war?

SCHIFFERDECKER: There certainly were a lot of consultations. The Israelis did not tell us ahead of time they were going to attack. They claimed they were acting in self defense and a case could be made that an attack by the other side would have left them crippled and maybe unable to do what they did which was to destroy the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian air forces on the ground before they were able to attack Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. President Johnson was livid about not being consulted and demanded an explanation, which Ambassador Barbour obtained from Prime Minister Eshkol. Basically, the explanation was, Israel could not afford to wait to be attacked; by then it would be too late to defend themselves. Shortly after the onset of the Six Day War a White House emissary came from President Johnson. He spent some time in the embassy getting in touch with the Israelis and coordinating with the defense establishment on the resupply of ammunition and other armaments that Israel expended in the war. There were a lot of postmortems conducted and delegations came to us and Israelis traveled to the United States. The most immediate action came up in the Security Council. Abba Eban, the Foreign Minister, flew to New York and the famous UN Security Council Resolution 242 was negotiated with our help and 242 continues to be one of the basic documents undergirding today's peace process. One of its main provisions, the inadmissibility of territorial gain by conquest, has helped to constrain Israeli expansionists and to keep the Arabs at the negotiating table.

Q: What other manifestations of the special relationship between the United States and Israeli were apparent at that time?

SCHIFFERDECKER: Relations at that time were strong, and durable. We didn't have the extent of defense cooperation, perhaps, that we do today or intelligence sharing. Although that began to increase in the aftermath of the Six Day War, and more perhaps after the 1973 war. But one incident did come up which pitted Israel and the United States against one another. That was on nuclear proliferation. We did get word through open non-intelligence sources that Israel was producing weapons grade material. As a result of that we made a number of demarches to Israel warning them not to proceed on that track, much as we had done with other countries such as

Pakistan, that had moved towards the capability of producing nuclear weapons. Of course, the Israelis did have a small reactor for research purposes and Israeli scientists are among the best in the world in many fields. But, this did create some tension in US/Israeli relations which continued long after I left and were never totally resolved because Israel still today is not a signatory of the Non Proliferation Treaty.

Q: Turning to internal politics. Was there any problem or perceived interference in Israeli internal affairs? I'm not thinking of official interference, but the large Jewish community and visits.

SCHIFFERDECKER: There were no major issues of such interference or accusations of such interference in Israeli internal affairs. There were a couple of amateur efforts by well meaning private Americans to come over and try to promote peace between Israel and the Arabs. One of them was a Rabbi from Massachusetts named Baruch Korff, who wanted the Israelis to take unilateral steps to open relations with Jordan, Egypt and other Arab states, which he had visited-- again strictly on his own. It was an interesting effort but the Israelis were not yet ready, nor were the Arabs ready to talk to the Israelis about peace. The logjam was broken only after the 1973 war, when the Arab side recovered some sense of pride and Israel began to realize that periodic wars did not advance their goal of security.

Q: Moving to the unofficial side in Israel, was the fact that Israel did have difficult or no relations with its neighbors affect your own ability to move around? Did you feel isolated?

SCHIFFERDECKER: To some extent yes. Before the Six Day War when Jerusalem was a divided city and before Israel took it over entirely, we were able to go to Jordan through the Mandelbaum Gate which was torn down by the Israelis the day after the Six-Day War when they unified the city, literally opening roads that had been closed for almost 20 years.

The feeling of isolation increased somewhat after that because only persons on official business could travel between Israel and Jordan by land. Of course, one could go by aircraft to Cyprus and take Middle East Airlines to Beirut, Amman and Cairo.

Q: Did your Israeli accreditation cause problems in Arab countries?

SCHIFFERDECKER: The Arab countries would not accept for admission into the country a passport containing an Israeli visa, but at that time the State Department could issue a second passport to those on official travel which Arabs would accept. So, we were able to get around the problem although we did not have diplomatic relations while I was there with most of the Arab countries.

Q: What were living conditions like in Tel Aviv?

SCHIFFERDECKER: Living conditions were quite comfortable. Houses were small, but clean and well built. We were mostly living north of Tel Aviv in the so-called diplomatic ghetto, Herzliyya Petuach, which contained not only foreign diplomats but also Israeli civil servants and

business people. It has become quite a large Mediterranean resort city and residential area north of Tel Aviv stretching further north today to the old Roman city of Caesarea.

Q: Any interesting aspects of how Ambassador Barbour ran an embassy or anecdotes about him?

SCHIFFERDECKER: Ambassador Barbour was a professional in every sense of the word. A seasoned diplomat who had served in Moscow, London and at least one Middle East post, when he came to Tel Aviv. He was ambassador in Israel close to 13 years. I think I was his eighth staff assistant. He had the habit of coming in in the morning at normal business hours, a little bit later than most of his staff. His papers were stacked up and waiting. He would look through his papers and pared down the sheaf of telegrams that I had filtered for him and taken out some of the stuff he had no interest in, although he had a wide interest in everything to do with managing the embassy as well as all the political and economic cables. Along about eleven or twelve he would finish his paperwork and confer individually with the section chiefs. If he had a demarche or some matter to take up, which was frequently with Jerusalem, he would get in his old Cadillac limo with his driver Shalom and head for the Jerusalem hills, and do his work with the Foreign Ministry, usually with the Foreign Minister, himself, or the Director General of the American Section, Moshe Bittan. Then he would return home for lunch and would not return to the office. I would run paper out to him if necessary. Once or twice a week he would try to play golf. As the Six Day War approached and in the aftermath of the war he was unable to find time to play golf and he frequently spent the entire day in the embassy. His work habits were somewhat laid back but he was a very efficient processor of the substantive material. He had a competent staff who kept him informed. It was a very smooth running office, a real model of an efficient embassy. Though it was not a very large embassy, like London and Paris...

Q: How large was it?

SCHIFFERDECKER: My recollection is that it was around 40-45 officer personnel and 20 or fewer American support personnel. If you count State and the other agencies you would have maybe 65 Americans and then a fairly large local staff.

Q: Well, Ambassador Barbour was a fairly colorful character which you have indicated. Were there any other anecdotes about him?

SCHIFFERDECKER: I would say he was a gentleman through and through. He treated everyone with respect. He never raised his voice and I never heard him say a word in anger. His sister, who was also a single person, as Ambassador Barbour was, used to come out during the Christmas holidays and be his hostess for the holidays and the ambassador would have staff in for Christmas parties and American occasions like the 4th of July. He entertained in a very certain special way. He had a table that seated 24 people and he liked to have the table full. He had a wide range of government and business contacts that he entertained regularly. Of course, there were many CODELS to Tel Aviv. The saying during my day back then was that any congressman who was running for reelection had to travel to one or more of the three I's--Israel, Italy and Ireland--in order to show the constituents that they cared about the old country. The ambassador kept a very set schedule for his dinners. A set amount of time for drinks, a certain

amount of time for dinner, followed by cigars and cognac for the men in the library, then rejoining the ladies in the salon afterwards. Everybody was usually out the door by 11:15 or so. He was a man of very regular habits. He was a rather portly gentleman and had been a chain smoker. He had the beginning of emphysema while I was there. He would frequently alarm visitors when he would pull out his inhaler, lean way back in his chair and spray it to get his breathing back on track. He would say, "No, go ahead and speak," when they would stop as he used his inhaler. Remember, these devices were not very common back then as they are today with asthmatics and people with breathing problems.

Q: What was the DCM's job like under an ambassador who was so interested in everything?

SCHIFFERDECKER: The DCM did not have as much of a role in handling the substance of the embassy work as he did in overseeing the administrative part of the embassy because the ambassador handled the major issues himself or dealt directly with his section heads. I don't know that this was necessarily a personality issue between Ambassador Barbour and DCM, Bill Dale, but only when Barbour took his home leave did Dale have a little more scope to run the embassy and deal with the political issues which the ambassador liked to do when he was there.

Q: Back to the social life. Were you as staff aide involved in protocol duties as well as other things?

SCHIFFERDECKER: Oh, yes, I was required to make sure that the guest list was in order. I maintained the lists of official government personnel, business people and other movers and shakers. I advised other sections; on protocol and procedures. I conferred with the ambassador on who his guests were to be and with his secretary who handled the invitations. I placed the guests in protocol order and made sure the seating was according to protocol requirements. That turned out to be not such a difficult job. I always showed the seating plan to the ambassador ahead of time so that he could play around with it and occasionally he would change things around and not go by strict protocol if he noticed there might be some conflict with people sitting beside each other. Normally, he was a stickler for rank order. Remember, he had been DCM in London many years. I frequently was invited as a fill in and was out by the swinging doors normally. So, I got to participate in many of these formal dinners. He enjoyed having black tie dinners as well, so that was part of his entertaining. It probably no longer exists at that embassy, although I am not certain. The Israelis, of course, were very informal, usually not wearing a coat and a tie to the office, but they certainly did at his residence.

Q: Was your wife invited to those dinners?

SCHIFFERDECKER: At that time I was divorced and single. I remarried later.

EDWARD GIBSON LANPHER
Rotation Officer
Tel Aviv (1967-1969)

Ambassador Edward Gibson Lanpher was born in 1942 in Richmond Virginia. He earned his undergraduate degree in 1966 from Brown University and was sworn into the Foreign Service later that same year. His first post was as a Rotation Officer in Tel Aviv, Israel but later his Foreign Service career took him to such posts as Gabon, England, Zimbabwe, and Australia before he was appointed Ambassador to Zimbabwe. He was interviewed in June 2002 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You went to Tel Aviv in '67. You were there until when?

LANPHER: Until July 1969.

Q: Interesting time.

LANPHER: Very interesting time.

Q: Before you went there, were you getting any scuttlebutt about what it would be like to serve in Israel?

LANPHER: I guess so. I took the area course. We were given a lot of reading, which I tried to do a lot of. It sounded pretty exciting. I had followed the Middle East war in 1956. This was an interesting part of the world and sounded like fun. I was 23 or 24 years old.

Q: When you got out there in January '67...

LANPHER: Yes. In those days, they were encouraging classes as a subsidy to the maritime industry to take a ship. So, about 40 of my junior officer colleagues and I got on the SS United States and had a stormy passage in the North Atlantic in January to France. Then I took a plane from France to Tel Aviv.

Q: Let's start when you arrived there. How was the embassy set up? Who was the ambassador?

LANPHER: The ambassador is somebody I'd like to talk about later. His name was Walworth Barbour, a real legend. A fellow named Bill Dale was the DCM. Heywood Stackhouse was the political counselor. I can't remember who the economic counselor was. I was assigned for the first part of my rotation to the consular section. The consul general was an old veteran named Cliff English. It was set up as a traditional embassy with a public affairs officer. I can't remember how many Americans there were, but we had six or eight Marines. It was a traditional embassy.

Q: When you arrived in '67, what was the situation there?

LANPHER: When I got there in January, there were reports about incursions and [whatnot and] firings across the line between Israel and Syria around the Sea of Galilee, but everything was sort of under control. The thing I remember most about the early days, January through March of 1967, was, Israel was in a deep recession. People were fairly blue. It was a pretty heavily

socialist country in those days. It wasn't working economically. I saw this on a day to day basis because I was assigned when I got there to be the immigrant visa officer, my first job. I saw a steady stream of Israelis coming in to try to get visas to the United States. I interviewed them and they were leaving for economic reasons. The country was dispirited. It was a good education. It was a good way to start out in the Foreign Service.

Q: Had these immigrants come there for religious reasons?

LANPHER: It's hard to generalize. There were some Sabras and many, many Israelis have relatives in the United States. It was a question of petitions from brothers and sisters. But there was also in the '50s and early '60s a lot of immigration to Israel out of Eastern Europe. To a certain extent, these people showed up in Israel and with the tough economic times, they couldn't get jobs, they couldn't sustain themselves. So they looked to relatives in the United States to petition for them and showed up in my office.

Q: Coming out of Eastern Europe, this must have complicated your life because of connections to communist movements in all these countries they came out of?

LANPHER: Yes, but these weren't political types for the most part. I don't recall any great problem with that. I had a very good staff of Israelis that did most of the filling out of background check forms and fingerprinting. The day I showed up first thing in the morning after I arrived at night, I walked into the embassy and I guess I was told I was going to be the immigrant visa officer. The consul general took me down to the section and introduced me to my chief assistant, Mrs. Hoffman. Mrs. Hoffman's first question to me was, "What year were you born?" I said, "1942." She said, "I went to work for the U.S. government in 1938." She put me right in my place. It was quite a stunning thing when I realized what she was doing. She was very good.

Q: You said Cliff English was running the consular section. How did you find him? He was one of the old line consular officers.

LANPHER: He was a character. He let the consular section pretty much run itself. He was there. He was sort of a curmudgeon type. For some reason, he took a shine to me. That's probably because the chief of the visa section was a woman officer that he didn't get along with.

Q: Who was that?

LANPHER: A woman named Sarah Andren. But she and Cliff didn't get along very well. But he kind of liked me. He was in his late 50s. I guess he probably looked at me as sort of the son he always wished he had and never had. He had a daughter and not a terribly happy marriage. So, he'd disappear for the afternoon and go play golf at Israel's only golf course. I think it was after the Six Day War that he used to call me up – I was no longer in the consular section – and say, "What are you doing this afternoon?" Usually this was a weekend. I'd say, "Nothing." He'd say, "Well, let's go out and shoot some birds on the green line." So, we'd go partridge hunting out on the green line, the old demarcation line between Israel and Jordan that disappeared in the war. It was kind of a difficult area. The birds knew it was the safest place to be because of the

minefields out there. Cliff thought he knew where most of the minefields were, so we'd go out and shoot birds. Cliff had an old friend, an Israeli... I think Cliff had been in Haifa in 1948 at our consulate. It was sort of a homecoming for him to be consul general in '67. The old friend was Moshe Dyan. They were very close friends. Cliff wasn't a political officer. This wasn't an intelligence relationship. They were just close friends. After Cliff and I'd shoot a bunch of partridges, we'd go over to Moshe's house. Moshe loved partridges, so we'd give him some of our partridges and sit down and have a cold beer with him. An interesting anecdote.

Q: Did you and your wife find yourselves pretty well absorbed into Israeli society?

LANPHER: Very much so. We had quite a social life. We lived in a rented house in a suburb just north of Tel Aviv. We had Israeli neighbors. We weren't in any sort of U.S. compound. We had friends in the embassy and we had friends in the Israeli community. So, that worked very well. We were very active socially. We were in our mid-20s, and had a heck of a good time. We traveled a lot around Israel. We didn't have any children at that time. Weekends, I remember going over to the old city of Jerusalem before the war and going through the Mandelbaum Gate and driving with a couple we knew from our consulate in Jerusalem down to Aqaba and Petra, spending the weekend in Petra, sleeping in a cave hotel down there. This was all before the Six Day War. We had a lot of fun. You could go to the Galilee for the day. You could go to Nazareth. There was plenty to see and do in Israel.

Q: I'm told that it was both fun and exhausting to be in Israel. The political discussions and the arguments were really exhausting but interesting.

LANPHER: I found that to be very, very true. It's one of those places where everybody talked about the problem all the time. You couldn't go out to a dinner or have a social event without the problem being on everybody's lips.

Q: And the problem being...

LANPHER: Arab-Israeli. If you were an American embassy official, which I was, junior as I was, but later on I was the ambassador's special assistant, so I was even more targeted, whether it was official or private Israelis, they wanted to be assured of at least 150% U.S. support. 100% wouldn't do. It was draining at times. You just couldn't ever relax. You were always on show.

Q: Was it possible or even thinkable at the time to talk about the Palestinians having rights? Those were the days of Golda Meir, weren't they?

LANPHER: The prime minister was Levi Eshkol. When he died in 1968, she replaced him.

Q: Were Palestinians considered a separate people or were they something over in Jordan?

LANPHER: There were a lot of Israeli Arabs, but they were strictly second class citizens within Israel. There was no talk about letting refugees back in. To be an Israeli Arab was not a treat. There wasn't much concern for them among the Israelis that I talked to. This was a Jewish state and that's the way it was going to be. The Embassy did maintain good contacts with the Arab

community.

Q: We were going through a real civil rights revolution in the United States during this time. Part of this time, I was in Yugoslavia. I couldn't help beginning to relate the problem of what now is known as the Kosovars to the blacks in the United States. I was told, "These Kosovars don't work much and they like to eat watermelon and they like to dance." I said, "You know, we've had those too." You were beginning to look at our own country and see it in others. Was this something that we were looking at?

LANPHER: Not really. These were the days before human rights reports. Our preoccupation, rightly or wrongly, was with the security situation. The Israeli preoccupation was with their neighbors. They weren't introspective internally. At the same time, to put it bluntly, there was sort of a 51st state aspect of serving in Israel because Israel was so political in the U.S. At the same time, at home, we were preoccupied not only with civil rights but also the Vietnam War. It really wasn't a focus. Subconsciously, we all knew that Palestinians were treated badly by Israelis, but then you'd turn on Arab radio stations in the Middle East or your shortwave radio and you'd listen to some of the most horrific language you've ever heard spilling out of Cairo, out of Damascus, even Beirut and Amman. The preoccupation was external.

Q: Was Nasser considered the boogeyman?

LANPHER: I guess so. Going beyond where we are now, from about May 1967 onward, about Israeli independence day, the Arabs managed to whip themselves in a real frenzy and that led to war. They were certainly never trusted by the Israelis. I think the Israelis always felt they had a relationship – and in fact, they did – with Hussein over in Jordan. But with Nasser, I don't think so.

Q: You moved from the consular section when?

LANPHER: I was still in the consular section for the Six Day War, which was interesting.

Q: Why don't we talk about the Six Day War?

LANPHER: As things heated up and the rhetoric started flowing out of the Arabs and they blockaded the Straits of Tiran, there was definitely an increasing prospect of war. The last week of May the U.S. government put out a warning to American citizens to not travel to Israel and, if you're there, get out. Cliff English put me in charge of the evacuation of American citizens, including repatriation loans. I worked my butt off for 10 days and we got a lot of American citizens out of the country between then and the fifth of June.

Q: Were there a lot of Israelis getting out? After the Yom Kippur War, there was a lot of talk about all the religious getting the hell out.

LANPHER: I saw a lot of that. Of course, you have a lot of people in Israel that are dual citizens. So, I had people lined up outside my office and down the block outside the embassy. I had people with side curls and I had people that were clean shaven. These were only American

citizens. They may have been Israeli citizens as well, but I was only doing American citizens.

Q: Was there a sense of panic?

LANPHER: I wouldn't call it panic. I would call it anxiety. People were being bombarded by propaganda out of the Arab radio stations and it was pretty bellicose. If you looked at the numbers in terms of the forces arrayed against Israel in 1967, manpower, airplanes, tanks, whatever, Israel was vastly outnumbered. There was always the question of whether Israel could fight a more than one front war. One has to remember that in 1967 Israel didn't have any equipment in its military inventory from the U.S. It was mainly French. The only thing U.S. was second hand reconditioned World War II era Sherman tanks and armored personnel carriers (half tracks) that Israel had bought surplus and reconditioned. The Israeli air force, aside from a couple of Cessna spotter planes and a couple of old DC-3 transports, was almost entirely French.

Q: Was the embassy saying something was going to happen?

LANPHER: Progressively we saw very clearly that this thing was getting worse and worse and worse. We also realized that consideration was being given to a preemptive strike. We, together with Washington, got all our dependents out about a week before the war. My wife was evacuated to Rome. All our other Middle East posts were evacuated to places like Athens and Rome. It was clear the war was coming. The intensity of the diplomacy - and I wasn't directly involved, but I was certainly well informed about it. I learned a lot more about it subsequently. You had the Israeli foreign minister, Abba Eban, traveling to Paris, London, and Washington. You had Lyndon Johnson deeply involved, as well as Dean Rusk, then Secretary of State. Despite Vietnam, this was a priority. There was also the Soviet angle, the Soviets with Egypt and Syria. So, it was a pretty fraught time diplomatically. But in the event, I was in the embassy on a Sunday night, the fourth of June, and the Israelis had lulled people into thinking things were cooling off a little bit by giving well-publicized leave to their soldiers at the weekend. But as I drove home from work about 10:00 on Sunday night, I saw troops by the side of the road getting picked up by cars, busses, everything. They were remobilizing in a hurry. I called the political officer when I got home and the defense attaché and said, "They're getting picked up. I think it's tomorrow morning." As I drove to work the next morning at about 7:00-7:30, down the coastal road from where I lived towards Tel Aviv, you could look out over the ocean and see the Israeli air force about 12 feet off the ocean headed for Egypt. They flew in under Egyptian radar, caught the Egyptians with their pants down about 7:45 Egypt time in the morning. They knocked out 18 Egyptian airfields in the first strike.

Q: What were you doing since you were at war?

LANPHER: I still was looking after American citizens. There was no transport in or out. Civil aviation was closed down for the war. So, it was largely handholding and doing whatever anybody else in the embassy wanted me to do. The first night of the Six Day War, a Monday night, I was the embassy duty officer. Of course, we were all in the embassy. The air raid sirens went off. The Ambassador and DCM and everybody went down to the third basement, the garage underneath our embassy. Although there wasn't an air raid, there was artillery shelling going on from the Latrun salient, about 12 miles away from Tel Aviv in Jordanian territory. So,

everybody else in the embassy got to go down to the basement. I had to go up to the roof of the embassy and sit with a special communications team that we had brought in from Germany, a backup or high speed communications team, a U.S. Army unit. There were four or five of us on the roof listening to U.S. supplied artillery shells going over the roof of the embassy. Luckily, they missed the embassy. But the embassy was right on the beach, the waterfront, and they were going over the roof and into the sea.

Q: Did you find that all of you were seeing this as a just war?

LANPHER: I think we all thought it was probably a just war in the sense that Israel didn't really have much of an alternative. I don't think we spent a lot of time pondering that question. We were all too busy. Our ambassador, Ambassador Barbour, was probably the most plugged in American ambassador there ever was. When the first air strike went off on Monday morning, he was invited to the cabinet room and sat with the rest of the cabinet for a briefing on it. He was like the 21st member of the cabinet. That was the nature of the relationship. So, we were very well informed. With the Egyptian air force out of action, the war was essentially won in the first hour. The rest of it was on the ground as the Israelis blitzed with their tank force through Gaza and into the northern Sinai. I was one of the first Americans down into the northern Sinai after the war. The devastation of the "blitzkrieg" was quite incredible.

Q: What was the impression of the two armies that you were getting from the attachés, the Egyptian and the Israeli armies?

LANPHER: The Israeli army and the Israeli air force were exceedingly well trained and maintained their equipment well. They were much smaller, but man for man probably 10 times as effective. Our attachés thought they were damned good, but you never know until you're tested. Looking ahead, after the war... At that time, the biggest tank battle ever fought in the world was done in the central Sinai, over 1,000 tanks engaged. It was near the Mitla Pass.

As soon as the war was over, within days, everybody in the U.S. Army and Air Force wanted to come out to Tel Aviv and debrief and get the story on the war, which was seen by our people as just incredible. The tank tactics and the air tactics, our experts and intelligence people wanted to get in very early. Our people wanted to get into the Sinai and wanted the Israelis to give us Egyptian surface to air missiles, which were Russian, the same things that the Vietnamese were using against us in Vietnam. There were a lot of exchanges after the war. I'll never forget a U.S. Air Force team coming out – I guess I went with them – for debriefing the Israeli Air Force. By this time, I was in the political section doing a lot of handholding of visitors. I went out with this Air Force team to one of the big Israeli air force bases. The commander gave a briefing and our guys asked a lot of questions. One of our guys said, "You just said you were getting six or seven sorties a day out of your aircraft. That's impossible. We can't do that." The Israeli said, "Well, that's what we did. We've got excellent ground crews and we can turn a plane around in X minutes and get it fully armed, fueled, and everything." Our guys just were astounded and they challenged the Israelis, saying, "It can't be done." So, the Israeli commander trotted out a ground crew, a plane, and demonstrated just how they did it and how fast they could do it. Our Air Force people still didn't believe it. They said, "Look, we have a demonstration crew at our place and we do dog and pony shows. We have a prize crew that can do this." The Israeli commander

called out all the ground crews and said, “You pick as many of these as you want. They can all do it.” Our guys finally believed him. But it was quite an incredible military performance in the eyes of our professionals. When you see the Golan Heights and how the Israelis went up the Golan Heights and took the Syrians on with their World War II Sherman tanks, it’s quite incredible.

Q: Was the entry of Jordan into the war and the occupation of the West Bank considered to be a temporary thing?

LANPHER: My recollection is not perfect. The Israelis did not expect Jordan would enter the war. I don’t think they wanted Jordan to enter the war at least in the military sense. One front with Egypt was enough. But they were prepared for the contingency of Jordan entering the war. I think they were disappointed in King Hussein, who got caught up in the momentum or whatever it was of the Arab rhetoric. At that point, the Israelis said, “Okay, he wants to play. We’ll take him out, too.” So, they took the Old City and the West Bank. But I don’t think it was part of their plan. I think they had a contingency. Certainly they had troops deployed on the green line and in Jerusalem, but their focus was Egypt.

Q: We’ll talk about Barbour in the next session. Let’s talk about the war right now. Did you feel pressure from American Jews from the United States who wanted to get where the action was?

LANPHER: In the weeks before the war, a number of American Jews did travel to Israel to volunteer. But once the war started, there was no way they could get there. There was no civil aviation for that six days and for weeks afterward. It was only gradually restored in the weeks following the war. But what the American Jewish community certainly did, and the world Jewish community, was to finance the war. The biggest percentage donors were from the South African Jewish community. They raised money and poured it into Israel. The war was a very expensive undertaking and was basically financed by gifts from the world Jewish community here in North America and South Africa.

Q: Prior to the Six Day War, did you get involved with American Jews coming to Israel on tours or this sort of thing?

LANPHER: Oh, yes, before and after the war. In fact, more after the war than before the war. There was a tremendous amount of Jewish tourism to Israel. Everybody that was ever a duty officer at the embassy said you’d have Jewish tourists dying, for instance, having a heart attack in the Hilton Hotel in Tel Aviv. So, you came into contact with American tourists all the time in our consular section. I did a stint in Citizens Services or filled in for somebody and I had an irate American Jewish tourist come in and complain to me that for all these years he had been donating money to buy trees for forests in Israel, part of Israel’s reforestation project. He said, “I came all the way out here to see my trees and nobody can show me where my trees are with my name on it. I want you, my government, to make them put my name on my trees.” I said, “We can’t help you.”

Q: Did you get involved with the religious side of the Israeli society? I’m thinking of the more orthodox.

LANPHER: Yes. Anecdotally, before the Six Day War, if you wanted to get to the Mandelbaum Gate and go across on Saturday, you had to drive through the religious quarter of Jerusalem and you had to drive very fast and very quietly or you'd get stoned by the religious kids trying to enforce the no driving on Saturday law. I went to seders, bar mitzvahs, and all the Jewish holidays with my neighbors. I went to weddings, funerals, circumcisions. I was exposed to all that. But most of my personal friends were not the ultra orthodox. The ultra orthodox, the fellows with the side curls and the black hats and the beards were there and had a political presence. A lot of them were American citizens from Brooklyn, ultra Hasidic. Believe it or not, I had friends in the Israeli internal security service, the Shinbet, who told me the biggest crooks in Israel were the religious guys. They'd tell me, "Just because the guy looks religious doesn't mean he's a decent human being. There are some real crooks there." I couldn't prove it.

Q: Was this a society where the ultra orthodox was set off to one side, one that was looked down upon?

LANPHER: I don't think they were looked down upon. Some people looked down on them and thought they were nuts, but they were definitely an influential minority. The people that ran Israel at least when I was there were primarily secular Jews of Eastern European origin who were much more into socialism and Zionism than they were into religion. They'd all celebrate seders. They didn't forsake their religion, but they were largely secular.

Q: Was there any feeling that this European socialism, which was part of the Labour Party's mandate, didn't work very well?

LANPHER: No. At that time, mid-'60s, the state of Israel was less than 20 years old as a state. It had grown up going back into the previous century with small Jewish settlements, agricultural settlements, kibbutzes. That was the image of Israel. Just as we talk about our pioneers in our Conestoga wagons and the trek West and our homesteaders, there was much of that spirit in Israel. That was the root of Israel. So, when I say in retrospect that the model didn't work, I can say - I haven't been back to Israel since 1969 when I left - but everybody tells me the kibbutzes are still there but they've moved off the socialist model. Israel is doing a lot better than a lot of other places. There was a romanticism about the kibbutz. It was probably the right thing at the time they were established.

Q: It caught the spirit and got people engaged.

LANPHER: Yes: remember, the kibbutzes were set up, a lot of them, back in the British mandate period, the Ottoman Empire era. The kibbutzes were small outposts of Jewish civilization, self-sufficient, agriculturally based. Interesting.

Today is July 1, 2002. You were in Israel from when to when?

LANPHER: From January 1967 until July 1969.

Q: You started on the Six Day War. Now why don't we talk about the Liberty and your take on

that.

LANPHER: During the Six Day War, which went from Monday, June 5, to Saturday, June 11, it was very hectic in Israel and throughout the Middle East. There was a heck of a war on three fronts. As part of our monitoring of that war, and I was not aware of it at the time, the National Security Agency had sent an eavesdropping ship to the Mediterranean that was apparently positioned very close to the Israeli forces in the northern Sinai to eavesdrop presumably on the communications during the course of the war as part of our overall monitoring effort. On the Thursday of the Six Day War, that ship, which was close to the Israeli coast, within eyesight, came under attack by Israeli forces - air force and navy. Before I left the embassy that afternoon, I had heard about this attack on this ship. I don't think anybody in our embassy was aware that that ship was in the area. But we certainly heard about it as soon as the attack had taken place. The ship wasn't sunk and it managed to limp off but there were heavy casualties, something in the neighborhood of 16-20 dead. When I got home to my house in the Israeli suburb north of Tel Aviv that evening, and my wife wasn't there because she had been evacuated, my neighbor, Oded Vered, came over to my house and said, "I need to talk to you. Something terrible has happened." He proceeded to tell me that he, as an Israeli naval reservist, had commanded one of the motor torpedo boats that attacked this ship, the Liberty - he didn't even know the name of it and I didn't know the name of it at the time - along the coast that afternoon. He told me that as they approached the ship, the ship was not flying any flag and that there was no identification on it indicating that it was a U.S. ship or a U.S. naval ship and that he as commander of his motor torpedo boat had gotten on the signal lamps and flashed repeatedly the international signal asking "what ship where found." There is some sort of international code about all these things. They never got a response from the ship and they proceeded to attack it with, I guess, torpedoes and machine guns. He was very distraught about this because they subsequently discovered that it was an American ship. But the damage had been done. After he left, I immediately contacted our assistant naval attaché, Lieutenant Commander Allan Wile, who later worked for the State Department in INR, and Captain Ernie Castle, our naval attaché. They were very interested in the information that I had gotten from this fellow and gave me a lot of questions to go back and ask him further. By the time I was able to talk to him the next day, he had obviously been told by his commanders to say nothing. The lid had gone on. There was no more discussion. I had talked to him right after the incident, as soon as he got home, and he had been so upset by this whole thing that he had blurted this out to me. But then the lid went on and he would never talk to me again about it. We remained good friends, traveled around Israel together, but that was it.

Q: What was the attitude within the embassy?

LANPHER: People in the embassy had been unaware that the ship was in the area and were incredulous but I think the consensus as best I recall was that this was a tragic accident in the heat of the war. You had war going on on three fronts. Everybody was tired after three or four days of the war. The Israeli navy had not had an appreciable role in the war. Everybody wanted to be a part of it. There was overeagerness, trigger happiness, whatever. But accidents do happen in war. Witness, recently two of our planes managed to kill a bunch of Canadians in Afghanistan.

Q: On a global commander level, you've got problems.

LANPHER: Yes. So that's my take on it. Subsequently, I learned from our naval attaché that the ship had in fact been sent a message some days earlier by their headquarters, NSA, to get the heck out of the area, move away from the coast, get out of the war zone. According to him, the message was never received by the ship because it was missent in our archaic telecommunications system to the American embassy in Seoul, Korea. So, I think there was plenty of blame. It was certainly sad that so many people were killed, but I see no logical reason for the Israelis to go out in the midst of a war with three countries, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, and shoot up a ship belonging to its prime backer.

Q: Was there a point when the Jordanians and the Syrians came in? Were there real concerns that things would go bad for Israel?

LANPHER: Not really. There was great apprehension before the war started that things would go bad for Israel. They were clearly outnumbered and outgunned by any order of battle information – number of tanks, planes, etc. The idea of a three front war was something that had everybody worried. We were worried ourselves because we had evacuated all our dependents. We told American citizens to get out of Israel a week or 10 days before the war started. But in many respects, the war was over in the first hour when the Israelis took out the Egyptian air force and sent their tank columns into Gaza and into the Sinai. That was a rout. That was an unbelievable rout. The Israelis were just very, very good. Tragically, the Jordanians and the Syrians got sucked into this, but by the time they got sucked into it through their own propaganda and beliefs, the Egyptians had been pretty thoroughly trashed and the Israelis were on the Canal in no time. There were some big battles in the central Sinai. But the Israelis were able to shift a lot of forces to the Jordanian and Syrian front in the latter days of the war, so it wasn't really a three front war 100% from day one.

Q: What were you doing during the war?

LANPHER: In the prewar period and also during the war, I was doing a lot of handholding of American citizens, acting as duty officer, backup political officer. I was a junior officer, a jack of all trades. As it turned out, as soon as the war was over, I was assigned liaison responsibilities for all the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine, all the refugee camps in Gaza. Where the liaison had always been with our embassy in Cairo up to the Six Day War, we had to take it over in Tel Aviv, so I did a lot of that work. I was the first American into the newly occupied territories under those auspices.

Q: At the time, as the Israelis rolled into the West Bank and into Gaza, was it felt that they were going to stay? Was there any concern about their staying? What was the feeling in the embassy?

LANPHER: We simply didn't know. Of course, as the war went on, and it was only a six day war, but in its aftermath, the focus shifted to New York, Security Council resolutions, and Jarring missions. We were also involved in the year after the war in trying to broker secret peace negotiations between Israel and Jordan. We were involved in peacemaking efforts. I don't recall whether we thought the Israelis would stay on. The Israelis lost over 600 dead in the Six Day War. At that time the country had about 2.5 million people. That was a terrible amount of casualties for them to take in a small country. So, there were very strong feelings certainly on the

Israeli side that they weren't going to give up anything that they had taken except in return for real peace. They were very adamant about that. On the eve of the Six Day War, at its narrowest point, the Jordanians were within 17 miles of Tel Aviv on the coast. That doesn't give people a lot of sense of security if you're in artillery range of somebody who says they want to kill you and take you over. From the Israeli perspective, I think they had a case. But I don't recall whether we had any absolute policy on the Israelis getting out of that territory.

Q: What about the Arabs within Israel? The Israelis were watching them. Were we watching them?

LANPHER: My recollection is that it was pretty quiescent. They weren't any sort of fifth column. They didn't do any sabotage during or after the war.

Q: Were you working with Barbour at that point?

LANPHER: I saw quite a lot of him during the war period because I was duty officer and running messages back and forth to his residence. I only went to work for Barbour as his staff aide about the end of 1967. I worked for him for about a year and a half.

Q: Let's talk about our relations with the consulate general in Jerusalem before, during, and after the war. Was there an antagonism there? What were you picking up?

LANPHER: I'm not sure "antagonism" is the right word, but there was forever a tension between the embassy in Tel Aviv and the Consulate General in Jerusalem, which did not report to Washington through the embassy in Tel Aviv. As far as the Israelis were concerned, Jerusalem was their capital and the Embassy should have been there. The Israelis perceived the Consulate in Jerusalem as an anomaly and one where the staff spent a lot of time with the Arabs, avoided the government of Israel, and had offices on both sides of the city which was divided before the war. Some of our staff assigned to Jerusalem at the time and historically had been very much pro-Arab, which really got under the Israeli skin. The Israelis were always after Walworth Barbour to move the embassy to Jerusalem. Of course, he didn't. But they even offered to build him a golf course near Jerusalem so that he could indulge his golf. He used to play at Caesaria on the coast, the only golf course in Israel at the time. There was always a tension.

Q: During the war, did that come up at all?

LANPHER: I think everybody was keeping their heads down because there was a lot of shooting around the city of Jerusalem and in the area where our consulate was located on the Arab side, the eastern side, which was very close to the Mandelbaum Gate, maybe 100 yards away. In fact, the consulate took some hits.

Q: We'll come back to that. Why don't we talk now about some of the immediate threats that you were perceiving both in Israel and also our embassy at the end of this war? Was it seen as a time of great triumph?

LANPHER: I think there was great relief that the war was over, that the shooting had stopped.

We had all been aware of our colleagues in the Arab world who had very hairy experiences of the evacuations of Alexandria, Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus, people going out the back of buildings on ropes getting rope burns on their hands, people as far away as Libya that barely survived. There was certainly a real sense of relief that it was over. I wouldn't have called the embassy in Tel Aviv pro-Israel in that sense. But there was a certain sense of relief that if you're going to be in a war, it's probably better to be on the winning side.

Q: Oh, yes. You can't help but, wherever you are, identify with the country, particularly in times of tension.

LANPHER: Yes. And we had all, obviously in the days and couple of weeks preceding the war, been tuning into the Arab broadcasting services, whether it was the Royal Hashemite Broadcasting Service or Radio Cairo or Radio Damascus, and listened to the vitriolic propaganda coming out, "We're going to shove Israel into the sea and all the Israelis will die." So, there was psychologically very much a sense of relief that that hadn't happened to us or to the Israelis.

Q: After the war was over in the immediate weeks and months, do you recall people within the embassy and maybe with your Israeli friends going through a feeling of "now what?"

LANPHER: I don't recall a lot. There was heavy focus on UN resolutions in New York and where do we go from here. But I don't think anybody had a plan at least in any immediate sense because nobody anticipated the war until a couple of weeks before the war and nobody had a plan for what you'd do if you occupied all this territory. The Israelis, if they had wanted to, could have gone to Cairo during the Six Day War. They could have crossed the Canal. The Egyptian army had evaporated. The Egyptian air force was finished. But what do you do when you occupy that much territory? There was that question. I think we raised it with the Israelis during the war itself, saying, "Hey, don't go to Cairo. Don't go to Damascus. What are you going to do? How do you administer it?" So they stopped at the Canal. They were stopped by President Johnson when they had taken the Golan Heights and they were poised to go down the road to Damascus. They could have been there like a knife through butter. Everybody had run off. So yes, they didn't have a plan for what was next. It sort of evolved. They were in place and nobody was talking to them. Nobody was going to make peace. We made great efforts, especially with the Jordanians in the year or so after the war, a special NODIS series of messages that I was privy to, trying to sort out something between the Jordanians and the Israelis. Golda Meir was heavily involved. She was foreign minister before she became prime minister. She'd travel incognito. Moshe Dayan and others were involved. We certainly encouraged these efforts and brokered and transmitted messages back and forth between the two countries. We were a post office.

Q: Did you sense a change in our relations with Israel?

LANPHER: That evolved. Before the Six Day War, we had no military supply relationship with Israel at all. In the immediate aftermath of the war, we were very eager to get our hands on a lot of the equipment that the Israelis had captured, Russian equipment that was of great interest to our intelligence community and our military because it was the same sort of equipment that the North Vietnamese were using against our forces in Vietnam. So, we were very eager to get a hold of this. The Israelis were willing to share it with us, but they extracted a price, things like

sidewinder missiles. For weeks and months after the war, we were sending in transport aircraft to pick up SAM missiles that the Israeli's had captured. We flew them back to the U.S. and our intelligence people exploited this trove. Our army and air force in particular flocked to Israel to learn the lessons of the Six Day War, things like tank tactics. The biggest tank battle in the history of the world was fought in the central Sinai. The Israeli tactics were brilliant and our people wanted to talk to them about it. But we first got into a real military supply relationship the following year, 1968, when we negotiated the sale to Israel of combat aircraft. It was a subsonic A4 Skyhawk. The Skyhawk had originally been a carrier ground attack plane. The Israelis were very happy with this deal. We sent Israelis to the States to train. I can't recall exactly how long it took before the first A4s arrived. This relationship exists to this day.

Q: What about your contact with the Israelis, your neighbors? Did you sense a change in them?

LANPHER: Yes. Between January '67 and March or April, I found Israel quite a depressing place. There was an economic recession. People were leaving the country. People were despondent. They were questioning whether the country had a future. After the Six Day War, they were totally energized. They felt that they were more secure. The economy started to turn around. They had been on the winning side and it gave a great boost to national morale. It was a much more positive atmosphere. Also, tourism started to come back a couple of months after the Six Day War. The world Jewish community had poured a lot of money into Israel, and basically paid for the war.

Q: Particularly the American Jewish community, did you find many coming from the U.S. to bask in the spirit?

LANPHER: It wasn't so much basking, but there was a great spirit of solidarity. They had sent money. There was a handful of volunteers who had come out from the U.S. in the weeks before the war just as the American Field Service had gone to France in World War I in advance of the U.S. getting into the war. My father had been one of those. There was that sort of solidarity and "this was the right thing." But it wasn't to gloat.

Q: In this period, what were you doing until you took over the staff aide job?

LANPHER: I worked in the political section for the political counselor, Heywood Stackhouse, an excellent officer. I learned a lot about political reporting. I had a particular brief as a junior political officer together with my refugee hat. I did a lot of reporting on the occupied territories. I traveled to the Golan Heights, to Gaza, to the West Bank quite a lot and did a lot of political reporting in a way that our officers from the consulate in Jerusalem could not because of the way the Israelis felt about them. Being from the embassy in Tel Aviv, I had easier access.

Q: Did you sort of coordinate?

LANPHER: I coordinated informally with our consulate in Jerusalem. But our consulate in Jerusalem basically had a brief only for Jerusalem and the West Bank. They didn't have any historic brief for the Golan Heights or for Gaza for that matter.

One of the other things I did, and it was rather curious but it's an interesting sort of aside; one of the responsibilities of embassies everywhere is to ensure that delivery of veterans and Social Security checks. Several weeks after the war was over and I was in the political section and one of my beats was the Golan Heights, we got a message from some Druze villagers that they were missing their Social Security and veterans checks that they had always gotten from our embassy in Damascus. This message came to us via the Israeli defense forces; occupation forces up there. We looked into it and communicated with our embassy in Damascus and Washington. Sure enough, there were a handful of recipients, World War I veterans, up there in a village called Magdal Champs, on the slopes of Mount Hermon. So, after some back and forth with Washington and Damascus and the Veterans Administration and Social Security Administration, we actually got some checks to deliver to these veterans. I was anointed because it was my territory to go up and deliver them. So, I had to work it out with the Israeli defense forces. I went in on half track with a large security detail. I was greeted like royalty in this little village high up on the slopes of Mount Hermon. They killed a sheep and I was treated to the sheep's eye. Since I did the first one so well, they gave me a second. That was a very great honor for a 24 or 25 year old junior Foreign Service officer.

Q: As you were going around... Let's take Gaza first. What were you seeing there? Was Gaza crowded at that time?

LANPHER: It was very crowded and very depressing. When I first went there in the days immediately after the war, the carnage, the wrecked tanks and vehicles and bodies, and shell holes and everything, was pretty bad. There is no such thing as a good refugee camp and Gaza was just one big refugee camp. Certainly the images you see today on the television, how packed and shabby the place is, it wasn't quite as big because more people were born in the last 30-odd years. But it was a pretty depressing place. People without a future, no economy, living on the dole. Very sad.

Q: Was there any feeling in the political section and the embassy of, "Oh, my God. Why did the United States..." Did you see this as a place of interest or was this just a depressing adjunct to your work?

LANPHER: I don't think I ever thought about it that way. This is the hand we were dealt. If it hadn't been for the war and before the war, officers from Cairo would come over periodically and visit the Gaza Strip, part of their oversight... They'd visit Rafah and other places in the northern Sinai. It was kind of a romantic journey out of Cairo. But, no, I never thought about it that way.

Q: As a political officer, who were you contacting?

LANPHER: I was contacting officials, and trying to gauge the mood of people in the occupied territories, Palestinians. There weren't any Syrians to talk to on the Golan Heights because they had all fled towards Damascus. There was no population left up there except these Druze villagers. In the West Bank, basically the population didn't flee to Jordan but stayed in the West Bank. For the Gazans or the refugees in Gaza, there was no place to go. So, there were people to talk to. And talking to UN officials, cease-fire monitoring officials from the UN Truce

Supervisory organization for Palestine. There were a lot of people to talk to. Particularly with the Jordanians, we were trying to gauge the mood of the West Bank population, which had always had tensions with Amman. But we tried to keep our fingers on the pulse of opinion there because we were trying to promote this Israeli-Jordanian dialogue after the war.

Q: Was there any talk about Palestinians per se? I am told Golda Meir would say, "There is no such thing as Palestinians." Were you getting any feel for this?

LANPHER: I really don't recall. I never heard her say that and I saw her quite a few times. In the early years after the war, there was no Palestinian Authority. There was no Yasser Arafat. There was no PLO. That all happened after I left Israel.

Q: So as you were talking to people, these were basically an unconnected people there with no...

LANPHER: To a certain extent. You'd talk to shopkeepers, but you'd also talk to the "Arab elites," the mayors of towns in the West Bank, whoever the senior people were in the social and business hierarchy.

Q: Was the hand of the Israeli occupation heavy at that point?

LANPHER: I think it was rather benign. The Israelis were preoccupied with securing the cease-fire lines. There were forces along the Syrian line on the Golan Heights. There were forces along the Jordan River in the valley. There were forces in the Sinai, but there was nothing to worry about down there. In terms of internal security, I remember some checkpoints going through and roadblocks where people would check your identification, ask you why you were going someplace. But I didn't find it oppressive the way it apparently is now.

Q: Prior to this occupation, there had been no basic connection between the population of the West Bank and Israel.

LANPHER: That's right. But there had been the old green line. Nobody crossed it. In fact, after the war, labor started coming over from the West Bank into Israel. An economist could probably argue that this supply of cheap labor led to the industrialization of Israel in a way that it had not known before. And they were contributing also to the economy of the West Bank in terms of wages.

Q: Prior to that, it had been stagnant almost on both sides.

LANPHER: Yes, certainly on the West Bank. Israel had seen its ups and downs, but the West Bank was an olive grove and remittance economy. A lot of West Bankers worked down in the Gulf and sent money home and built summer houses in the West Bank, Hebron, Ramallah, that sort of thing.

Q: Were you picking up any feelings towards Jordanians? We're not too far from the Black September of 1970. It was a different crew, but still, relations between the Bedouin and others, King Hussein, and the Palestinians weren't great. When the Jordanians had run that whole area,

were you picking up things? Were local people saying, "Thank God those Jordanians are gone?"

LANPHER: No, but there was clearly a tension between the Palestinians and the East Bankers (we called them the East Bankers, the Bedouin Hashemite Kingdom). It was an unnatural act, Jordan. But I never heard anybody say, "Thank God we've been occupied by the Israelis." They were in limbo. Nobody likes to be in limbo. But from the Israeli perspective... And the reason they worked so hard at it, albeit unsuccessfully, in that period after the war, at achieving some sort of an accommodation with Jordan, is that the Israelis always kind of liked Jordan, always kind of liked King Hussein. Maybe "liked" is too strong a word, but they always believed that they could do business with Jordan and that Jordan was dragged into that war against its real will and that it was always caught in a bind within the Arab world for being moderate. So, I think there was at the official level in Israel and also on the street more sympathy for Jordan than for the Syrians and the Egyptians. And Jordan never constituted a genuine threat to Israel, whereas Syria and Egypt did.

Q: Did you get any impression of the Israeli leadership? What were you picking up on Moshe Dyan and Meir?

LANPHER: Lebi Eshkel, who had died in 1968, about March, was replaced by Golda Meir. But yes, I saw a great deal of the Israeli leadership. They were very open, accessible. When I was in the political section, I'd go off with the political counselor and see people like Yigal Alon, Shimon Peres. I first met the current prime minister, Sharon, at a dinner at the ambassador's house when he was the leading crossborder retaliation for the Israeli army. I used to see Moshe Dyan when I'd go with Cliff English, the consul general, to deliver birds we had shot to him and drink beer. They were amazingly successful. Golda Meir was an incredible character. She was a real presence. If she walked into a room, she was certainly not the world's glamour girl by any means, but she had a voice and a presence that was astounding. She walked into a room and you could hear her talking in a quiet voice on the other side of the room and you knew she was there. She was one of about six people I've met in my life that really had a presence. She was an extraordinary woman. She was very close to Walworth Barbour. Before she became Prime Minister, she and Wally, as she called him, had a warm personal relationship. She'd come down from Jerusalem and go to his house, just the two of them, for dinner. When I went in and told Barbour that I just had a call from Jerusalem saying Prime Minister Eshkol had died, he was very moved. He liked Eshkol and was very saddened by it. Then he asked me, "Gib, who do you think's going to be the new prime minister?" There were a lot of people who would be logically under consideration, people like Shimon Peres and Dayan, and several others. I said, "I think it's going to be Golda." He said, "Oh, no." I said, "I thought you liked Golda." He said, "I do like Golda, but I have a hard time dealing with women." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Sometimes when I've seen Golda, when she was foreign minister and I had to deliver a tough message, she cried and I don't know how to deal with that." But he was very fond of Golda and they worked well together. But he was a bit uncomfortable. It wasn't part of his life experience to deal with a woman.

Q: That's wonderful. Did you see any of their workings together?

LANPHER: I saw the results. I never sat in on a formal meeting. When he went off to see the Prime Minister when she was Prime Minister, he didn't take a notetaker. But I saw the results of their meetings. He was on the phone to her all the time.

Q: Some of these people don't take notetakers and don't really leave much behind, so you don't know what happened. Was he pretty good about reporting back?

LANPHER: Oh, absolutely. He had two ways of reporting. One, if it was during working hours, he would dictate to his secretary as soon as he came back in the old fashioned way. He would dictate quite long cables full of flavor. If it was at home in the evening – and we had lots of evening work because of operational things – Israeli raids into neighboring countries, retaliation for this or that – one night I made six round trips of 20 miles each way between the embassy and his residence with cables back and forth. He'd be sitting on his couch with a yellow pad and he'd write out his cables long hand. I'd take them in and the communicator would send them out, just type them on the teletype machines right off his draft. He was a good writer.

Q: On the personal side, what did your wife think of all this?

LANPHER: She was amused as any young woman of 24 or 25 years old... She was very flattered by Barbour. She thought he was old fashioned. She was always amused when he'd get on the phone and say to her, "Can you get yourself gussied up?" She could get herself gussied up. She was flattered. And he was a very warm, if shy and reserved, man. I had great affection for him. You always knew when it was May 1. He'd show up in the embassy because that was the beginning of summer, as he saw it, in his panama suit, his white shoes, and his straw hat.

But when I referred on the last tape to having learned a lot from him, let me share with you a couple of things. During the Six Day War, when the Israelis got to the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Suez and stopped, they didn't stop altogether. There was an American offshore oil rig working in the Gulf of Suez pumping oil. I believe it was owned by Amoco. It was an Egyptian concession area, quite close to the coast of the Sinai south of the Canal. The Israelis occupied that oil rig and started to pump the oil because Israel needed oil. Well, it took a while, but Amoco came into the State Department eventually and protested this because they weren't getting the revenue anymore. The State Department sent Barbour a cable saying, "The Israelis are clearly in contradiction to international law and we're in the process of preparing a legal brief which we in due course will present to the Israelis." Barbour sent a cable back saying, "That's not the way to go with the Israelis. If we want them off that oil rig and it returned to Amoco, we do it politically. You give me instructions to go in and tell them to give it up. Don't file a legal brief." Well, I didn't question his judgment on this, but the State Department said, "No, we've got a solid legal case. We're going to do it." So, eventually they called the Israelis in Washington and gave them this legal brief. The Israelis accepted it and said, "We'll be back to you." Within a matter of days, they had a photograph of their soldiers on the rig, dated on the photograph, before the end of the war, before the cease-fire went into effect. We had no legal case against them. They sent a very chagrined cable out from Washington back to Barbour. I said, "What do you think of this?" He said, "It's what I always say. If you have an important issue in diplomacy, don't let the lawyers anywhere near it." I said, "Why not?" He said, "The other guy's lawyers are always better than ours. If you want results, you go in at a political level." I learned that lesson

and it's one that stuck with me.

Another thing mightily irritated him. He was very much a bilateral diplomat, had great skepticism about the utility of the United Nations. He recognized that the United Nations was important and served our purposes sometimes. But he was very frustrated by the amount of time that was spent in New York on resolutions of this and that. His observation to me, which stuck with me, was, "You never want to go work up there in New York." He was sort of a father figure. I said, "Why not?" He said, "Well, you've been watching all this stuff going on. Those people that work up there in New York at the end of the day, all they care about is "resoluting" something. They don't care what they resolute, but they want to resolute something, not solve something. Any important issue you keep out of their hands and do it bilateral." I learned those two lessons. There is a lot of wisdom in that.

Q: Oh, yes. Did you get a feel while you were working with him about his relations with the consulate general in Jerusalem?

LANPHER: To be perfectly frank, Jerusalem was a burr under his saddle. He generally ignored Jerusalem. He could be very imperious. He didn't let Jerusalem bother him. He basically thought they were inconsequential.

Q: Did he ever in your presence talk about the reporting about our ambassadors in the Arab world? Did he see himself as "us versus them?"

LANPHER: No. He had a very polite and very professional dialogue in cables. They'd make an argument. He'd argue back. He had no animosity. He regarded them as professionals. He didn't think they were right a whole lot of the time. But he was absolutely thoroughly professional. As you mentioned reporting, he knew Israel so well and he knew the U.S.-Israeli politics so well that he kind of drove his political section crazy in that he wouldn't let them report political gossip, who was doing what to whom in Israeli politics. He valued his relationships in Israel and he had his own personal relationships everywhere. He didn't want a lot of cables going back to Washington reporting political chit chat. "Those cables always leak back in Washington. My name is on the bottom of it. They get back to the Israelis one way or another." He would share with his political counselor after he had had a dinner party or something like that, if he had heard something interesting. He would sit down with his political counselor and give him chapter and verse, including all the gossip, but he wouldn't let the political counselor report it. He said, "What use is reporting it? It's only a liability out there." This was kind of astute.

Q: Knowing how the system works, it's the sort of thing that we end up as... Political reporters love to get this but it doesn't go anywhere and it can hurt your relations.

LANPHER: Exactly, and he saw this perfectly. He let the political section report all sorts of stuff out there on the occupied territories and moods in Israel and polls and press and everything like that. But when it came to the juicy political gossip, he would share it with them and he thought they needed it for background to put things in perspective, but don't put it back to Washington. He also had because of his techphobia a great concern about his telegrams, especially his NODIS telegrams somehow winding up "in the Bureau of Fisheries."

Q: Speaking of gossip, Moshe Dayan was a figure larger than life. Were you picking up much about him?

LANPHER: Oh, yes. There was always gossip about Moshe Dayan and Moshe Dayan being a womanizer. We kept that out of the reporting. But quite a few people, including the ambassador, had a good relationship with him. Moshe Dyan was a very interesting character. I think he was too loose a cannon for being anything more than Minister of Defense. But he did a good job.

Q: There was no concern about him becoming a man on horseback?

LANPHER: Not that I can recall. It was up to the Israeli political system to use his talents where they were best applied. But he wasn't out of the old hardcore labor movement, the Labor Party, and I don't think there was ever any serious consideration given to him as Prime Minister.

Q: From Barbour's perspective, did the Likud raise any blips on our radar? Did he do anything with them?

LANPHER: He would talk to everybody in Israel. He'd invite orthodox and religious types to receptions at his house. But you have to remember, going back to the '60s, the Labor Party was the Labor Party and they ran Israel and there had never been an opposition party that was the government party. The politics of Israel were the politics of the Labor Party for the most part. Sure, there were splits but always within the Labor Party as between the Ashkenazis and the Sephardic Jews, Jews from North Africa, Iraq, and Yemen. It was politics within the Labor Party.

Q: Speaking of the wide dispersal of the Jews in the world, particularly after the war, did you spend a lot of time arranging for American politicians, leaders, and others to come to Israel or was this not as much as it is today?

LANPHER: That's a very good question. The embassy did almost nothing in that regard. We sent Israelis to the United States, International Visitors Program, young political leaders as we do all over the world. But the Israeli government took the lead on the other side. In fact, they devoted enormous resources, time, energy, and access to inviting American politicians to visit Israel. In fact, in the two and a half years I was in Israel, I was control officer for over 60 CODELS. It was not as strenuous a job as that might imply because the Israeli government made all the arrangements, provided transportation, actually was the one who invited these men and women from our Congress to come, and other political leaders. In terms of American politics, they always say, "Israel, Ireland, and Italy" are the countries that count. We had an enormous number of visitors and the Israelis were very sophisticated in terms of handling them. They gave them a tour, took them to the Sinai, the Golan, the occupied territories, they made everybody in the government available to people up to and including the Prime Minister. This is where their bread was buttered and they worked very hard and very effectively at it.

Q: Did you at the embassy try to give a balanced account, not to give the right side as opposed to the wrong side, but to give the American side of how we looked at things?

LANPHER: Absolutely. And Barbour was very astute on this. We assigned a control officer to every CODEL that came in that we were aware of. Sometimes we were unaware of them. He would see any and all congressmen that came through. He'd have them out to his house for drinks or give a lunch for them and try to expose them as broadly as possible. To the extent that we could, we tried to give them a balanced view. But they didn't always want to hear it. A lot of American politicians, sadly, visited Israel to get their ticket punched to get votes back home and they weren't going to rock any boat. Most of them were there for U.S. domestic political reasons.

Q: Were there any issues at that time where we saw particularly our relations with the Arab states that we should be doing thus and so but the Israelis from their perspective didn't want us to do thus and so? I'm thinking about arming or supporting this or that group in the Arab world. Often it had to do with military equipment and there was great pressure brought from the politicians in the United States not to do something. Did these issues affect you?

LANPHER: No. Bear in mind that I left Israel two years after the Six Day War. The kind of issues you described came later. They weren't issues at that time. In the time I was in Israel, the only military deal we did with Israel was the A4 deal, which was kind of modest and that was sometime in 1968. We'd had a long-term military to military relationship with Jordan and had previously supplied modest amounts of military aid to Jordan. So, there was a precedent in the region for it. The issue was within the U.S. government about a military supply relationship with Israel. We had never had one before. So, this A4 deal in 1968 was precedent setting. We didn't even have a framework with Israel to put in place a military supply relationship. Before we can transfer military articles to a country, we have to go through lots of bureaucratic steps to certify that country as being capable of protecting our equipment, internal security surveys, at conference tables when we were negotiating some of these things trying to insure ourselves and go through the bureaucratic steps that Israel could protect what we were about to supply them.

Q: Is there anything else we should talk about?

LANPHER: Yes, one of the dumbest things I ever did. About two or three weeks before the Six Day War, there I was, 25 years old, and I developed a friendship with Walworth Barbour's Irish butler, John. It turned out that John was a fly fisherman, too. One day, he said to me, "I've fallen into Israel's biggest secret." We used to drink beer at the ambassador's pool. John said, "I found a river in Israel that's full of rainbow trout that haven't been fished for years and the river is full of them." I said, "Yeah? Let's go." So, one afternoon two or three weeks before the Six Day War started, but the war clouds were certainly gathering, we took off from Tel Aviv in my car with a cooler full of beer and our fly rods. We drove up to northern Israel, the upper Galilee, to the base of Mount Hermon, where the Dan River flowed out of the base of Mount Hermon and down towards the Sea of Galilee. For two or three, four, miles, despite the heat, the water was cold enough to sustain a trout population. It had been planted during the British mandate period, probably by some British officers. We got up there and only then did John tell me that this river, the Dan River, was the cease-fire line between Israel and Syria. He said, "We've got to be careful. There are machine gun nests on both sides." So we waded out into the river between machine gun nests with guys peering at us on both sides. We caught trout like hell. For a very good reason, nobody had fished it for years. The machinegunners on both sides didn't know how

to deal with two fellows out there flicking fly rods at this water and catching trout. In retrospect, it was one of the dumbest things I ever did.

KENNETH A. STAMMERMAN
Rotation Aide
Tel Aviv (1967-1969)

Kenneth A. Stammerman was born in Kentucky in 1943. He graduated from Bellerme College in 1965 and entered the Foreign Service in 1966. He has served in post in Israel, the Philippines, France, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Stammerman was interviewed in 2000 by Charles Stuart Kennedy

Q: June of '67, and you were in Tel Aviv from when to when?

STAMMERMAN: I was there twice. So this is the first time, from June of '67 until December of '69. Two and a half years; I extended.

Q: What was the situation when you arrived in Tel Aviv?

STAMMERMAN: When I arrived there were four first-tour junior officers, and a couple second-tour junior officers. Again, that was because people were being reassigned. People who were evacuated from NEA posts, rather than go all the way back, some of them went to Tel Aviv. And Tel Aviv could take junior officers because it wasn't on their bill in terms of budget, it was on Central Personnel's JOP account. They weren't busy at the Embassy in the way that Tel Aviv later was busy. It was a post with sort of a classic organization, with the ambassador and DCM, formal staff meetings. Junior officers were pretty much left to the section chiefs to manage. It was the old Foreign Service, so spouses were graded, so the spouse's performance would go on your efficiency report. Tel Aviv was an exciting place outside the embassy. Israel was very exciting... it was still a new country, vibrant culture. We got there and sort of kept contact with the Embassy almost only to go to work to, and got out into Israeli society, and it was exciting. Jerusalem had just opened up for Israelis, so we'd go up to Jerusalem and go to the Old City, drive around the West Bank, go to Bethlehem. I studied Hebrew immediately, got into a Hebrew class. The embassy was formal, Walworth Barbour was one of the greats, I think. We didn't all go to staff meetings. Junior officers would rotate to the staff meetings. Junior officers were mainly seen but not heard at a staff meeting. You could sit there and get this wonderful education from Ambassador Barbour who knew everybody and everything in Israel. He would go to the embassy late in the morning, stay for 2 or 3 hours, and go home and take a nap.

Q: Is that right?

STAMMERMAN: He was already somewhat ill, had trouble breathing. But he would come in and say, "I saw the foreign minister yesterday and this is what she had to say." And you'd learn all this stuff. Absolutely great analysis. Political Chief was Howard Stackhouse. Excellent man. They kept the reading file, which is to say all the reporting cables, which we all could read, in the

commo section. You'd sign the cover and then you could read. It was a wonderful analysis, so you learned how Foreign Service reporting was done by reading this excellent analysis about what was happening. They also told us about the events leading up to the war, what they saw, from their perspective. I was thrown into the visa mill, first job, visa officer, lot of Foreign Service officers do visa work, non-immigrant visas. That amounts to interviewing people who want to go to the United States as visitors, and you examine their bona fides, are they really visitors? A lot of times we'd get Israeli kids just out of the Army and they were really going to the United States to get a job. So we'd turn them down and tell them to get immigrant visas. Of course if they got in the immigrant visa line, they would have to wait for years. So they would always try to lie to us and say they were going to a cousin's wedding or whatever, and after a while you would learn who was good and who was not. The FS lady who was the consul in charge of visas, Sarah Andren, was very tough. She was hard on junior officers. There were not that many women in those days in management positions. Usually they were consular or admin. But she was tough, and if you made a decision on a visa that she thought was questionable, she would give you a hard way to go. She'd shout about it, even though these were all judgement calls, you never know. But she'd take something out of a file and say, "Why did you give this visa? They're never going to come back. I'll show his adjustment slips six months from now. This is terrible." It was as if you'd misplaced top secret or something [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

STAMMERMAN: She would make it into high crimes or misdemeanor. She had quite a reputation. Even later in the Foreign Service, I heard of people who went through Tel Aviv in those days or elsewhere who suffered under her management. So, anyway, I did my visa work, non-immigrant visas, for six months in rotation. A funny thing that happened may be of some interest. That was when the Israelis starting putting security guards on their El Al planes. There had been some airplane hijackings, before then there were no hijackings. After the hijackings, the Israelis started putting security guards on their planes. These were all young men just out of the military, and they would need a visa because they were flying to the United States, and we'd refuse them. And we'd say, why are you going to the United States? And they'd say just to visit. No you aren't, you're an immigrant. So finally the Israeli foreign ministry came to the embassy and said you are turning down all our security guards. The consul said to us visa interviewers (two, usually), you guys are pretty good because you are figuring these guys are not really your typical visitors. So then they started giving us a list, and we would always give them without question their multiple entry visas. But that was when terrorism first surfaced.

Q: Visas aside, first... did you find you were trying to get to know the people, foreign post and all... did you find that the visa thing would come up and hit you in the face at a dinner party and that sort of thing?

STAMMERMAN: Actually, it was very seldom. I found out that if I spoke Hebrew, I could cut the visa interview time in half. And the questions were roughly all similar: where were you born, what do you do for a living, what ties do you have in Israel? Things like that. So that encouraged me to learn Hebrew. I studied Hebrew very hard. After a few months, I could do the interviews in Hebrew. In Tel Aviv, you got people from all over the world, so you still needed help with the non-Hebrew translations, but it helped that I knew Hebrew. People out in the real Israel world,

people might ask, and I would say if somebody wants to go for a visit it's no problem at all. Tell them to come and see me. But if they are kids who go to work, they are not going to get a visa. I think the Israelis knew that. Word gets around, everybody knows everything in Israel. You were describing coffee gatherings... there was no television in Israel in those days. So, politics. It was like sitting around the table in Louisville and we'd talk politics. Fascinating people, fascinating histories. I learned a lot about Israel and Israeli society. It was great.

Q: Were you picking up and of the feeling, even before you went out and when you went there, particularly at this time, there was often a divide between what has often maligned on the Arabists, but people who have been looking at... American relations with the Arab world, and the American relations with the Jewish world... and so it was always felt that by the people dealing with the Arab world was that our people in Tel Aviv had been seconded into the Israeli Foreign Service. Did you run across any of that?

STAMMERMAN: Well, it was interesting. We had a couple of people on the staff who had served in Arab countries. Part of that is because '67 when because of the war people were reassigned and released, so we had a political officer. And remember, that by that time, Gaza became within Tel Aviv's consular district. And the big argument that kept coming up, even to the present but certainly during my second tour there, between Embassy Tel Aviv and Consulate General Jerusalem over areas of responsibility. Now the embassy Tel Aviv reporting was candid because the contacts were with the Israelis and this was a very exciting society. The Embassy reported what people felt, I didn't do any political reporting in those days, I was consular. But people reporting out of the Arab countries, it seemed to us that they completely misunderstood what Israelis were like, and part of what we were doing was explaining what Israelis were really like. So embassy management were encouraging the embassy officers to please meet Israelis, the more the better. So, you had a substantive divide in reporting from the Middle East Foreign Service. I remember one from Saudi Arabia when I was reading the reading file, or the ambassador was reading it, and we all kind of laughed at it. It was one of these, "American has so thrown its policy in line with the Jewish state that our position in the Arab world is ruined forever." These were so stereotypical of reporting out of the Arab countries that they didn't know what the Israelis were all about. Of course, the Israelis didn't know what the Arabs were all about either [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

STAMMERMAN: But we would read what the Arabs and American officers reporting from Arab countries were writing about Israel, and it was simply wrong. Because we could meet the Israelis every day and look at them and say, "These are not the people you are talking about. They are warm, cultured, and agreeable. Would you please make a telephone call and everything would be settled." That was sort of the message. Obviously you don't read everything as a junior officer, but the feeling in Israel at that the time was that if the Hashemites, King Hussein's people, would simply talk to the Israelis, that they could have the West Bank in a minute. Because most of the Israelis I knew didn't want anything to do with the West Bank. These were American Jewish immigrants who wanted it. But most Israelis simply didn't want the West Bank, so long as they did not get the Arab Legion on their doorstep. They wanted to be able to travel. End of story. Peace would be very easy. When you read the reporting out of Jordan,

Embassy Amman reporting about Israel, you were seeing a different country. We would have visitors from Amman very seldom because Embassy Amman would not encourage anyone to go all the way to Tel Aviv, they could go to Jerusalem, but not to Tel Aviv. If you were telling the embassy in Jordan this, they'd say well, the Jordanians are worried about the Palestinians. The U.S. Embassy in Amman argued that if King Hussein talked to the Israelis there'll be a revolt and the Palestinians would overthrow the king. We'd say, and the Israelis would say, "The king can beat them." That was before Black September.

Q: 1970.

STAMMERMAN: By then it was too late. By then the settlements had started, different government. But we would watch... by then the Rogers Plan had come out, we'd see the commentary about the Rogers Plan and about the UN shuttles, and we could see that it was fairly useless, it wasn't going to happen. You had to have direct contact or you were never going to solve the conflict.

Q: At this time, were you all feeling the heavy hand of what later became known as the Jewish Lobby, AIPAC, and all that. This was before...

STAMMERMAN: Again, people were reporting what I thought were fairly reasonable analyses of Israel foreign policy, what they were about. But there was no compulsion, by any means. I eventually got into economic/commercial work, in addition to consulate work. In fact I spent over a year, of my two and a half years, doing commercial/econ, and I don't think anybody had any feeling at all about the Jewish lobby. We always thought it was a joke. People would talk about a Jewish Lobby...where? There was pressure only on performance, but reporting was mainly, can you write well and report accurately. I was doing commercial/econ so there wasn't any [pressure].

Q: What about commercial developments at that time with Israel? You had a sort of socialist country up against American free enterprise. How did that fit?

STAMMERMAN: Not terribly well. There were some American investments so we would have American businessmen coming and looking toward investing. But the market was protected. Tel Aviv never had an AID mission, so what little Agency for International Development work existed would go through the econ/commercial section and I would get involved with that. By then we had some small amount of food aid going, but not much. We'd do reports on local firms, WTDRs, and that was sort of the bread and butter. You'd go out and meet local companies. An American company wants to buy from you or sell to you and they want to know who you are... so we talked to them.

Q: I would think that you would have quite a bit of problem, because it's no revelation that the people from there and certainly the Israelis, but I mean people who would come to the United States were merchants par excellence, and so you would have Americans say from New York or in trade and wanting to do something sort of for their country of birth. But a hard businessman would go over and find themselves up against the controlled economy and come to the American embassy and pound on the thing and "You've got to sell because I'm trying to be a good guy and

sell them sweaters and I can't get a sweater market."

STAMMERMAN: We would do things like...the Department of Commerce had trade missions and put on trade fairs. Actually trade fairs were a way to get through the tariffs, so we encouraged people to do things like that. But more often they were trying to sell something. So we'd tell them what you really want to sell it to is the Histadrut. Histadrut businesses, that was the trade union that controlled the big part of the economy. Not quite socialized... there was the Socialist part of the economy and there was trade union part of the economy. All the doctors worked for the trade unions, and so we'd make an appointment. If you want to sell sweaters you really want to sell to the Histadrut's Koor Marketing Group. But if it's something that's made in Israel, forget it. No way. But there wasn't that much trade. People would come through, but it wasn't that big a market. After all, three million people, it was a little bigger than the rest of the Levant, but not that much.

Q: I think the French were the main military suppliers at this point.

STAMMERMAN: Up to that point. In June '67, the French broke with Israel, because DeGaulle told them not to start the war and they did. So France then broke off relations. The big issue when I was there was supplying Phantom Aircrafts, which we did.

Q: F-4s.

STAMMERMAN: F-4s, that was our first major sale. One thing that helped, even then we were on the 3I circuit for congressmen, Ireland, Italy and Israel, we had a lot of CODELs, congressional delegations.

Q: These are people pinning the ethnic button back in their district.

STAMMERMAN: Absolutely. So it was not necessarily Jewish, it was also Irish, Italian... So we got to accompany congressmen around, take notes, we learned to write, and heard what the Israelis were up to and we got to meet people and travel around the country. I recall one time, probably '68, I was with a congressman from Los Angeles and we went down to Sde Boqer to interview David Ben Gurion, the foreign ministry had set it up, and we sat there for two hours listening to Ben Gurion talking about Zionism and the history of Zionism. He talked about his discussions with DeGaulle, then the French-Israeli relations and the French-American relations and the American-Israeli relations. The French were cutting off military supplies.

Q: Sitting in on staff meetings and so forth, what were you picking up about Israeli politics at that time, and the leadership?

STAMMERMAN: One of the persons talked about a lot at the time was Golda Meir, Golda was foreign minister. A lot of discussion was about the Eshkol government from just before the war started, because then - Prime Minister Eshkol had appeared on radio than a month before the war started, and gave a very rambling, talk, speech, sounding nervous, sounding unsure of himself. After that speech, he was forced to bring in Moshe Dayan as defense minister from RAFI, part of what had been the Labour Party, let by Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres. And David Ben Gurion.

They broke with the Labour Party back in 1964, over the Lavon Affair, a famous affair. I have no idea what was the truth of it. Historically, it was Israeli spies were caught in Cairo dealing with Egyptians, planning to do some terrorism against an American installation. Lavon was then the defense minister, and the Labour Party split over this. David Ben Gurion, Moshe Dayan, Shimon Peres walked out on the basis that the truth wasn't told. Golda Meir stayed in, and Eshkol led Mapai, (Mifleget Poalei Yisrael) the main part of what became the Israel Labour Party. That was the name of the party before the war started, though Mapai was forced to accept Rafi, which had a much harder line from a security point of view. David Ben Gurion was after all the architect of Israeli involvement in the 1956 war, Dayan had come into the cabinet in May of '67. From what people at the embassy told me, that was the key that Israel was going to war, once Dayan was in the cabinet.

So at staff meetings, they would talk a lot about Golda Meir, the Rogers Plan, that was later in about '69, the Rogers Plan was a way to bring Israel and Egypt to discussing things indirectly. It was subverted, we later heard, by Henry Kissinger, [laughter]. That's when Rogers was Secretary of State. But a lot of the talk was about Golda Meir, the peace process, how the Israelis wanted to deal with Egyptians and Jordanians, and how could they do that. Moshe Dayan was then Defense Minister, and I knew very little of them personally. I knew a lot of Israeli military, everybody was in military, so we heard just by being in Israel about what's going on in the military, lot of gossiping and so on.

Q: Were you picking up the feeling that Nasser was sort of a spent force?

STAMMERMAN: No, in those days, the Egyptians sort of thought Nasser could have lost it in '67, but he didn't, so therefore he was in charge. The Israelis still feared that Nasser could block any peace moves by other Arab states with Israel, but were not in those years worried about the Egyptian army.

Q: Also the war of attrition was on, wasn't it?

STAMMERMAN: Just started. '68 is when it started. '67 was when you had the Barlev line that was being built. Actually the Barlev line, I take that back, started in '69, after the war of attrition was underway. We were sitting in Israel after all, and the Israelis, when the war of attrition started, the Israeli were doing some very imaginative things. My landlord, it turns out, it came out in the newspaper months later, I was renting from an Israeli Army colonel. Turns out he was on this raid that went behind the lines on the other bank of the Suez. He crossed from the Sinai, behind Egyptian lines and had blown up a bunch of installations. The Israeli also grabbed an entire Russian radar installation down on an island in the Gulf of Suez. So, very imaginative and exciting things. We thought it was fun, in a way, oh boy, people we knew were doing these things.

The Egyptians were more and more, from our point of view, in the pocket of the Soviets. I heard from my Israeli friends about an encounter between Israeli pilots and Russians over Suez, later written up in various places in the newspapers. One of my Israeli friends in the Air Force said, "Ken, did you hear about this? We took out the Russians." That there had been a flight of Israeli planes over Suez, ran into Russians, who were covering for the Egyptians, because Israelis were

regularly shooting down every Egyptian plane that came up. So apparently the Russians sent a flight up and the Israelis took them out. The Israelis were monitoring and heard the Russians, Israelis speak Russian, a lot of them do, and heard the Russians say when the Israelis attacked, 'they are going to kill us all,' and the Israelis did it, and the Russians that didn't escape the first encounter, the Israelis shot down on the run back to the Egyptian base. So that was one of the things we'd hear. Whether it was reported, or whenever, but I read it later in the newspapers. So we would hear from the Israelis what was happening in the war of attrition.

Q: How was King Hussein regarded by this time?

STAMMERMAN: Well we had two levels here. One, the American embassy in Tel Aviv, point of view as I understood it was that the King is in a stronger position than he knows. The Israelis tell us that if he takes on the Palestinians, he will win. And if need be they (the Israelis) will help. They won't have to because the Israelis really respected the Arab Legion, they always did. Remember their hardest fighting in both 1948 and 1967 was against the Arab Legion. They said that if the King took the PLO on, he can't lose. The embassy in Amman, the feeling we all heard, the embassy in Amman thought he could not, that if he tried to take on the Palestinians, it would be the end of the Hashemites.

The feeling among the Israelis was "Why can't you guys [the Americans] tell him that? His future is with us, not with the Russians, who want his head, and the Nasserites want his head, the Syrians want him dead." So the Israelis were saying he should come with us be on their side. But he didn't.

Q: What were you getting at the point about the Likud and Begin and Sharon and those people?

STAMMERMAN: Well, Sharon wasn't visible yet, not until '73. He was a colonel in the Army then. I'll tell you about that later. Next assignment.

Q: But did...

STAMMERMAN: Likud (which was then Herut) was off limits. You didn't talk to them. Period.

Q: What was the rationale for that?

STAMMERMAN: They were terrorists. They blew up the King David Hotel.

Q: You are talking about the star...

STAMMERMAN: You simply do not. I was not doing political reporting so it didn't affect me. The word was around the embassy was, certainly among political officers, they are off limits, no, don't talk to them. Nor should it get back to the Labour Party that we are talking to them. That was another thing. From Labour's view, we are the government. We are legitimate. And among the Israelis, the feeling was, the people I knew, the old Mapai, European Jews, sort of the people, Likud, Herut was not nice people.

Q: I mean, looking back on it, and you went there later on, did you feel like you were dealing with sort of Ashkenazis and the European types...was this pretty much your world?

STAMMERMAN: It was all Ashkenazis. Almost all. There were the Sephardic Jews who worked at the embassy, the drivers. In our neighborhood, I lived in a suburb called Ramat Hasharon, pretty far from the rest of the American diplomatic community, because we were on the economy rather than housed in embassy-owned or managed housing. The newest junior officers like me were simply given rent money and told to find our own housing. I lived in an Israeli neighborhood; I was one of the few Americans who did. The American embassy had bought or built housing in Hertzlia Pitruach, which turned out later to become an exclusive suburb, next to Kfar Shmaryahu, another exclusive neighborhood. I lived in Ramat Hasharon, which was almost all Israeli. My neighbors were all Israeli, and I got to know a lot of them. But our neighborhood was Ashkenazis. There were some Yemenite Sephardic Jews who lived in a suburb next to it and they lived among themselves. The Ashkenazis areas spoke Hebrew, which I was learning more of. Yiddish was a language that was not spoken. Young Israelis thought Yiddish was European, a diaspora language. It was not done. You spoke either French or English or Hebrew. I'd studied enough French so I could get around using French. You could speak French to the cabbies, many from Algeria or Morocco.

Q: How about the religious community?

STAMMERMAN:..There was the NRP (National Religious Party) sort of equivalent to what would be the current Shas up there in Jerusalem, too. But when we were there, I had almost no contact with the parliamentary NRP. We did and we didn't see religiously observant Jews. I'd go to the village for the Habad movement, Kfar Habad, because I was really into learning about the culture. It was a fascinating place. So I would go to some of these religious groups and their festivals. But you'd go and talk and they'd dance and you'd see all sorts of cultural things. But politically, they were not that important. And in Tel Aviv, as opposed to Jerusalem, the religious were and still are for that matter relatively few in number. The NRP was in the government, Allied to the Labour party, always had been. You had the small parties like Aguda, but then you had the ultra orthodox which were out of the government. They got to where they thought the Jewish state was an obscenity, blasphemy. The Luboviches accepted Zionism. Some of them were and some were not, but they were not radically anti-Zionist. (End of tape)

So this would have been around 1968. As I was saying, our Israeli FSN women visa clerks would often walk in and kind of shake their heads and raise their eyebrows about ultra-religious visa applicants; and these guys would come in with the long side curls and the coats and the hats. Again, Tel Aviv had a religious suburb, but most of the people who were ultra religious, Jewish observant, lived in Jerusalem or else in separate communities like Moshav Levi, that were ultra religious.

So anyway, these guys came in one day and the head of the Lubovich community in Israel was with them. There were four or five orthodox Jews wearing the long side curls and coats and hats, 20s to 40s probably, and the clerk didn't even type up a form, she said she knew they'd need an interview. Our policy at the time was that anyone who had recently come out of the Soviet Union was ineligible for a visitor visa because they had no ties to the state of Israel. They were just

using Israel as a stopping point. They'd go to the States and we'd never see them again. And the American law said: If they are not coming back to the place where they got their visa, don't give them a visa. Plus, we had to find out if they were Communist. A lot of Israelis who'd lived in Romania or Russia, or whatever, had been members of the Communist Party, simply because they needed to join before they could get a job as a university professor. So, we had to process them as so-called defectors. And they would laugh and say, "Of course we defect, but we were members of the Communist Party." That always took a while with the INS, so that they knew that I'd talked to these people.

So, this one day, this group piled in to my office. I had these four guys and a man who ran the Lubovich community in Israel, and we started this interview. It was a funny interview to begin with because they spoke Georgian and Russian; they were from Georgia, part of the former Soviet Union, so Georgian and Russian. We had an interpreter who spoke Russian and Yiddish. So they went from Georgian to the one among them who spoke the best Russian to our interpreter to me. So it was a roundabout interview. They all said they wanted to go to the United States because the Lubovich Rabbi wanted to see them. They'd just gotten out of the Soviet Union, really. Oh, okay, so I asked them about what had been going on...had the Communists been in their village. Oh, yes, they came, we threw rocks at them and they left us alone. So we had a little Jewish village out somewhere in Georgia. "What in the world were you doing out in Georgia?" These are Europeans, not native to the Caucasus.

What in the world were you doing in Georgia? They said, well what happened is that when... our group is from Poland, as most Lubovich Jews were, our group is from Poland and when the Red Army was collapsing against the German onslaught when the Germans broke out and the Germans betrayed the Russians and moved into eastern Poland... as the Red Army was falling back they put us on their trucks and said, "The Nazis will kill you. Come with us." So they thought the Red Army were great guys. The Red Army was taking them and their parents out of Poland all the way out to Georgia, as far away from Nazis as possible. I don't know who did, but somebody in the Red Army was moving people out. But they said, "but the local Communists tried to tear down their synagogue, and we threw rocks at them and they went away and that was that." So they were describing the Lubovich community in Georgia and eventually the kids grew up speaking Georgian and Russian. Eventually they all made it to Israel, though, and so I said, "First I have to ask you a question, are any of you members of the Communist party?" That was a laugh, they laughed and laughed. They thought that was the funniest thing they had ever heard. Of course they were not. They never went to university, they were simple, they'd only studied Torah. (In those days, there was a forest near Jerusalem which was called the Red Army forest. At Israel's founding, the Israelis were close to the Soviets on a number of issues, out of gratitude for defeating the Nazis in WWII and because they were instrumental in 1947 and 1948 in getting the UN to approve the formation of the Jewish State)

So, I said "Will you come back to Israel," and they said "we'll do whatever the Rabbi tells us to do." Honest answer. So I spoke to the guy in charge, I spoke to him in Hebrew. I said, "Rabbi, if I give visas to these people, will they come back? Will you make sure the Rabbi sends them back, at some point, because American law won't let me issue visas otherwise." And he said, "Yes, we'll get them back here." Meanwhile, while I was talking to one of them, the others would be praying, reading the Torah and rocking back and forth. So the whole thing was kind of

funny, happening in an American visa office. And he said, "Yes, we'll get them back here." I said, "Fine, I'll write your visas." So I gave them all visas, and he was surprised because he was prepared for a really hard way to go. He said, "What you have done is a mitzvah." A mitzvah, which is what we would say would earn you an indulgence in Catholicism, probably. I said fine, "I may need that some day." So we let them go, and the local employees were shocked. They didn't like these guys to begin with. They didn't care for these people, but I let them go. My boss didn't like it either, but I said, "They are going to get to the United States no matter what we do. So I gave them the visa. They'll come back." So we had contacts like that.

Q: But we were not looking upon a divided society there where at that point where religion would be... really orthodox would become a major factor.

STAMMERMAN: At best, they would be a marginal player. The feeling when we would read reporting from other Middle East posts would suggest that Israel was some kind of religious state. But we'd say it's not. Yes, on Yom Kippur you don't drive a car anywhere in Israel because you get a rock thrown at you. Because that's the one day the kids are told they can throw rocks at cars, so they throw rocks at cars. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

STAMMERMAN: But the State was just not religious. Very marginal things.

Q: What about the West Bank, in Gaza? Could you do anything there?

STAMMERMAN: You could visit the West Bank. We got to know people in Bethlehem. My son was born in Israel, in 1969. We would visit, we got to know people in Bethlehem very well. There's no border. The road just went on, that had been cut between 1948 and 1967. There was no 'green line' along the 1948 Armistice line anymore, you just drove wherever you wanted to drive. Occasionally, you'd see Israeli roadblocks, but there was no terrorism. The two places we didn't go... we didn't wander around Gaza, and you didn't wander around Jenin, which is a city in the northern West Bank. There was already trouble there. We'd avoid those areas. But we would drive down to Jericho and go to restaurants in Jericho and East Jerusalem and Bethlehem. We weren't supposed to report on anything, we might tell the ambassador or the DCM something, but Jerusalem felt that was their reporting prerogative. I didn't care, I went there on weekends. Tourism.

Q: Was there much contact, say, were there junior officers at consul general in Jerusalem and were you all in contact sort of chatting around, or did you find there was a social divide?

STAMMERMAN: There was a social divide. We seldom spoke to them. They would not come to Tel Aviv. That was a problem.

Q: Was that on purpose?

STAMMERMAN: We sort of understood they did not come to Tel Aviv because they saw themselves as the consulate to the Palestinian Arabs. They just wouldn't, there was a divide. The

more they kept themselves away from coming to visit... We would drop... well you didn't go by the consulate because you were embassy. You might run into them occasionally. But I didn't know anybody up there. Occasionally one of us would remind them that they had a large Jewish presence in their consular district in West Jerusalem, but then and when I was posted there later, they seemed to ignore their Jewish residents and only report on Palestinians. They were never accredited to Israel, still aren't. They are accredited to the city of Jerusalem.

TERESITA C. SCHAFFER
Rotation Aide
Tel Aviv (1967-1969)

Ambassador Schaffer was born in New York and later educated in France. She received her undergraduate degree from Bryn Mawr College and joined the Foreign Service. Her Foreign Service career took her to Israel, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Ambassador Schaffer was interviewed by Thomas Stern in September 1998.

Q: *So in early 1967, you went to Tel Aviv.*

SCHAFFER: That is right. I had never been in Israel before. Walworth Barbour was the ambassador. The DCM was Bill Dale, who was there for the eighteen months of my tour. He was replaced by Owen Zurhellen in the summer of 1968. At the time, the Embassy was much smaller than it is today. There were three or four officers in the Political Section; three in the Economic Section; four officers in USIS. I would guess that it was a medium sized Embassy.

I was assigned to the administrative section, as the first part of my rotational assignments. My boss was Jack Curry, the Counselor for Administration. After that I had four more assignments -- five -- including a few months in USIS -- during a two year tour. I did not really have a good mentor in Tel Aviv. There were a couple of people who were helpful, but no one took me under his wing and tried to teach me about the Foreign Service. If your immediate boss or the DCM don't do that, then the Junior Officer is pretty much left to his or her devices. I must say that there were more senior colleagues who from time to time tried to be of assistance. But it was not a consistent, sustained effort. I did pick up something of the Foreign Service lore through conversations with my colleagues.

There was one officer who made an impact on me. That was the Counselor for Economic Affairs -- Richard Breithut; he was married to a Swede. That gave me the opportunity to exercise my Swedish. I was invited to their house on a number of occasions -- usually dinner. In all of my years in the FS, the Breithut dinners were the only occasions where I was subjected to a separation of the sexes after dinner. It was Mrs. Breithut's practice to take the ladies off to her bedroom where we would sit on her bed and use the bathroom. She explained to me that she was just following the practices of her last post -- Karachi. So I learned that lore; I didn't like it one bit.

I was not the only junior officer in the embassy. At various times, there were five others in all, but no more than three at any one time. All except one -- John Will -- rotated. Gib Lanpher, John Peterson and the others did rotate. In that group, I was the only woman. There were two women consular officers.

When I returned from Tel Aviv, I was assigned to the political "cone."

As I said, administration was my first rotational assignment. I must say that the administrative staff did not know what to do with me. So I was assigned as a kind of supernumerary to the General Services Section to watch what GS was doing. That assignment could have been very boring, but the Six Day War started about four months after I reported to the GS Section. All of a sudden, all personnel were needed badly. I became involved in implementation of the Embassy's evacuation.

The second rotational assignment, which started soon after the War ended, was to the Economic Section. Although I eventually became a member of the economic "cone", at this point I had managed to escape, during my college years, without taking any economic courses. So my assignment was an interesting one. My job was essentially to take care of any loose ends. We had a bi-weekly report which I was asked to edit, as well as being a contributor. Then, for example, I did the report on minerals; for that, I visited the phosphate mines in the Negev and the copper mines in Elat. That was fun, and was made even more interesting because at the time of the visit, border hostilities broke out just south of the Dead Sea. Preparations were under way as I was driving back to Tel Aviv in my very small Fiat. I was able to monitor all of the heavy army equipment which was in the other lane, headed for the border. In fact, I think I was the only one in the Embassy who was aware of the border skirmishes. The Attaché had heard rumors that something might happen; after the fighting had begun he was told to call me, which he did -- although obviously reluctantly.

When I first got to Tel Aviv, the major subject was unemployment. Israel was in somewhat of a recession. There was great concern about emigration -- I think that persons leaving Israel outnumbered new immigrants. The national leadership viewed this trend with great concern particularly since they had been very active in trying to convince Jews living in the U.S. and the USSR to immigrate to Israel. After the 1967 War, I believe that the economy grew again and I don't remember the discussion of unemployment to be that high on the political agenda. The focus shifted to questions about the economic relationships between Israel and the Occupied Territories; there were few answers, if any. This was before Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza came to work in Israel. In the last few years, Israel had enjoyed a booming economy; it was not that while I was there.

Next came a few months in USIS. It was run by Jay Gildner, who was one of the most outstanding USIA officers. He was probably the most relentlessly organized boss I have ever had. He was very methodical; he took my rotation seriously, in part because he thought he could use another hand and in part because he wanted me to fully understand all facets of the USIS operation. I spent three months doing press work -- the Press Attaché was gone for much of that time, putting me in charge of the press operation. One of our main tasks was to place in the Israeli papers certain policy statements emanating from high officials in Washington. We also

distributed the “Wireless File” which provided material on what other papers were saying. Most of what we distributed of course was related to the Middle East.

We were, of course, in the middle of the Vietnam War; that generated much interest among the war correspondents to whom we would send materials on the U.S. positions. I must say that Vietnam was not high on the Israeli agenda; they were so preoccupied with their own problems that they didn’t talk about other ones very much. I had been in Tel Aviv for perhaps a little more than a year when we had a visit from veterans of Embassy Saigon. The DCM, in what proved to be a major miscalculation, asked the two to talk to the Embassy staff to offset a rising tide of anti-Vietnam feelings -- incorrect views in his mind. There was a lot of skepticism about our policy and about our explanation of the situation -- e.g. body counts, strategic hamlets -- among the staff. He thought that if these veterans who had just left the trenches could talk to us, a lot of the staff’s sentiment could be reversed. It turned out that the last experience these diplomats had was the Tet offensive. They were very candid; they were devastating in their comments on the South Vietnamese. They agreed that the Tet offensive had caught us by surprise. Theirs was a point of view not often heard in Israel. So Bill Dale’s efforts to engender greater support for our Vietnam policy was seriously undermined by the eyewitnesses comments.

I then worked in the cultural affairs section. I enjoyed that stint in USIS both because I had an opportunity to do some interesting work and because Gildner saw to it that I knew all of the activities in which he was involved. He was a trainer and I learned a lot from him. I should note that a junior officer rotating through USIS was then not the norm, but Gildner was delighted to have a junior officer and devoted some of his time to my training.

I also rotated to the Political Section. There I did mostly press reporting as well as biographical work -- standard junior officer chores. But I was fortunate because my assignment lasted during the summer when at least one officer was on his or her way to the next assignment or on home leave. So I was able to expand my experience to almost all facets of political work. In general, I think this assignment was probably the most fun. Of course, it helped that by this time I had been in the Embassy for over a year which gave me a good feel for what I and everybody else was supposed to be doing. I had learned Hebrew quite well which was quite useful.

As I said, much of my time as devoted to reading and reporting on the Israel press. I thought that it was a good press -- independent, feisty, representing many different points of view. The articles were pretty well written. Each publication had a single “party line”, but since that was well known, you could distinguish fact from fiction. That was particularly true in the Hebrew language press; the main English language newspaper was *The Jerusalem Post*. It was unlikely that any Israeli newspaper would express a real radical point of view on Israel-Arab relations.

There were two people on the Israeli political scene who were different from all the others. One was Aie Nathan, who was regarded as a nut-case. He was the fellow who flew his private plane to Egypt to try to arrange a meeting between Nasser and Rabin, who at the time, was the chief of staff. The other was Shulamit Aloni, who was newspaper editor and a parliamentarian. She was viewed as a maverick.

My last assignment in Tel Aviv was to the Consular Section. I thought that I had made the

appropriate arrangements which would have left me in the Political Section. I had convinced the Political Counselor -- Heywood Stackhouse -- to assign a small portfolio to me for my remaining four months in Tel Aviv. But one day, I was asked to see the DCM; he asked me what I wanted to do in the next four months and I told him that I would like to stay in the Political Section. He smiled and said that he had other plans. He thought that I should have some experience in the Consular Section. He was kind enough to ask whether I preferred visa work or American citizen services. I told him that I thought I might have a slight preference for the latter. He said that I had given him the right answer and then he assigned me to American citizens service section.

My assignment made it possible to get Kim Pendelton to take another assignment as part of his training program -- he had not been part of the rotational program. I enjoyed those four months in the Consular section. I viewed the time spent there as being quite worthwhile. First of all, this was the first section I had worked in Tel Aviv which gave me a consistent job that was mine -- and no one else's. American citizens services were my portfolio. The job had been there for ever and I was the next occupant -- no make work. I had to supervise some people; I had a workload that had to be completed. Secondly, I found that consular work can be rewarding because at the end of the day, an officer can tangibly measure his or hers accomplishments -- you have issued a passport, you have issued a visa, you have refused a visa, you have found a lawyer for an American in jail, you have counted the cash and on the other hand, you know what you have not done. The experience in a consular section, which is largely operational, is good experience; it requires the officer to make decisions which he or she then have to convey to people who might not be too happy to hear it.

I also learned something about supervision. That was training in a perverse kind of way. I was working for a boss -- the head of the American citizens service section -- who I found immensely personally very likeable, but who would occasionally lose his cool. I might note that the Consul General, Cliff English, did not like women officers even though (or because) he had two women officers on his permanent staff. He was always snippy about his female officers; his predilections were well known in the Embassy, and many advised me not to go to the Consular Section. So he was not pleased by my assignment, but my immediate boss protected me from the CG; I kept out of his way. But he was the exception in the Embassy. Otherwise, I was never discriminated against because of my gender.

Embassies in many places become protective of the country in which they serve. That is a little different from "localitis" which is usually policy oriented. I am referring here to the tendency to mirror some of the social habits and prejudices of the host country. It has been said, that people assigned to Bonn, find themselves in an Embassy that is intensely rank conscious reflecting the mores of German society. On the other hand, Israeli society is very casual; people drop by without formal invitations. It has a long tradition of women in many different occupations, including leadership positions. I found the same attitude prevalent among my colleagues, unlike that found by my embassies' colleagues who served in the Arab world -- especially when women officers were still few and far between. In those embassies, I was told that the American male officers were made very nervous by this new trend of women officers.

I did much traveling, both within Israel and in neighboring countries. Before the Six Day War, everyone was interested in visiting the old city of Jerusalem which was governed by Jordan.

Such a visit inevitably led to travels through the West Bank and often into Jordan as well. I toured Jerusalem on several occasions, usually by myself. To cross into the Jordanian-held side of Jerusalem in those days, you needed a piece of paper saying that you were Christian. The local clergy was pretty loose about this certification. In my case, there was no need to fudge because I am a Christian, but it was not as simple in other cases. The process was to get the certification from some clergyman, who might or might not care about the exact truth. Then you submitted the certification to the Consul General in Jerusalem, about two weeks before the start of the intended trip. Both the Israeli and Jordanian authorities had to approve; then you were issued a permit for what was called a “double crossing” which allowed you to cross the Mandelbaum Gate and return through it. I managed to see the old city twice before the War broke out -- once with other people and once by myself.

The trip through the Mandelbaum Gate was something surrealistic. The check point was staffed by many Israeli policemen who recorded the traveler’s information, and the same happened when you got to the other side with the Jordanian police. If you were assigned to the CG and had Jerusalem plates on your car, you could drive through the Gate; otherwise you had to walk a long stretch of a road that was walled off on both sides. When you reached the Jordanian side, you were in another world. I remember that this was one part of the world where I felt distinctly foreign. The atmosphere was very different from the one that existed in Israel. There, having acquired some language competence, I was able to communicate in Hebrew with the Israelis, even if perhaps at a fundamental level at the beginning. But I didn’t speak any Arabic; so almost all I heard in Jordan was a foreign language that I didn’t understand at all. Even written numbers were different.

As I said, I visited the West Bank, but never went into what is now Jordan. Once, while on leave, I visited Cyprus, Greece and Lebanon.

As I said, I had never been to Israel before I was assigned there. The first thing I noticed was its intensity. People immediately want to know how you feel about Israel -- they are kind of “in your face” when they ask that question. If you seemed unsympathetic or even ambivalent, the Israelis would try to convince the visitor to become more pro-Israel. I didn’t realize the depth of that feeling until I went to Greece on leave -- after about eighteen months in Israel. I was never approached by a Greek to inquire -- much less insist -- about I felt about Greece. The difference was most striking.

I met a lot of Israelis. It was very easy to do so. They accepted me immediately without reservations. My closest friends were Sephardic Jews with ties to Asmara, Yemen and Israel. Two people in that family worked in the Embassy. One had a daughter of grade school age that bound us together because my younger brother was about her age. In the other case, it was woman about my age with whom I still correspond. In that family, there was also a brother who at time was managing a five-star hotel in Tanzania. He would return to Israel periodically for R&R. He was a kind of “high roller” -- a great guy, very engaging and charming. I also became socially acquainted with an official of the Ministry of Commerce. He had been designated as the liaison officer from a trade show in which we participated when I was in the Economic Section. He had originally emigrated from Rumania. There were others as well.

The social life was quite active. The Embassy's leadership made sure that we were invited to some functions. Most of the Embassy functions did try to have an equal number of women and men, which I think was unnecessary in Israel. By the time I got to Pakistan in 1974, that pattern had long been given up, at least by Americans -- perhaps as the result of the many "no shows" which one experienced there at parties; many of those "no shows" were women. So in Pakistan, the balance between men and women was not an issue. Of course, the U.S. practice in Israel was likely to be an advantage for me, because a single woman was more likely to be needed "to balance the table." Israel was an easy place for the social life because the prevailing mode of entertainment, especially among the younger crowd, was coffee and dessert. That enabled us to invite people to our residences without having to cook a whole meal, and the Israelis would do the same thing. It was all very casual; seating arrangements were never considered. So all of the challenges that bedevil younger officers in the more protocol-minded countries were irrelevant in Israel.

I became quite close to my Hebrew teacher and her family. She was employed by the Embassy. I had been doing some work with the FSI tapes before leaving the U.S. -- to fill in for two weeks when they didn't know what to do with me. So they sent me to the language lab where I started to learn Hebrew. I was handed a tape and told to go to work. Then I signed up for a local class for new immigrants in Tel Aviv -- although I wasn't the first diplomat to do so -- because the Embassy's program was not yet ready to start a new class. I spent some time in that class. By the time the Embassy started a new course, I was well beyond Hebrew for beginners. I was able to talk the Embassy into letting me have a paper class -- i.e. the press attaché and I were allegedly in that class, although I don't think that he and I were ever in the same room at the same time. By the end of my two years, my rating in Hebrew was 4/4.

The country didn't seem particularly impoverished. People may have been less prosperous than they were in the U.S. There were relatively few washing machines; there were no dishwasher. Living quarters tended to be a lot smaller than they were in the U.S. Most people lived in the cities, usually in apartments as I did. I had a two bedroom apartment leased by the Embassy.

The Ashkenazi-Sephardic tension were already manifest in the mid-1960s. You were always aware that the population was split, although at the time the Ashkenazi were the majority-by small percentage with the Sephardics catching up quickly since their growth rate was much higher. The issue would be discussed -- with some embarrassment and usually only in private. In the Embassy, we had employees from both groups. I remember my Hebrew teacher telling me that the way people looked down on the Sephardics was a disgrace. She was a Sabra as was her husband -- that is people born in Israel. They had an easier time relating to both groups. But there were many fissions in Israel's society based on national origins -- very stereotyped. Comedians would mimic the Germans as "yekim" -- very picky and very literal minded. They would also make fun of the Yemenis by exaggerating their Hebrew accents. The Sabras were supposed to be brash, the Yemenis a little stupid, etc. Almost all nationalities were put down. The press didn't pursue that line; I guess it had decided that it was in bad taste.

At this time, there was a political party called MAPAI -- an acronym. This later became the nucleus for the Labor Party. This party had dominated every government that Israel ever had. The formation of the Labor Party, which required the merging of the MAPAI with some smaller

groups, took place while I was in Israel. I think the consensus was that this new Party would run the government as far as the eye could see, although it might not necessarily have absolute majority in the Knesset. It was also the general view that the Labor Party would need the help of some religious parties -- especially with the National Religious Party -- the largest religious party, and the most center of all religious parties. Labor would play the broker role. The extra votes that Labor needed to get its programs enacted came from the National Religious Party. This situation resulted in the passage of a lot of religious legislation, which the Labor Party and the MAPAI before it, would probably have preferred not to be enacted. But that was the price of coalition and support. So I had an interesting lesson in coalition politics.

The National Unity government was in fact in power during most of my tour. It was an interesting experiment in government. It was not an entirely comfortable coalition; there were a lot of big egos, all of whom took certain positions which had to be accommodated in the passage of the legislation. For example, the party to which Dayan belonged -- which eventually merged with Labor although it had a different approach to some of the issues -- was from the beginning strongly opposed to the return of any of the conquered territories. Prime Minister Eshkol and then Golda Meir, who became PM two days after I left, succeeded in keeping the coalition together and in drafting statements that were mostly consistent with UN resolutions and were close to our positions. The coalition fell apart in 1970 when the government's position on withdrawal was too clear for the tastes of Begin, Dayan, Ben-Gurion etc. They walked out of the coalition. There were obviously some hard feelings between Eshkol and Meir and Dayan. The latter was a very creative politician, although he certainly was a hard liner. The general view was that of all of the Cabinet members, Dayan and Alon -- the Labor Minister -- who had personal experience with Arabs, saw them as people rather than abstractions or stereotypes. Dayan had the reputation of having relatively good relationships with those Arabs with whom he met. He also had a reputation of being a wild man when it came to military operations.

There were ferocious debates on some political issues -- which party was better, what social policies should be enacted, what is the most effective method of encouraging immigration. Surprisingly there was very little debate on what I considered the most important issues. No one questioned the government's need to use any means it chose to defend Israel's security. No one really questioned, at least not from the left, the government's characterization of its security requirements. There were occasional challenges from the right. So the debates within Israel and within the Knesset left out entirely a discussion of one of the most fundamental policies of all governments. That has changed; in the days preceding the agreement with Egypt of 1979 and then after that agreement was reached, there appeared to be a mood change as it appeared possible to have a peace agreement in exchange for some accommodation. But during my tour, these issues were not debated; there was a consensus, even though the discussion of the issues would mostly be framed as arguments because the Israelis enjoy lively debates. But the consensus on national security was broad and deep -- and very emotional.

As I mentioned I traveled as often as I could, trying to cover Israel as much as possible. I visited some Kibbutzim. At the time the Kibbutz movement was probably much stronger than it is today. But each Kibbutz was beginning to develop its own approach. For example, there were some which gave more time for the children to be with their parents and less time in the children's dorms. Some had communal eating facilities; others did not. I thought that the Kibbutz

movement was an interesting experiment. I was fascinated by the social impact on children brought up in a Kibbutz -- Bettelheim was just starting to write about this subject. Some of my Israeli friends had some interesting reactions to the movement.

As I recall, about 7% of the population lived on Kibbutzim and 25% of the military officer corps came from there. One plausible theory for this imbalance was that the young men were so accustomed to collective living that the military did not require them to change their life styles as much as city folks had to. They were also imbued with the national ethic, as were most Israelis. The Kibbutzim people were used to less privacy than the city dwellers. This was a period before the shelling from Lebanon fell on some Kibbutzim. Syria however did send some missiles occasionally, especially on those settlements in the shadow of the Golan Heights -- which after the 1967 war were occupied by Israel. I did visit Kibbutz Dan, which was right at the corner of the Syrian-Lebanese-Israeli border. This was a settlement that took fire in recent years, but in my time it had been a safe place. After the War, I drove through a number of Kibbutzim on the Golan Heights.

Let me say a few words about 1967 War. When I went to Israel, all I had was the general knowledge that the Arabs and Israel were at odds and that the state of Israel had never been recognized by its neighbors. I had taken FSI's two week area course, which was a pretty good rudimentary introduction to the Arab-Israeli issues. That was supplemented by some reading, but in general, my knowledge of Israel and its neighbors was fairly basic. I had no thought of a war breaking out; neither did anyone else to whom I spoke.

Before any serious hostilities broke out, I remember talking to the Political Counselor at a social occasion. I asked him whether he thought that Israel had any territorial ambitions on any surrounding areas -- like the West Bank and the old city of Jerusalem. He said that he didn't think so; he felt that if the Israelis ever occupied those areas it would be by force of circumstances. I remember that analysis well, because it was so correct.

The first sign of the trouble that culminated in the 1967 war was an aerial dog-fight between Syrian and Israeli planes which occurred in early April, 1967. The Israelis shot down a number of Syrian MiGs. That was a serious incident in part because it was such a departure from the normal pattern of infrequent border skirmishes. The dog-fight increased tensions thereby leading to a flurry of diplomatic activities designed to block an escalation. I was generally familiar with those diplomatic efforts by reading the general file maintained in the Embassy's communication center that was available to all American officers; in fact, we were encouraged to read it. Since I was not terribly busy, I read it assiduously. Of course, the file did not include any sensitive traffic, but since I had become friends with a few members of the Political Section; they filled me on details that were not in the reading file. So I had a pretty good sense of what was going on and what the Ambassador and the Political Section were doing in that crisis atmosphere.

The Ambassador did hold a weekly staff meeting which was attended by all American officers. It was primarily an opportunity for the section chiefs to brief the Ambassador; he rarely told us what he was up to. So the utility of the weekly meeting was limited, even though all attendees could talk if they wished -- very few ever did. It was a very brief show-and-tell.

There followed a number of further incidents. I still remember a couple of fiery speeches by President Nasser of Egypt. He said that he was asking the UN observers, who had been monitoring the Israel-Egypt borders and in Gaza, to leave. He also said that he was closing the Straits of Tiran -- the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba and therefore the Israeli port of Elat. The Israelis had for many years stated that the closing of the Strait would be a *causus belli*. So, more and more analysts came to the conclusion that war was very likely.

The UN observers did depart. The Straits were closed. The Israelis started a general mobilization. That became obvious to us because many of our Israeli employees were called up for army service. In early June, 1967, a government of national unity was formed with Moshe Dayan -- the leader of the opposition -- joining the government. This new government was a clear signal that war was possible -- if not imminent. I remember going to visit some Israeli friends and helping them put masking tape on their windows, to prevent them from shattering in case of air raids.

I believe that dependents were beginning to be evacuated at about this time. It was first a voluntary evacuation even though the dogma in those days was that there was no such thing as a "voluntary" evacuation. But throughout the Middle East, there were "voluntary" evacuations. The Department authorized any family that wished to leave for a safe area. A lot of families took advantage of the authorization; I spent a lot of time at the airport putting the families on planes. In fact, I was sometimes at the TWA counter doing flight documentation -- it was a much more casual era of airport security.

The national unity government was formed on June 2 -- three days before the war broke out. The second of June was a Friday. Over that week-end we were blessed by a visit by James Tate, Mayor of Philadelphia. We knew he was coming, but he apparently had not been reading the tea leaves very well. In any case, I was assigned to help the control officer -- Mark Lissfelt -- in the care and feeding of the Mayor. Before landing in Israel, Tate had requested that photographs be taken of him and the Prime Minister and of him and the Mayor of Tel Aviv. Of course, the PM was in cabinet meetings for much of the day and night; he had much more important matters to worry about than the visit of an American Mayor. The Mayor of Tel Aviv was in the hospital at the time with a very serious heart condition -- he was dying. So Tate didn't get his photo opportunities; on Monday, he came to the Embassy to seek assistance for some more impossible requests. He then heard the air raid sirens that signaled the start of the Six Day War. I had also heard the sirens earlier. I knew that the Israelis had been testing the siren system for sometime; I thought that this was just more testing. I went out to my balcony, after finishing my breakfast. Although the traffic on the street was quite light, I didn't see any other signs of an impending air raid. I noticed that a military jeep, driven by a person in uniform, stopped across the street from my apartment. Out of it jumped two kids who then quickly headed for their school. I interpreted that as a positive sign. So I drove to the Embassy just in time to hear the sirens starting again. Mayor Tate was wondering around the Embassy, obviously displeased and unhappy with our inability to get him his photo ops. I was told that it was my job to get him down to the Embassy basement because that was what we were supposed to do when the sirens went off. Tate was most unhappy about that development.

Later, Tate asked his control officer to see whether the U.S. Air Force might fly a plane to Israel

to rescue him. Of course, the Air Force had better things to do. Tate then retreated to his hotel; apparently, he found that basement more inviting than ours. In a crisis of this sort, the Economic Section does not have a lot to do. So the Economic Counselor -- a big, dignified officer -- had been assigned as the super control officer to take care of Tate. He spent a lot of time trying to cool him off.

When actual shooting began, I was probably running on adrenaline; I was excited and curious -- much more than scared. As it happened, we had one more evacuation scheduled for the afternoon. There weren't many dependants left, but the airlines had stopped their flights to Lod International airport. (None of the staff was ever given an opportunity to leave; that would have been contrary to tradition.) An American Air Force plane was at an airport facility undergoing maintenance. The U.S. Air Force was eager to get the plane out of the war zone. So it made seats available to civilians if they could get to the airport by six p.m. There were twelve dependents left. As it happened, the ones that wanted to go were enough to fill the seats allotted to us by the Air Force., leaving one empty seat. In the meantime, we had received a cable from our UN Mission informing us that Arthur Goldberg's niece -- he was then our Ambassador to the UN -- was in Israel. He asked us to check to see how she was doing. We managed to find her and put her in the last seat available. The plane left without any problems that night.

Of course evacuations have changed considerably in the last fifteen years. At that time, we made no effort to include private American citizens. The evacuation was strictly for U.S. government employees and their dependents. In fact, the evacuation plan, which I helped revise just before war broke out, stipulated that official Americans would come first followed by AID contractors and then everyone else. Today, we would not be allowed to operate in that manner -- all American citizens must be treated the same. We did issue a record number of passports to Americans living in Israel -- people who had let their passports expire. We did take the names of people who wanted to leave on the next available flights so that we could notify them when commercial flights began again. Those flights did in fact start two or three days later, despite the war. But by this time, a large number of the Americans had changed their minds; it looked like that Israel would win the war handily and therefore they were no longer interested in leaving.

I was certainly caught up in the excitement that some wars generate. I was frightened only once and that was when I was at the airport watching the Air Force plane taking off. I didn't think that being at a military airport was exactly the safest place to be.

We returned to the Embassy, not knowing that the Egyptian Air Force had been essentially eliminated from combat. I spent the night in the Embassy, sleeping on a mattress along with many other staff members. This was in part for security reasons and in part because of the workload. Most of us had not blacked out the lights on our cars and therefore could not go home anyway. The distances were too great for walking. So, many of us slept on mattresses on the floor of the Embassy.

The Israelis were filled with great anxiety about the War. I was first struck by the starkness of the response. For example, when one walked the streets of Tel Aviv, there were no young men; only children and older people. There was practically no vehicular traffic because cars had been requisitioned. Eventually, a few did reappear, mud caked because they had been used in the

desert and therefore had been camouflaged. I discussed the War with many of my Israeli friends. As I mentioned earlier the family I knew best was Sephardic. They were very anxious and bitter about the Arabs, who they thought didn't care how many people they would kill. For that family, Israel was the only place to be. So I think that the sense of being beleaguered was the most memorable one.

At the end of the War, there was an incredible euphoria. People drove through the street with tops down, honking, waiving, singing, shouting. I remember well the annual Festival of Song which was held in Tel Aviv. That year, one of the songs that was entered was called "Jerusalem the Golden." which had just been written. It was performed by Shuli Nathan, a singer with a gorgeous voice. It didn't win the competition, but came in a close second. But it was the song that everyone remembered from the festival.

After the Israelis had taken the old city of Jerusalem, which happened on Tuesday or Wednesday (June 6 or 7), the song writer wrote an additional stanza about the Israelis' return. It became even more popular. Young men, who were being discharged from the army were singing it -- actually shouting it. The song had captured the imagination and inner-most feelings of the Israeli people. The opportunity to return freely to the old city with all of its holy places resonated deeply; it was a huge emotional experience. Besides the euphoria of victory, which highlighted Israel's strength and fortitude in the face of considerably larger enemy forces, there was a sense that now Israel could show the world how humanely it would deal with this new situation. In the first few days, there was considerable skepticism that the map of the area had in fact been changed. Many thought that once a peace agreement was signed, much if not all of the conquered territory would be returned to the powers which controlled it before the War. By the end of the summer, this skepticism had disappeared as it became obvious that the new boundaries would be maintained, at least for the foreseeable future.

I had another interesting experience during the War. There were about 1300 American citizens living on the West Bank. The week after the end of hostilities, I was asked to go to Jerusalem to help the officers of the Consulate General respond to families in the U.S. who were anxious to know how their relatives were. I was supposed to man the office while the regular staff went out into the field to find these Americans. It was an exciting time because it was the beginning of Israel's occupation of Jerusalem. Our Consulate people knew a lot of Arabs who had lived in old Jerusalem; they were seriously distressed by the new turn of events. They had watched a major exodus of Arabs from old Jerusalem as the Israelis moved in; most of them moved to the east bank of the Jordan River.

The activities of the CG staff was very much in the old Foreign Service tradition. They looked up and down the West Bank, looking for any piece of information which would allow them to find these American citizens. The staff did know a lot of them; in other cases, they knew in what town they had been living. So they went from town to town looking for these Americans. We worked long hours during and after the War.

In Jerusalem, we were living dormitory style. The staff was ordered to leave their housing and congregate in the American School for Oriental Research, which was close to the office. This was done partly for security reasons and partly to minimize the problems of travel in the city --

there were check points and the documentation required to move around by car changed daily. So we stayed in the neighborhood. A Consulate General officer's wife organized the kitchen that fed us most meals. In fact, this practical need created an atmosphere of camaraderie. We sometimes made our facilities available to American journalists who were coming through.

As I am sure has been documented in other oral histories, the relationships between the Embassy and the Jerusalem Consulate General were tender -- as they always had been and remained so for many years. The CG in Jerusalem was an independent post; it did not and does not report to our Ambassador in Tel Aviv. Although the tensions were noticeable, it did not stop the CG from asking for help from the Embassy.

I stayed in Jerusalem for two weeks. I had acquired some knowledge of consular work from my TDY in Jerusalem. It was rather basic; I didn't issue any passports or visas. I did a lot of registrations. Much of my time in the CG was devoted to answering the phones and taking messages.

The War had some positive impact on my personal relationships, particularly with those people whose house I visited to help put tapes on the windows. That was a kind of bonding experience. As for the reaction to the U.S. in the streets, that was harder to judge. In the middle of the War, the Israelis fired on and sank one of our Liberty ships. After the War, the French, who had been Israel's most reliable arms supplier, turned against it. So we became the putative major supplier, which became a subject for extensive discussion for the U.S.-Israel relationship.

On the way back to Tel Aviv , I was asked to give a ride in my car to a young -- eighteen old— Arab-American woman with two small children. Her husband was in the U.S.; he sent tickets for the family and I put them on the plane. She was terrified. She had a special pass which got her from the former Arab lands to the Tel Aviv airport. This was the first time she had been in Israel and she didn't know what to make of that.

I might just comment briefly on the tensions existing in Israeli society. The split between various religious communities was already apparent in the mid-1960s. There were some members of the religious right that would not accept the State of Israel. There was an ultra-orthodox neighborhood -- Mea Shearim -- right next to the Mandelbaum Gate. That became a problem for those who wanted to cross the Gate on Saturdays. These religious ultra-conservatives would stone cars driving through their neighborhood on the Sabbath, forcing people to take circuitous routes. This brought home to me the difficulties of maintaining a close-knit society, that included both ultra-orthodox and very liberal people. I also remember that there was a rabbi in Brooklyn who had gotten Congressional approval mandating certain grants to some of Israel's ultra orthodox schools in Jerusalem. At one point during my tour, I was asked to escort a Member of Congress, Silvio Conte (Democrat, Massachusetts), to Jerusalem; the Brooklyn rabbi was there as well. We visited the school supported by the American tax-payers. Before leaving for Jerusalem, the Ambassador called me into his office to tell me that he didn't want the Congressman or the rabbi to make any new commitments because the Israeli government objected strenuously to these schools. I was supposed to make sure that the delegation did not say more than normal pleasantries. I was half successful; I kept the Congressman away from some of the schools.

We had lots of CODELs. I was the control officer for one and a half visits. My first “client” was Joshua Eilberg from Philadelphia along with his wife. I arranged a few meetings for them and took them sightseeing to some of the standard tourist spots. That visit went quite smoothly. I learned from Eilberg that Mayor Tate was airing his experiences in Israel and was becoming a folk hero. That took me by surprise because I didn’t remember much heroism in Mayor Tate.

I also met Senator Javits (Republican, New York) who was my senator. But someone with the prestige that Javits had was essentially escorted by the Ambassador.

CODELs are and have been in recent years a major work-load for our Embassy in Israel. This was not the case when I was there. We had visits, but not as frequently and as large as today. The big challenge for the Embassy was trying to keep track of the Members of Congress who had come to Israel at the invitation of the Government of Israel. Sometimes, these people would not even inform the Embassy that they were coming. In general, my experiences with CODELs in Israel were positive. I also felt that it was an opportunity to observe American politics as it was played on foreign soil.

I regret that I didn’t get to know any Israeli Arabs terribly well. I had one young woman who worked for me in the Consular Section. She spoke about the War in very guarded terms -- she was pretty careful.

After two years, I was fascinated by Israel. I had rather conflicting feelings. I had a lot of affection for many of the Israelis that I met as well as the country. However, I also believed that the post-War policies were leading Israel down a path which would prevent any peace from coming to fruition. That was a tragic policy choice. There was no doubt in my mind that Israel would survive as an independent nation, but at some costs. I think that view was shared by others in the Embassy.

Before ending the discussion of this tour, I should mention one fascinating experience. There was in Tel Aviv a social/political club which was one of the left-of-center parties. I had been at the club on a couple of occasions as part of my USIS portfolio -- at the suggestion of one of the Israeli employees who suggested that this was an interesting and different group. After one of these meetings, I was asked to come and present the American view on some aspect of U.S. foreign policy. In addition, they said they would appreciate it if I could do in Hebrew. I swallowed hard and agreed. I got through it all right; I kept it relatively short. I remember agonizing whether I should write in proper Hebrew script or in Latin letters -- it would have been quite slow had I written it in an unfamiliar alphabet, so I used the Latinized version. But I got through that presentation and even enjoyed it.

The following week, this club called and told me that Abba Eban was coming to speak and invited me to join them on that occasion. Eban was the Foreign Minister at the time; of course I would go -- third secretaries don’t spend a lot of time with Foreign Ministers. He gave a talk as he usually did, in grammatically and literally elegant Hebrew with a British/South African accent which was very noticeable. Eban went through what people called his “Oxford Hebrew” routine and then asked for questions. Suddenly, he emerged as an entirely different person then --

relaxed, witty and charming. There was a degree of informality in his answers that was completely at odds with his reputation. By the end of the evening, he had a skeptical audience eating out of his hands. It was an interesting view of one of Israel's leading personalities as well as a lesson in Israeli politics. I met Eban after the end of the evening. We were introduced and someone mentioned that I had given a speech in Hebrew to the club a few days earlier. He beamed. Some one in the audience commented that Eban had left the meeting as a "human being." -- a person who had earned the respect of his audience.

In retrospect, I think that the idea of rotational assignments for junior officers is a good one. I learned a lot -- especially in view of the time and place. I was in Israel at a time when a lot of things were changing. I had a front row seat on a lot of action. But the program was not particularly well run. I did learn something about how a diplomat tries to interpret events on the ground to his or her own government.

I was very positive about the Foreign Service after my two years in Israel. I had had a fascinating tour. It was clear that I was interested in pursuing the Foreign Service as a career. I found the large majority of my colleagues to be stimulating and personable. I had received one promotion while in Tel Aviv and one as I arrived in Washington from my Israeli tour.

MARGARET L. PLUNKETT
Labor Attaché
Tel Aviv (1967-1972)

Margaret L. Plunkett was born on April 15, 1906. She received a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a doctorate from Cornell University. Ms. Plunkett worked in the New York State Department of Labor; was a researcher at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology; was on the Wage Stabilization Board; War Production Board; BLS in the Labor Department and the Women's Bureau. She served in Tel Aviv, Israel as the Labor Adviser to the Technical Aid Mission and later in The Hague, Netherlands as the Labor Attaché. She was interviewed by Thomas D. Bowie on July 28, 1995.

PLUNKETT: Now we come to the time when I was sent back to Israel as Labor Attaché. Although my first appointment as Labor Attaché was to Holland, I want to combine the Israel experiences, the two tours there, because they are so closely related, and then later I will come back to Holland, which is a very different type of experience from the point of view of the labor situation.

In 1967, I was transferred directly from Holland, where I had been Labor Attaché for five years, back to Israel. I resumed at once my connections with the people whom I had known before, including Golda Meir, who was then the Foreign Secretary. I had kept in touch with her over the years I was away from Israel. When she used to come to the United Nations for Israeli business, she always let me know and I went up to New York to see her. She was such a friendly, nice person to me. She wasn't always so nice. People complained about how she bit them on the nose

when they didn't go along with her, but she never bit me. The one negative thing about Golda was that she didn't like cats.

Anyway, there were people in the Histadrut in 1967 who were still there since my earlier experience, and they had always been extremely friendly because many of the projects that I had suggested during my Mission days were things in which they were very much interested. In any case the job as Labor Attaché in Israel was very different from my job as adviser to the Mission in which there had been specific projects to work on. The Embassy job was more "office" work. You established relations and picked up what people thought about U.S. policy or Israeli policy. I became a member of the political staff in the Embassy; I was certainly not an integral part of it but I was attached to it.

I always thought, both in Israel and in Holland, that the Labor Attaché's job was the best in the Embassy. People with other specialties, like the Science Attaché, concentrated on the sciences, and the agriculture specialist concentrated on agricultural matters. Their contacts were mostly with officials. Mine were not. Oh, I had plenty of contacts with the Labor Ministry and the Social Affairs Ministry, but the great merit of the Labor Attaché's job was that you could reach out all over the country to the trade union or unions, as the case might be, or the Labor Ministry, the Social Affairs Ministry, the Education Ministry, if you chose as a Labor Attaché to do this.

I don't know whether other Labor Attachés did, but I did, and it expanded my contacts with the Israeli people. I also resumed my contacts with the Arabs whom I had known in my earlier incarnation. I had gotten to know, for example, in earlier times, the mayor of Nazareth, who was then of the Greek Orthodox religion. He was one of three brothers who were very well known in Nazareth and throughout Israel. Right after the 1948 war one of them became the official regional judge; another became the regional military supervisor for the Israeli government; and the third was the one I knew best. He was the youngest son, who had gotten a job in the newly established employment service in Nazareth. They had never had an employment service to help the Arabs before the [establishment of the] State and that was one of the things that the Labor Ministry did right away: It established employment service offices for Arabs throughout Israel.

I have always felt that Israel has never gotten the credit it deserves for all the extension of social services-Histadrut membership, employment service, medical services, etc.-to all those Arab communities. Israel never did a very good advertising job on that. I used to tell them that.

Anyway, where was I? I was back at the Embassy and how different it was from [my earlier work at] the Mission.

Q: How did your colleagues in the political section receive you?

PLUNKETT: Very well. I am surprised that there was so much emphasis in other [oral history] reports on how they were received as labor attachés. Of course, I expected that a woman would be downgraded and not paid much attention to. But it never happened, either at the Mission, or in Holland, or in the Embassy in Israel. Now, I don't know why that was the case, but I simply assumed that I was the same as everybody else on the staff, and nobody challenged me at all. Well, I wasn't shy about offering my views. I think that was an important part. My personality

was such that I didn't hang back.

Anyway, we had a marvelous Ambassador in Israel at the time, Walworth Barbour. He was there for 12 years as Ambassador, and apparently he liked me right off. So he never set a tone of "this is just another secretary." I was always at the staff meetings. There was never any question about that. When I was retiring-I was beyond retirement age at the time-we had a very disagreeable Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). The Ambassador was out of the country for a while when the processing of my retirement came up. I wrote a letter to the Ambassador saying that I would like an extension of six months. It would affect my pension. I had that all worked out. So since the Ambassador was away, my letter went to the DCM. And he said, "I'm not going to approve this. I'm going to have to retire much younger than what you're getting away with. I'm not going to approve it." I said "All right, give it back to me, and I'll wait until the Ambassador gets back, and I will submit it directly to him." So I did.

Q: It was a rather twisted way for him to judge the situation on the basis of his personal circumstances.

PLUNKETT: Yes, he was not a nice man. So anyway I sent the letter in to Ambassador Barbour and he took it and he rewrote parts of it. He said it was very important that I remain on the staff for another six months, that I was in the middle of certain things that he wanted to see finished. After that the poor old DCM treated me with kid gloves. He never once again said anything that was unfriendly. So, I thought that was good. After I retired and was living in Washington, he came back to the State Department in some capacity. Every year he used to have a reunion of people who had been on the staff in Israel and he always invited me. I thought that was very amusing.

Well, I did say that I kept in touch with the Arab community. This was very helpful because I also got to know some young men in the old city. I had done that when I was first there, and the Ambassador's secretary, who was a spunky little girl, had been in the habit of going over to the old city frequently, so she introduced me to the old city actually and to these young men she had come to know. She said, "They always used to say to me, 'We're going to push those Israelis into the sea,' and she would say to them, 'Yes, and in the meantime what are you going to do?' " They never succeeded in answering that.

In any case, it's a good time now to talk about the Histadrut. The Histadrut is, in the correct sense of the word, a unique institution in the world of labor unions. It began in 1920 when there was no state [of Israel], of course, and in a sense the Histadrut was a state. It not only was a trade union but the overall trade union. There were subdivisions as [there are] here, such as the plumbers as well as agricultural workers and the many other trades who were unionized there as well. Support of the unions came mostly from the agricultural settlements; they produced all the products at that time. So Histadrut developed the state. It really was a state. It developed the entire national health service, which was one of the outstanding aspects of Israel when it became a state. Israelis didn't have to worry, as we do, about how to set up a health service. It was there and covered every member of the Histadrut. Most of the people at that time were members, because of all the different advantages it offered. If they were a member of the trade union, they were entitled to a complete health service. Of course people complained about the service, just as

we all do about our medical service, but it was a major part of the state's operations and the Histadrut was politically a very powerful organization.

Because, you see, after the 1948 war, the whole government had to be set up. Ben Gurion became the first Prime Minister and of course he had been very active in the building of the state. The Histadrut was such an important part of the society that it was of interest to us as well as just for its own functioning. It was a decisive organization in making state decisions and without the support of the Histadrut organization, the state would never have been able to develop.

So the first thing I had to do when I went to Israel the first time was to get in touch with the Histadrut personnel, the top dogs. The General Secretary of the Histadrut at that time was quite along in years at the time and he's long since dead. I found him a little stand-offish. His English was very inadequate and that may have been part of it. He married later a much younger woman who is now the Minister of Labor. I got to know her very well during my second incarnation there.

I was in very close touch with the Histadrut all through my five years as Labor Attaché. They were always forthcoming. They always discussed their internal problems, about which I could do nothing, but at least they kept me informed about what was going on.

Anyway, I'm anxious to convey an idea of the power of the trade union. It was an umbrella union. They had subdivisions by trade and so on, but I'm sure that the government never made a major move without consulting with the Histadrut. Unfortunately, to my way of thinking, the Histadrut has lost much of its power in the last ten years, because, as the state developed, it developed, for example, its own employment service. That was a function which the Histadrut had fulfilled before. It still has the health service, but there has been movement to "declassify" it, so to speak, and make it a national service rather than a trade union service.

The personalities involved in the Histadrut now have perhaps not been as good or as powerful as the earlier ones, and politics began to become an important part. Israel is very political. I've never seen or heard of a country that was so political. At one point there were 17 parties, but the Histadrut also had its own divisions; the Labor Party was the major party in Israel in my day. It was sort of a centrist party. Then it had a left wing. They didn't disagree; basically they all sort of worked together but they argued a good deal. Trust an Israeli to argue. As the saying goes, you put two Israelis together, and you have three arguments. But that to me was a pleasure, because I like to argue myself.

In any case the Histadrut is really *unique* in the world and I use that word advisedly. It commanded so much influence that the state really couldn't operate without it. Now in recent years this influence has been declining. Outside influences have been coming in; American, particularly. Well, of course, our government has given Israel billions over the years, and so we had influence there on what kind of economy they would be developing. I'm sorry myself that this is happening, but that is partly due to my own pro-labor prejudices.

Q: How much of this parallels the decline of unionism in other countries?

PLUNKETT: None. There is no parallel. Our AFL-CIO is not a parallel at all; of course, it does not have authority over its constituent unions. The Histadrut had authority over all of its constituent unions.

Q: Has its membership remained stable, or has it lost membership?

PLUNKETT: It has lost some. I don't know whether it's an actual loss or new people not joining it as they once did. There is a great movement for the State to take over the national health services. Well, you know how there are changes. We have them here of the same kind. Our AFL-CIO isn't nearly as powerful politically as it once was. And here I want to make a very strong point about the influence of the Histadrut on national development. I think that is the basic point and of course it was all set up in 1920, but it operated from 1920 to 1948 as kind of a state. It did everything. And it had even established a kind of pension system.

Oh that reminds me. After I retired, I wrote a pamphlet on the Histadrut. I was an ex- Cornellian and the people in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University asked me if I would prepare a document that would give them some information about the Histadrut. I did that. It was okayed by the State Department. The School of Industrial and Labor Relations printed it in its monthly bulletin, and this is one of my prides and joys: They duplicated it in 5000 copies to use in the Labor School. Of course, it is very much out of date now. What the Histadrut was when I wrote this is no longer what it is. So it is now an historical document! But that was one important thing, I thought, that came out of my whole service in Israel.

Q: Didn't you write the labor profile on Holland for the Labor Department?

PLUNKETT: Yes, oh yes, after I retired, I wrote the profiles on Holland, Israel, and Ireland, and I was in the middle of writing one on Belgium when the money was withdrawn. Oh, that was a dreadful thing. Actually, I had written half the project on Belgium when they called me from the office and said just drop your pen; we can't pay you for another minute. So that was all wasted, but I enjoyed my "post-graduate" service with the Labor Department.

Q: That's where we worked together.

PLUNKETT: That's right. Anyway, I want to make the point that possibly the most productive aspects of my work in Israel were the long-term contact with the Arab community and the publication of this really historical document about what the Histadrut used to be.

Q: Could you cite an example or two of your relations with the Arab community?

PLUNKETT: Well, yes. There was this young Nazareth Arab who was one of my early contacts. At that time we had what we called the Trainee Program. No Arab had ever been sent to the United States on a Trainee Program and I thought that would be a good idea. So I nominated him. He was in the Nazareth office of the employment service and it was kind of a casual, not a professional, service. I doubt whether the government paid an awful lot of attention to the offices in the Arab communities, because they were established after the state. But he was a very smart fellow, and the Mission resisted me greatly in trying to send an Arab to the states. I don't

understand why.

There was no contact whatever with the Arab community before I came there. I'm speaking now of the early years when I was there with the Mission. My nominee came here and really made quite an impression. When he got back he made a speech somewhere and said "I am eternally grateful to my Government of Israel for giving me this opportunity." I was so pleased with that, because it showed some kind of a relationship with Israel. In those days it was hoped that what is happening now or what happened during the Intifada would never happen. I think it was never thought that it would. Anyway, he was the first and, as far as I know, the only Arab who was ever sent on a training program grant. It's kind of like "one woman" but no more.

Q: How about some more examples of your relations with the Arabs.

PLUNKETT: Oh yes, I became very friendly with the Muslim Mayor of Nazareth, and particularly with his wife who was a very intelligent woman and very outgoing. She was sent as a delegate to a number of conventions of women around the world. She was not one of those homebody Arab women at all. I used to see her fairly frequently. Frank Sinatra donated the funds to construct a building in Nazareth for the Histadrut. I went there fairly frequently and talked to groups of Arabs about this and that. Most of the people there in Nazareth spoke English. And of course George Kteily, the trainee, spoke English. The Histadrut had an Arab section with an Arab at the head of it. I became very friendly with him. He lived in Haifa but came down to Tel Aviv to work. Once he invited me for a weekend to his house, and I went. He was a very nice man and quite intelligent. He was responsible for a number of my visits to Haifa and contacts with Arabs there.

I also developed good relations with the Technion, Israel's leading technical university in Haifa. It had a labor division and while I was still there in Israel, the Technion invited my cousin, Harry Van Arsdale, to a conference. He had come out of the famous Local 3 in New York of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). They named a wing of the Technion building for Harry and in Silver Spring, Maryland, where the AFL-CIO labor school, The George Meany Labor Studies Center, is now located, there is a large bust of Harry right in the entrance hall. So that little boy in my childhood got to be an international labor leader, you see.

Anyway, where was I?

Q: You were winding up your discussion of your experiences in Israel and then I think you wanted to talk about your work in Holland.

PLUNKETT: Yes. I could go on probably for hours talking about that Israel experience because it was such an important one in my whole life. I have kept in touch with a number of Israelis, although I left there 25 years ago.

MILES S. PENDLETON JR.
Consular Office, Staff Assistant

Tel Aviv (1968-1970)

Miles S. Pendleton, Jr. was born in New Jersey in 1939. He graduated from Yale University in 1961 and received his MPA from Harvard University in 1967. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1967, his postings included Burundi, Tel Aviv, Brussels and Paris. Mr. Pendleton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: *Well, are you in Israel from, what, '68 to –*

PENDLETON: Right.

Q: *'68 about?*

PENDLETON: Well, we actually arrived early in 1968. In preparation for Israel, of course, I was given the French part of the "French," which was that I was sent to FSI to study French and then assigned to Israel. So that's fairly normal in the Foreign Service, to be assigned to French instruction and then to a country where French isn't one of the most frequently used languages. Fortunately, English is. While waiting for a budgetary travel hold to be lifted, I was assigned to the Turkish Desk for ten days. My principal assignment was to hang pictures of former U.S. ambassadors to Turkey on the wall. We arrived in Israel in February of '68, so we missed the Six-Day War, and we departed before the Yom Kippur War in '73. We were there during a time (from the Israeli's point of view) of psychological and physical expansion, which was very exciting for Israelis, and in a sense, it was a very exciting and positive time to be in Israel if you were not totally preoccupied with the Arab side of the equation.

Q: *You were there, then, from '68 to what?*

PENDLETON: '70. The summer of '70.

Q: *What was your impression of Israel when you first arrived?*

PENDLETON: In a sense, you can't go to Israel without being almost immediately struck by the people, the kind of dynamism, the energy, the "Israeliness" of the people who live up to their reputation as go get 'em, stand up for themselves people. You have that. I was extremely struck by how small the country was. I think it's the size of New Jersey. From the deck outside our bedroom, we could see the hills that had been captured a few months previously from the Jordanians on the West Bank. We were living in Herzaliya Pitua, which is in the narrowest sleeve of Israel proper. You quickly realized that you were living in a land of pent-up energy and that it really was pent up, that you had only 12 miles, say, from the sea to the former border right where we lived. I took an immediate liking to the Israelis I got to know, and I think that there's something about a first post that always lives with one. Certainly my married life really started in Israel. My professional life started in Israel. Our daughter, who is now 28 and an attorney, was born in Israel. So our family life started in Israel. And I was earning \$8,200 a year, but we never lived better, in a funny way, and it was one of those times in our life that seemed to fit very well with the mood of the Israelis after the Six-Day War.

Q: Well, I'm told that there was a real sense of euphoria after the Six-Day War because they felt that, you know, they could do anything. I mean, for the first time, they really felt Israel was there to stay.

PENDLETON: Well, I sensed that, but six months had past from the war when we arrived, and yet there was this undercurrent and overcurrent which was very much one of being upbeat, being optimistic, and sometimes it's hard for Israelis to be optimistic because of (a) their Jewishness, if they're Jewish Israelis, and (b) the fact that the country has a kind of institutionalized fragility by its very geographic nature. But that was quite true.

Q: Can you describe a bit who was the Ambassador, the embassy, and what you were doing.

PENDLETON: The Ambassador, whom I never really met for a long time, was Walworth Barbour, who was an institution. He'd been there, I think, nine or ten years at that point. He remained a total of 13, 14 years. He refused other assignments. Barbour was offered Moscow at one point. I think he was afraid he couldn't pass the physical, because he was manifestly overweight. I did get to know him well in the end because I became his staff assistant, but initially I was assigned, of course, as a consular officer. And I was assigned to look after Americans in distress, welfare and whereabouts. I had a lot to learn about that. Certainly, learning about the embassy wasn't too easy from that particular perch. Almost immediately, I had a run in with Bill Dale, who was the Deputy Chief of Mission. The first weekend we were there, I was assigned to be the duty officer for the embassy, and I had never even walked around the embassy or been shown around it. And there was an event with Jordan which required a flash cable from Washington and our embassy to Amman. Suddenly, I was part of the process to get it out, but I had never in the A-100 course been shown how to write a cable or what was involved in sending one. We were never told that, and the nice person in the communications office said, "Don't worry, we'll take care of it." Well, the upshot was that the cable did not reach its destination, and that wasn't discovered until the following Monday, when I found myself sitting in the Deputy Chief of Mission's office being more or less berated. I just told him, that frankly, I was astonished that I had been assigned at the outset of my tenure to be the embassy's duty officer (which somebody mindlessly went through and made up the duty roster (and put in a position of some trust when I couldn't possibly know whether I was fulfilling it or not.

So we had a bit of a go around about that, and I went back to look after citizens in distress. I was feeling a bit like myself at that point. The first one on the first day taught me another lesson, which you would appreciate. A hotel called and said, "We have a woman here who's very ill. She's an American." I said to the head local, "host country nationals" were called in those days, "Well, let's go over to her hotel. It's just down the street, I gather." He said, "I wouldn't do that if I were you." Anyway, we went, and I went up to the room and knock on the door. The woman yells, "Come in." I go in. She gets up off of the bed and says, "I'm sick," and then proceeds to throw up all over me. So I could see that Jack, the head local, thought, "Well, this young man is going to learn fast, or not at all." And so we slunk back to where I could change my clothes. My first citizen in distress was inebriated, and life in consular office kind of went up and down hill from there.

How did we learn about the embassy as a young couple? The DCM invited my wife and me to dinner at their house. We didn't have a car at that point, so we had to walk quite a long way and were pretty tuckered out when we got there. And when we got to dinner we found his secretary there, who had just announced to him that she was not going to stay in Tel Aviv, where she'd just arrived, but was going back to the States. He said to my wife, "Well, you will come and be my secretary starting on Monday." And my wife said, "Now, wait, I was a secretary at Look Magazine, and I went to Harvard Law School to get away from being a secretary because I couldn't see where it was leading me. I want to think about this." Well, we discussed it, and I said, "Look, where I am, I'll never learn about an embassy. Why don't you say you'll take the job for six weeks. By then they've got to have somebody else from Washington, and you can brief me on how an embassy works." She did that, and it was helpful for both of us.

We had a lot of mental cases in the Welfare and Whereabouts section. Too many Americans were dispatched to the Holy Land by themselves and fell apart upon landing. One day I met Mr. Afroyim, of the Afroyim decision by the Supreme Court, that you can have dual nationality. Then I moved to the visa section, which I just hated, because no Israeli going to the States wants to say that he is going "down" from Jerusalem, "yeridah", as against going up to Jerusalem, "aliyah". And so they would do anything to convince a Foreign Service Officer that they were just going to Aunt Minnie's wedding and would be back within a week. And then, of course, you'd get the adjustment of status straightaway, and you'd know they were lying to you. I couldn't bear it, and I never could have been a career visa officer.

Q: I was a supervisory consular officer and I think one of the hardest things was for young officers in the visa process to be lied to. I mean someone would look them right in the eye and lie to them, and it's not the sort of thing that we normally run across, you know, in our education. Under the system you might run across some things but not people outright lying to you. I would think there would be a lot of problems, because of the close connections back in the United States, with refusing visas. Did you get screams and yells from Congress?

PENDLETON: All the time, and a funny thing happened. I never, as I say, really met the Ambassador. He only came to the office from 10:00 to 12:30 or so each day, which was a bit unusual. I've always described him as being like a guided missile (expensive to keep in place, but very much on target when launched). I thought he was a terrific ambassador as I got to know him better. However, one day I turned down a person to go to the States, because our chief local in the visa section, host country national, told me that the young lady had admitted that she was going to get married, which sadly you couldn't do in those days. And so I said, "Well, I believe you. If she said that, then I can't give her the visa, as much as I hate to..." It turned out she was the daughter of the president of one of the biggest Israeli-American corporations and that the father was very close to the Ambassador and the embassy leadership and everybody else, and so the word that came down was that I was to reverse myself and give the visa. And I said, "No, I won't," being petulant and not totally caught up in the system at that point, and I said, "If the Consul General or the Ambassador (if the Ambassador as an exequator that gives him the legal right to give a visa -- wants to give the visa, they may do so, but I simply can't, and I won't." And I was told that that would finish me with the Ambassador, but since I hadn't really met him it didn't matter. But he got me up to his office, and I told him I wouldn't, and I went away and thought I'd better start packing my bags. And about a week later, the Admin Counselor came

and said, "The Ambassador wants you as his staff aide." And there was a lesson in that someplace. So I moved up to his office. Incidentally, a letter came from a Congressman about the famous visa saying all the young lady wanted to do was to get married. I was vindicated. And she did get married.

Q: Before we talk about the ambassador's Office, you mentioned a large number of mental problems. I have been told that Israel gets a lot of people who want to be close to Jesus or Mohammed or Yahweh or whatever it is, and they go there, so that you end up with a lot of really unstable people.

PENDLETON: Right, absolutely correct, at least in those days, and I assume that still happens. And many were American Christians, young usually, who thought that the answer to a very difficult life here in the United States usually involving mental problems would be to go to Jerusalem, to go to the Holy Land. There would be occasions when you would find that the pilot of the plane they were flying on would radio ahead and alert Yakov Hospital for the mentally unstable and the embassy and anybody else that somebody was arriving who was going to need special attention. We were involved in a sad number of those cases. My wife and I also went to visit prisoners in prisons on a couple of occasions together and once went to a psychiatric prison, where a great deal of torture had taken place in the past. My wife and I found ourselves seated at a table in an amphitheater with lights on us while we were trying to find out about the fate of an American prisoner, or mental patient(I can't remember at this point. But it was one of those memorable experiences.

Another memorable experience of a more positive nature was the chance we had to give people a year's worth of Social Security and Railway Retirement Benefit Checks all at once. That was when Washington finally decided what it was going to do about delivery to Druze in the Golan Heights, those whose benefits were cut off when their mountain villages in what had been Syria were captured during the Six Day War. Druze had worked in Detroit and Chicago before retiring to the Golan and were quite reliant on their Social Security benefits. These were often American citizens who, when you met them in their traditional villages, didn't give much impression that they'd ever lived in the United States. But they certainly had for a long time and had earned these benefits. So finally the high muckamucks in Washington decided that these checks, which had been held up for over a year, could be delivered if one wrote "via" Israel on the envelopes, and didn't make the switch to Israel totally. And so I was dispatched with my wife and her visiting cousin in our Volkswagen, to these Druze villages. Well, you can imagine when a person arrived with thousands and thousands of dollars worth of checks to give away there was much slaughtering of the goat and eating of the eyeball and other things which unnerved our stomachs but left very pleasant memories.

Q: Could you tell about being staff aide to Walworth Barbour, who was the "Mr. Israel" for the United States for so long. You saw him towards the end of his reign?

PENDLETON: Well, I saw him about three-quarters of the way through, but he'd settled into a pattern. One was to let the Embassy be run, by and large, by his Deputy Chief of Mission, and for most of the time I was working with Barbour, J. Owen Zurhellen, who had been an authority on Japan, a very dynamic, sometimes roughly dynamic individual, was the Deputy Chief of

Mission. Owen could do almost anything with his eyes shut, and he was allowed very large measure of play, both in terms of substance and in terms of administration. He knew when to defer to the Ambassador and when to seek the Ambassador's judgment, and he had the Ambassador's confidence, totally, as far as I could see. And yet I found myself in a bit of an awkward situation because I was not working for Owen but for the Ambassador, and the Ambassador wasn't there very much. There were a few occasions when the messages were crossed and when Owen got cross. Barbour didn't get cross with me much because I think I served him well in term of what his traditional expectations were. Having been there already nine years or so, he knew every Israeli, and while he did not speak Hebrew, which was in a way a bit sad because he missed a lot of fun, he would over the years go to all-night sessions with key Israelis and play cards and be with them at moments of high crisis. And he brought a kind of stability to the embassy in both form and substance which was very, very useful. He was extremely well respected by the leaders of the American Jewish Community, which was a great supporter of Barbour staying on, because they believed that he understood Israel very well, understood the angst of Israelis, understood what the American role might usefully be in Israel, and they didn't want to get into trying to have somebody new who might be less predictable. The Administration respected him. His Arabist colleagues, I think, had (and you would know from interviews, I guess, better than I would) some degree of skepticism about him.

Q: Oh, absolutely. I mean this is part of the dynamic. We're talking about the ambassadors and others who served in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, or Saudi Arabia.

PENDLETON: On the other hand, I described him previously as being like a guided missile. If there was a message that had to get through, he could pick up the phone and call Golda Meir and just lay it to her absolutely straight, and it would be listened to. He didn't overdo it. If anything, he probably underdid it. But that allowed him to be such a voice of authority that today, I think, it's really equivalent to the President picking up the phone, because we did not have at that point the kind of involvement of the President and Secretary of State that you have at this point. At that point, it was the Jarring Mission, and Jarring was a Swedish diplomat reporting to the United Nations, and we were not involved in shuttle diplomacy and things which we have come to take for granted. We did not have Presidents or Secretaries of State fluttering around (very usefully, I would say) but we were feeling our way during that period. It was a time where we continued to support Israel very heavily financially, and the arrival of the first F-16s came during that period. It was also the period when some of the first terrorism events, the first hijackings, came in the region. I remember leaving the embassy one night and the Marine guard said, "There's a phone call you'd better take." It was Stuttgart saying, "We're following on radar a hijacked plane coming your way." We had not had that experience before and didn't really know how to handle it adequately. It was also the period of Black September.

Q: I was going to say, the Black September was towards the end of your time there. It occurred in Jordan, September 1970.

PENDLETON: I had left for home leave and reassignment to Burundi, a few months earlier. In the runup to Black September, I became aware of what everybody who reads newspapers now knows, that there were more communications between the Israelis and King Hussein than one supposed, than I as a newspaper reader had imagined, and that there was a singularly important

role for the United States at a variety of levels that we needed to play. And it was a period during which I had a chance, even based on some of my contacts from my consular work, to find out what was going on down on the Suez Canal, where both sides had heavy fortifications. One informant was a U.S. citizen who renounced his citizenship in front of me and then went to serve in the Israeli Army down there.

There were ways that I could begin to learn to be a reporting officer, but most of what I was paid for was Friday night. In those days an "immediate cable" was used rather indiscriminately, with no indications as to whether action at night would be needed, and every Friday night as people were dumping their cables before the weekend into the code room back in Washington (and I've been guilty of the same thing (we'd start about eight o'clock getting a flood of incoming cables, and I often would have to move into the embassy and stay there overnight reading them and deciding whether the Deputy Chief of Mission had to be alerted or anybody else had to be alerted. That also was a useful sort of training, in a sense. If you make a mistake, you can make a bad mistake, and it's fairly evident quite quickly. In general, I didn't make mistakes, but just a week before leaving, after a near-flawless run of about a year, I made a booboo which I will recover from someday.

Q: *What was that?*

PENDLETON: I frankly don't remember what it was about, but I do remember a very angry Owen Zurhellen at six in the morning saying I should have brought it to him at midnight. I waited till first light, I think. He reached in his wallet and pulled out the number of the Operations Center at State and called them. I memorized that number on the spot and know it to this day.

Q: *Was Ambassador Barbour concerned about unfolding events in the region?*

PENDLETON: He was of course concerned, but he had served in the region during World War II and had seen it all over the years -- even the sinking of a ship bringing supplies of food and liquor to the diplomatic section in Cairo. The corps had gone up to Alexandria to see the ship arrive and it had been sunk right before their eyes. So Barbour came to have a remarkable way of suppressing concern. He was notably overweight and also sick and for many months was at home.

Only the deputy chief of mission, myself and his chauffeur saw him during this period. I would say that his concern became even more modulated than it normally was.

Let me just tell you a story which I heard but was not there for. During the Six-Day War, there was great fear about the embassy being destroyed.

Q: *This was 1967.*

PENDLETON: In '67. And at one point everybody went down to the sub-basement parking lot to use it as a bomb shelter, and people, I'm told, were understandably a bit tense. Barbour was down there, and he said to his secretary in a very loud voice, "Take dictation, please." So everybody

hushed to listen to what the Ambassador was going to say. And he said, "Special for Sisco," who was the Assistant Secretary for North African and Near Eastern Affairs, "from Barbour: fail to understand why shipment of my new couch for the residence has not been expedited." Et cetera. Well, everybody calmed down, allegedly, after that because they knew he was counting on having his embassy and his residence and his team. This was the way he approached so many issues. When he picked up the phone, there was often nobody else in the room. And I've heard him a fair number of times, and I've heard him become angry, but an awful lot of communication from that Ambassador drifted unrecorded, I think. As mentioned previously, the deputy chief of mission, Owen Zurhellen, had a pleasant sort of temper, which added spice to each day. When Owen got angry it was more of an event.

But in terms of the substance, I realize in retrospect that I didn't untangle it as well as I would like to have, and I was especially aware of this some years later when I became head of the Office of Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs in the Department, and I was so glad that I understood Israeli *Angst* and sorry that I didn't understand a bit more of the history, although I'd read widely, and even what had gone on when I was in the Ambassador's office.

TERRENCE CATHERMAN
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv (1968-1970)

Terrence Catherman was born in Michigan and attended the University of Michigan in the early 1940s prior to joining the army. He completed his bachelors and master's degrees in political science. He joined the Foreign Service and received his first post in Tel Aviv, Israel. His Foreign Service career also took him to Germany and Yugoslavia. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in January 1991.

CATHERMAN: Israeli society was, of course, very proud of what it had done. It felt that it was, I don't want to give Israeli society a broad brush treatment, but my impression as I look back on that era now is that it had pretty much established itself as impregnable, omnipotent in that part of the world. From my point of view they looked that way. They had won the war, of course there were many Israelis who were grieving at losses of their family members from the Six Day War and I always found that touching. But they felt pretty much that they were able to handle themselves very well in the Middle East. It was my job, and it was not an easy job, to go around and try to convince them in innumerable weekend visits around the country speaking in large and small groups that they would have to figure out a way of making their existence in that part of the country more palatable to the surrounding countries and societies. It was hard work. I loved my stay there and certainly it was one of the most stimulating experiences of my life dealing with the Israelis. I had some touching personal relationships with people with whom I was more at home speaking Russian than English. I learned pretty good Hebrew. I was able to do my business in Hebrew and read the newspapers before I left. There was some military tension, but not a great deal. I will say this, I made quite a contribution, I think, to the positive development

of the Israeli-American Fulbright exchanges program. That was one of the high points of my contribution there.

Q: What was the thrust of your work essentially?

CATHERMAN: In Israel?

Q: Yes, in Israel.

CATHERMAN: Well, we had an enormous amount of press work to do because of the intense relationship between the two governments. Due to innumerable visits by congressmen, senators, State Department representatives, the Secretary of State was in and out quite a bit, we had an active relationship with the Israeli and the foreign press. I did a lot of that myself. The other aspect which was important to me was the academic exchanges program. I guess I had three things: the press to handle; the academic exchanges program; and then I had the explanation of American foreign policy as regards Israel, to try to explain it to the Israelis. That was in the period of the so-called Rogers plan, Secretary Rogers. I don't remember the details of it anymore but essentially it asked that the Israelis withdraw from the West Bank, the same things we are asking these days. I had a pretty rough go.

Q: The Likud government hadn't yet come in. It wasn't quite as bad as it would have been later on.

CATHERMAN: No, but the Israelis were always very suspicious of our attempts to get them to consider withdrawing, obviously.

Q: You never had any trouble selling the American story except as far as the policy was concerned when it impinged on its particular interest.

CATHERMAN: That is right. They were very friendly and I think from a quality point of view the academic exchanges program was the best one I ever saw. We had really good people going back and forth between the two countries.

Q: I gather that you found a very high degree of education and awareness of world events, a highly intellectual society.

CATHERMAN: Very sophisticated society. A society which seemed to me at any rate to know what it wanted to do and how to do it. Of course the development of the country itself, the infrastructure and everything, was staggering for me. I was very impressed.

MARGARET J. BARNHART
Consular Officer
Jerusalem (1968-1970)

Margaret J. Barnhart was born in 1928 in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. She graduated from Goucher College in 1950 with a major in international relations. She joined UNESCO and was employed there between 1951 and 1955. Following that she worked for the State Department in the Speakers Bureau. In 1961 she enlisted in the Foreign Service and held positions in Paris, Tokyo, Jerusalem, Bangkok, and Rio de Janeiro as well as several positions in the Department of State.

Q: You were in Jerusalem when to when?

BARNHART: '68 to '70. I arrived on the day that Sirhan Sirhan shot Bobby Kennedy. From the airport I went right to the consular section to look through the files for his family.

Q: He was a Palestinian?

BARNHART: Yes, he lived up on the West Bank. This was a good way to remember the date of my arrival. I had heard that he had been shot when we were Rome. By the time we got to Athens, the pilot had heard that he died. President Kennedy had died while I was in Paris. A big memorial service was held at Notre Dame. I joined my Embassy colleagues in attendance at the service.

Q: Back to Jerusalem.

BARNHART: Jerusalem was fun. I went there, as I say, in June of '68 to '70, and that was interesting. I was in charge of the consular section, and I had one assistant who was there along with about 8 foreign nationals. The Mandlebaum Gate had come down the year before.

Q: We're talking about '67 war when the West Bank in Jerusalem had come under Israeli rule.

BARNHART: When I got there one year later in '68, I said, "Where's Mandlebaum Gate? Well, right outside of my office, the old consulate that was on the west side, the Arab side, was there. The Deputy Consul General lived upstairs, and we had the consular section downstairs. And then over on the east side, the Israeli side, the Consul General lived upstairs in the building, and the rest of the consulate, admin, political who'd come, were all over there. There was a lot of back and forth. On my side I had the Iraqi Jew, I had a Sabra, being a native born Israeli, and I had a Moroccan. I had the Moroccan but then I had Muslims. I had a whole variety of Christian-Muslims, Muslim Muslims that would get down on a rug five times a day to pray. And he shared an office with this Sabra, but they got along. We just had this mixed bag. Shortly after I had gotten there, there was a big bang. Oh, what's happened? And I went out right away. One of my locals there said, "Oh, that was an explosion." And it had blown in the window in the office where my deputy was sitting, had blown in that window, and he had been just out in the garden. I went out right away and looked around. The detonator had gone off but the bomb hadn't, and I almost stepped on the thing. So that was a little excitement that day.

Q: What was the bomb for?

BARNHART: With the Palestinians these things were going on all the time. The Palestinians and the Israelis would put bombs in wastebaskets. One side would do it and bomb something in Tel Aviv. Then they would retaliate. They would go back to the West Bank, the Israelis, and blow down a building. They found one kid that was involved in this, or they thought was involved. They would go out and take the whole family, give them 24 hours or even eight hours to get out, and then blow it up. It was pretty dicey. I lived on the West Bank, and I had a choice where I wanted to live. Most of us did live on the West Bank. We could get better and larger housing than on the East Bank. We were separate from the Embassy. I mean, we were the Consulate General reporting directly to Washington. It was this *corpus separatum*, I guess, thing that we didn't recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, or Jerusalem as being part of Israel.

Q: *Who was the Consul General when you were there?*

BARNHART: Steve Campbell, his wife was French. I never met her. She died before I got there. She had done lots of work in the Resistance and was decorated by the French Government, but unfortunately she died of cancer. I knew some people at the UN offices in Jerusalem. One of the girls had a house at Gaza. We used to go down there on the weekends. You were certainly limited in where you could go. You could go up to Galilee or Lake Tibberedge. You could roam around the West Bank. But we couldn't cross the Allenby Bridge.

Q: *Oh, Allenby Bridge brought you into Jordan?*

BARNHART: Into Jordan.

Q: *Was everyone there monitoring the temper of the Palestinians in the West Bank and how this was working out?*

BARNHART: Not everyone but political officers both in Jerusalem and from the Embassy in Tel Aviv monitored the situation. When I arrived from Tokyo, I knew far more about the Vietnamese War and what was going on. I remember seeing a headline that Nasser died, but I knew nothing. I hadn't been there more than two or three months, and I pretty much became pro-Arab, as did almost everyone there. They gave us a hard time, they set up roadblocks - the Israelis.

Q: *Did you have any Palestinians coming to the Consulate and asking for help and that sort of thing, and particularly American Palestinians?*

BARNHART: Some yes, but not too many. There were other Americans that lived there, religious group type people and so forth, but basically the Americans did not create much of a problem for us. Occasionally there were. There was one famous American, Joe someone, but he was mayor of some little West Bank town and his only problem was: when are you all coming to eat, Saturday, Sunday? And I would turn to my deputy, "You go." I just didn't care much. I'd go when I had to, to some of these. The Arabs wanted to entertain all the time. The Arabs were wonderful when they wanted visas. I did visa work for awhile. They would come in and say, "I have a wife and five to ten kids here, and here's a piece of paper that I own land here, etc., and I want to go just see my brother. I'm coming back, of course. I have all these reasons to come back." And then I found they were walking across to the local gasoline station and borrowing

money to come in and show it to me in cash. "We can't show you bank accounts, because our bank is in Jordan." A lot of them would come in too and say, "I'm going to be a student." "Where are you going?" "I'm going to aviation school." And then I said, "And then you're going to work for El-Al?" Air Jordan I didn't think. I had checked on that through our embassy, and they got their pilots from their air force. All kinds of stories. I used to get free food here at the Calvert Inn, though, because of all those nice young Palestinians who couldn't handle US schools and who thus chose employment, i.e. Calvert Inn owned by a West Bank family. I tried to give a limited number to the Arabs. If you had 30 student applications in one day and none of them were any good, you'd have to give a few, because you're also giving visas to the Israelis. But they'd end up in a restaurant or someplace, and say, "You were right. I wasn't a very good student." Anyway they were fun.

Q: Did you ever have any dealings with the mayor of the Israeli part of Jerusalem, Teddy Kalleck?

BARNHART: Yes, I had met him several times on business or at receptions. There were seven countries that didn't recognize Jerusalem, namely the Dutch, the French, the Spanish, the Greeks, and the United States, but all had small consulates in Jerusalem. The diplomatic community was small as well. You could go to five receptions in the same week and see them every time. Teddy Kalleck handled official business. He was nice. I was reading about the one who's there now, who is not so nice.

Q: Not so nice, no. He's sort of a true believer, I guess.

BARNHART: You couldn't drive everywhere when you wanted. The Maesherein area of the Orthodox Jews was right outside of my office. You don't drive on a Saturday morning, because they'll stone your car. I used to play golf down in Caesarea on the Israeli coast, and at least once, I had to spend the weekend because I could not get on the highway because it was one of the high holy days. Orthodox Jews used to come in the office for visas. "We have to go to the United States for the high holy days," and I had thought all Jews came to Jerusalem for the high holy days. I learned that for many, their head rabbi was in the U.S. The Orthodox Jews, they'd sit there and they'd look down, and when I'd ask them a question, they continued to look down. They'd never look at you. So then when it came time, if the locals put the passport in, then I signed it. I'd sit there and just hold it to see if they would reach for it - because they won't touch a nonbeliever or have any contact. If they really wanted it and wanted to get out of the office, they'd finally grab it.

Q: Somebody who was dealing with them said that when you've got a whole roomful, it really smells, because they didn't bathe.

BARNHART: No, and they wore those heavy coats and fur hats. While I was there, the Israelis hired a pathologist to work at the Hebrew University. He lived in Jerusalem in the Orthodox area. Because the Orthodox don't believe in pathology, they went and dragged his mother and his wife out of the apartment and did considerable damage. They didn't kill them, but they tore apart the apartment. That was one of the first things I remember seeing. There wasn't anything we could do about it. They are violent, and they were even in those days. If I had been the man, I

would have packed up and gone home, but I guess he was going to stay around. He was Jewish.

Q: *Dealing with our Embassy in Tel Aviv, was it sort of us and them between Jerusalem and...?*

BARNHART: Yes, pretty much so. Our Consulate Generals for the most part were pro-Arab, I would say. Consular people move around and like that, but still there was not too much support for the Israelis, whereas Tel Aviv was just the opposite. I don't know whether they had an Arabist there or not. I don't think so. They would read our reports. Anytime Jerusalem sent cables into Washington, we'd info Tel Aviv. But there wasn't any love lost, or very little.

Q: *Were you doing any looking for...*

BARNHART: Counting halftracks? Well, when I was living on the West Bank, we always - I think they were called halftracks, these big convoy things - and you always reported those. You counted them if you happened to be around to see one. Yes, we did report a lot of them, all of us were told to. It was a small consulate there, and so we all watched what went on.

WAT T. CLUVERIUS, IV
Econ-USAID Officer
Tel Aviv (1969-1971)

Wat T. Cluverius, IV was born in Massachusetts on December 4, 1934. He obtained a B.A. from North-Western University. He obtained an M.A. from Indiana University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1967. He served in Jeddah, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem. He also served in Washington, DC in the Near Eastern Bureau. He retired in 1988. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 31, 1990.

Q: *I was going to say that there was almost an unacceptability if you once served there you couldn't go somewhere else. At least that was the word of mouth.*

CLUVERIUS: Yes, that was the image. Now there were already two Middle Eastern experts in the Embassy in Tel-Aviv. I was to go and do an economic-AID job and then move into the political section later. There were 2 guys there already. Maybe 3, let me think. Yes, Hayward Stackhouse was political counselor and he had a Middle Eastern background. Not a pure background, shall we say, he had served elsewhere and all of that. David Korn was there at the time. Also he had done western Arabic and I think he did one tour in Beirut. David, it soon became apparent, didn't give a damn whether he served in the Arab world again. He became very much an Israel partisan. Hayward Stackhouse just did it because it was an intellectual thing to do. The 3rd guy who had done Arabic and served in the Arab world was Jay Freres in the political section. And those were the first 3 so-called Arabists, a label I don't like, to serve in Embassy-Tel Aviv. And they were all still there, so no one knew what their onward careers would look like. But Eilts told me this tour in Tel Aviv would make my career. So I went to Tel-Aviv in the summer of 1969.

Q: Who was the Ambassador then?

CLUVERIUS: Oh, the Ambassador was Walworth Barbour. He eventually left a few years later after being ambassador there for 13 years. He was quite an interesting old character. Wally Barbour served in Baghdad in the late 30's and didn't like it; he was Minister in Cairo during World War II and didn't like that very much. But he pretty much ran the top policy and all the major policy of the Embassy with the government of Israel out of his hip pocket. He had tremendous clout in Washington and with the American Jewish community. In fact, I accidentally discovered in '71 that most initiatives that the US was considering in the region, ones that might be sensitive, were informally at least cleared with Wally Barbour, including instructions to our Embassy, or, rather, our interests section in Cairo. Things were cleared with Barbour to see if they would upset the Israelis or not. So I arrived in the summer of '69 and did this econ-AID job. Which turned out to be absolutely fascinating because it was only 2 years after the war. Our AID relationship that we had had with Egypt for the Palestinian refugees in Gaza had been transferred to the Embassy in Tel Aviv. Supervision of the voluntary agencies like CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Federation, that we had with Jordan in the West Bank, were now administered out of Embassy Tel-Aviv. And that was my portfolio. Gaza was then dangerous. There was an organized resistance down there at the time. Not like the Intifada, it was more based on cells and the PLFP, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, rather than on popular sentiment as was the intifada. So, I was the only Embassy officer allowed to go to Gaza. I covered Gaza both in the economic-aid sense, particularly working with CARE, which had huge programs down there--Food for Peace, Food for Work, and all of that kind of thing. I did both the politics and the economic aid supervision and reporting for Gaza. On the West Bank it was a little more complicated because that's the turf of the Consulate General in Jerusalem. But they couldn't administer these aid programs because to do so one had to deal with the Israeli military and civilian occupation authorities. The Israeli authorities in general and the Israeli occupation authorities would never deal with the consulate and vice-versa. So on the West Bank my responsibility was strictly supervision of the aid programs but obviously I went and saw things and saw people that the consulate people didn't. I would work with somebody in the consulate and we would jointly do the political reporting. I became early on something of a Palestinian expert.

Q: Well a little compare and contrast. Again at your level, how did you find coming to Israel and dealing with Israeli authorities. Was this quite a change?

CLUVERIUS: I think that was the only time in my life I really felt culture shock. I didn't feel it the first time I lived abroad in the Navy which was in Cyprus. I didn't feel it so much when I went to Saudi Arabia because I had the language. I went over a weekend, flew from Jeddah, had a new baby ... my wife took my son and the new baby home to the States for a couple of months. We had some health problems with the baby in Jeddah. So we all flew to Beirut where I put my wife and two kids on the plane to Chicago via Europe. I spent a few hours in the Beirut airport then flew to Cyprus, stayed a couple of days, saw some friends (I had lived there in '60-'62) and then flew directly into Tel Aviv. So that was quite a culture shock. Here's a place that's a mixture of Europe and, perhaps, of Eastern Europe, totally different language, noisy, didn't know the language. Although I soon discovered that all the business of Israel is done in English. If you're

dealing with, shall we say, the lower social-economic spectrum like cabdrivers and waiters and folks like that, they speak Arabic because they're Sephardi. So I found the Arabic kind of useful. And professionally the English was useful. As a result, although I studied Hebrew, I never became very good at it. But I also had a kind of access for a relatively junior guy which was that the Israelis were very interested in what we were doing for the occupied territories, obviously. They were interested that we do it right, they were interested in being cooperative, because the success of a Care program or Catholic Relief Services Program, is good for Israel's image and something that they don't have to spend money on. It helps keep the population quiet if social services are being delivered. So I had resources so to speak for certain Israeli officials in the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Defense, which had overall responsibility for the occupation. So I had good access. I discovered that the Israelis, of course, have a kind of permanent chip on their shoulder. A tendency to automatically, so to speak, adopt the attitude--if you're not 100 percent, if you're only 99 percent with us then you're probably an enemy of some kind. There is a bit of that. But then again they were in the glow of their 67 victory ...

Q: I was going to ask, this must have been sort of the height of self-confidence. Because later on things weren't quite as...

CLUVERIUS: This was the height of self-confidence, the phrase "that they were still waiting for the phone call from Hussein," was very popular. They'd won a tremendous victory. They couldn't quite believe, I think, that the Arab world didn't have to come to them. They felt that they could make peace very much on their terms. They didn't understand that as a population, so to speak, even as a political culture, they didn't really understand that the Arabs had lost a war but, so what, the Arabs could just turn their backs on Israel and go about their other business in the world. They didn't have to come to Israel's terms. The Israelis didn't understand that. Obviously there were some intellectuals who did. But as a political culture they certainly did not. I was quite a unique bird really. The Israelis were fascinated by someone who had just come from the Arab world. Particularly Saudi Arabia which was a real enigma to the Israelis. The Jordanians they had known, the Egyptians they had intercourse with--usually violent but they had some contacts. So it was fascinating. The other 3 guys who had studied Arabic in the Embassy--Stackhouse, Korn and Freres, hadn't been to the Arab world just before they'd been there, as I recall. I found that the Israelis, if they thought you were biased against them, you'd never get through. If they felt you had an open mind, and would listen, after awhile then you could really argue. You could really make close friends. But you had to first prove that you weren't basically anti-Jewish or anti-Israeli. That you didn't believe all the Arab propaganda, that you believed some of what they said. Once you established your openness to them and heard them out, and after you became somewhat friendly, you could have the most wild arguments. You could really hammer and tongs it with them. And it wouldn't damage the relationship. I enjoyed it enormously for that reason and of course ultimately I ended up spending 8 years of my life living in Israel in 3 different assignments. I did the econ-aid job from summer of '69 to summer of '71, when I became number two in a three or four person political section.

Q: In that economic-aid job, what was your impression of how the Israeli authorities and maybe how the Israeli people were treating or looking upon the people of the Gaza strip in the West Bank?

CLUVERIUS: That's a good question and I think it's worth recording somewhere that at the beginning the attitude was as Abba Eban had told Washington, very carefully, right at the end of the war. That Israel had no territorial ambitions vis-a-vis Egypt or Jordan; that the Golan and Jerusalem were going to be special cases. But there were some special holy sites in addition to Jerusalem which would have to have special treatment, such as Hebron. They did sort of see themselves as holding this as a card for negotiations which they felt had to come and had to come on their terms. Because the other side had been so soundly beaten. They did keep this trust very carefully at first, unlike much later. They appointed really top officers to be the military government types, really top lawyers to sort out the legal complexities of occupation. They had Arabic speakers, they had officers who were on they way up. When I was in Gaza in '69 or '70, somewhere in there, Mordechai Gur was military governor and later rose to Attaché in Washington and Chief of Staff, now a member of the Knesset of the Labor Party; very bright articulate kinds of guys ran the occupation. They did see themselves as administrators of a civilian population. They were holding this in trust so to speak, a card to play for the future. They were quite open to local initiatives and didn't want to interfere in any more than they absolutely had to. There was a debate within the Labor Party at the time that they shouldn't let too many people from the territories work in Israel proper, because that would distort the nature of Jewish labor in the Jewish state. That was quite a dispute with Eban being against it and Dayan as Minister of Defense in favor of large-scale use of Arab labor in Israel because people needed work; if you were going to administer people you have to feed them yourself or let them have a job where they could feed themselves. Dayan won because the pressure of the community was such that they wanted this cheap labor. Particularly the Sephardi community which was at the bottom of the Israeli social-economic ladder.

Q: Sephardis being the ones mainly from the Arab world where as the founders of Israel, the elite, had come from East Europe.

CLUVERIUS: That's right. These were the people mostly from Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen. So as the Arabs came in from the occupied territories to become the street sweepers and the stoop laborers they moved the Sephardis up the ladder almost automatically. But all of this was done with great debate. I think a very principled debate within the party, within the society. Should we have 10,000 work permits or should we have 5,000. Of course later they became totally open. Should the Arabs be eligible for certain health services and other things like that. How do you pay them? The Histadrut insisted they be paid the same as a Jewish worker and that deductions be held back. And for a while they were, I think. The national health and all of that was taken out. But of course the fund I suspect has disappeared. But there was all of this going on. So it was a fascinating period. Of course the phone calls from Hussein never came. There was the War of Attrition between Egypt and Israel in '70-'71. I remember one of the rare occasions when anybody else would go into Gaza from the Embassy. The DCM, Owen Zurhellen, quite an activist fellow, really wanted to see it. So the Israelis took him down there with me and I think Gur was still military governor and OC Southern Command was Arik Sharon. He had the military control in the Sinai, all of the Sinai. And that was the day it looked like the US would arrange the cease-fire along the Canal. Which was, you will remember, artillery duels and occasional air battles. I was sitting at the bottom of the table with my contacts in Gaza, military government guys, at this lunch and these social welfare types and all of that. The DCM was sitting at the head of the table with Arik Sharon and the military governor. It

wasn't that big a table but it was fascinating amongst my guys, my side of the table. They were all very pleased that this war of attrition was going to be over. It was taking a toll and some of these guys were just reservists. And it was great that the US was helping to broker the cease-fire. At the other end of the table Sharon was saying that this was a mistake, that we should use the War of Attrition to cross the canal and go to Cairo and force peace on these people on our terms. That kind of thing. Quite a belligerent chap.

Q: I'd like to get a little feel about the attitude because this is a very volatile and important time over there. Within the Embassy you had Barbour who'd been there a long time and was considered a friend of Israel. You had the political officers, one you mentioned was David Korn who became very pro Israeli. But others, were there debates that there's another side to this and after all there's a bloody big Arab world out there and here we are supporting a relatively small country without any real strategic advantage to us? In geopolitics it doesn't make a real amount of sense to get overly involved here. Was this just a matter of debate? Or was this just--assume this was the way it was going to be and -you didn't have to talk about it?

CLUVERIUS: No, I think it was talked about. It wasn't talked about in any acrimonious sense because there was an environment in which our client, Israel, had beat the bejesus out of the Soviet's clients. As you recall, some years later that was very much a motivation on Kissinger's part. That there's no way that we're going to let US arms lose to Soviet arms. There was that kind of strategic element in it, the East-West element.

Q: Going back because things are changing so rapidly now, you did think of, Syria and Egypt as being Soviet clients more than...

CLUVERIUS: Sure, there was one of those treaties of friendship, etc. between Egypt and the Soviet Union and between the Soviets and Syria. This was 2 to 3 years before Sadat threw the Soviets out. Nasser was still president in Egypt. He died while I was there in Israel. So there was this view that there was this strategic element to this relationship. There was no real reason to jump on the Israelis for occupation policies which were really quite enlightened at that time, though it did not last long. The Settlements issue had not taken off yet.

Q: We're talking about putting Israeli settlers into the occupied areas.

CLUVERIUS: That issue was not started yet. That was started a bit in '68. I think it was, in Hebron. But the official Israeli line was that these were paramilitary settlements, called Nahals, subject to the orders of the Government and therefore not in violation of the Geneva Convention, as was being claimed by the Arabs and others. The United States protested to the Israelis about some of these settlements when they were converted to clearly civilian use. Perhaps if the US had made a bigger fuss the settlements might not have become the obstacle they are today. I guess the United States did not respond forcefully then, I think they should have, obviously should have. Probably one of those hundreds of occasions in which somebody in Washington said, "Oh now we can't jump on the Israelis on this because the plate is already too full of what we're trying to do," something like that. A great mistake. Of course at that level in the Embassy I wasn't privy to the very close-hold circuit of peace making efforts. It may have been felt that maybe if the Arabs see that the Israelis are getting comfortable with this, maybe that will help

bring them forward to cooperate in the peace process. It didn't of course, but that may have been an element.

Q: I want a little more of sort of the attitude that you had. One, was there any sort of frustration, going back to your previous subject, that no matter what happens, with every country we have disputes? Obviously with Israel we have policy problems, even at that time. That Israel would always prevail because it had influence back in Washington? That it almost wasn't worth trying to clash swords with Israelis from a diplomatic point of view? Because they could always bypass you through the Israeli lobby, and influence in the political process?

CLUVERIUS: That was certainly part of, shall we say, the diplomatic culture in the region. The views of the US Ambassador in Israel are going to carry more weight than the views of any other ambassador in the region. You had to keep your eye on the Lobby. But again some parts of that relationship were quite new. Until after '67, we had not been major arms suppliers for Israel. The relationship really was much more between Jewish communities, so to speak, and Israel. We weren't the major suppliers of arms. We were hardly even a minor one really before '67. It was the French and the British for their own reasons. Obviously the British-French cooperation with Israel in '56. That kind of thing. So we had some policy differences with the Israelis. But when you discuss the Arab-Israeli problem, then you had doubts about the US course in this thing. Then you weren't talking about '67. You were talking about '48 still. Shouldn't the Palestinians be allowed to go back to their homes in Haifa, Tel Aviv, and places like that. Wasn't it wrong for the Israelis to expel so many Arabs in '48. -The Israeli mythology was not believed that all those Arabs fled voluntarily in '48. That kind of discussion went on. A historical, intellectual exercise. But we didn't have a lot to be upset with the Israelis about post '67. At least by the time I was there. We did by the time I left in '72. I had some good bosses there. Jack Button, recently deceased, was the Economic Counselor. I did quite a bit of political reporting on the territories since I was always out there along with the Consulate General, of course. But their reporting tone was a bit shrill in those days and that is always a danger for the consulate general in Jerusalem. They're so much on the cutting edge. I was later Consul General myself there. It's a very difficult place to report from. You deal with the Israelis and the Palestinians. You go to bed feeling schizophrenic every night. But from the Embassy point of view, there was nothing to get really excited about with the Israelis. We were waiting for the Arabs to respond to the reality of their defeat and try to get a peace process going. There was a thing called the Jarring Mission from the UN which was US supported. There was a lot of high level diplomacy going on, trying to gin up something. Assistant Secretary Joe Sisco was very active.

Q: Sort of moving on, you then came back to NEA, the Near Eastern Bureau. And you were the Deputy Director with what was the peace process...

CLUVERIUS: There was an office created I think in . . .

Q: This was from '72 to '76?

CLUVERIUS: That's right, I left Israel in July of '72. And there was a little dispute at the end of my tour. Since I covered the territories so much I wanted to wrap up my views and this was in 6 months or so before I left. So this would have been late '71 or something like that, maybe '72. I

wrote a series of messages. Basically, arguing against the belief in Washington that Israel was still holding these, now 4 to 5 years after the war, was still holding these territories solely as a card to play. I argued that that was no longer quite the case. That there were certain parts of these territories that the Israelis probably would never agree to give up. They were becoming too comfortable with it. And that was controversial. The Ambassador did not want to send the messages.

Q: Still Barbour?

CLUVERIUS: Yes, still Barbour. I had a chat with him. I think we did have what is called a "dissent channel" at that time. I felt very strongly that the Washington view was very simply that Israel was prepared to trade all the territories for peace; that the Arabs were being jerks and not coming forward and challenging the Israelis at the negotiating table. I said it isn't quite that clear. Jerusalem aside, there were areas of the territories that I didn't think the Israelis would ever agree to give up. There was the coastal strip from Elat down to Sharm el Sheikh to assure the freedom of passage down the Strait of Tiran, parts of the West Bank, particularly the Latrun salient, and probably other parts. I concluded that under the best of circumstances, I thought the Israelis would insist in negotiations, again not including Jerusalem, on taking 25 to 40 percent of all the occupied territories, the Golan completely. I laid this all out on maps for what used to be called an airgram, which was mailed, not sent telegraphically. Airgrams did not have wide readership. Still my boss didn't want to send it. I told the DCM that I really felt strongly about it and had spent all that time tramping around out there seeing more Israelis than most people in the Embassy did and seeing Palestinians, of whom the Embassy was otherwise ignorant. I saw settlers, I saw the military occupation people, all of that. So I really felt I hadn't acquired all of this insight not to have it recorded somehow. The DCM basically agreed with me, he said he would get it sent, and he did.

Q: So to get back to where you were, '72 to '76.

CLUVERIUS: I went back to be the Deputy Director of Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs which had been created I think in '65 or '66.

Q: You sent this airgram which was a dissent but obviously based on personal experiences--did you find that this had any readership at all back in Washington?

CLUVERIUS: It did in NEA and INR but surely not on the seventh floor. At that time Hayward Stackhouse, known as Stack, who had been Political Counselor in Tel Aviv when I arrived there, was back as Director of the Office of Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs. And he offered me that job. But I didn't take it in '72. Actually, thinking back, I first went back and took a few months of academic sabbatical to try and finish my dissertation. I wasn't doing very well with that; I found that I wasn't really interested in it anymore. The Department said that if I really wanted to continue working on it after these few months off, if I don't finish it, we'll give you a job in INR, which was basically a 9 to 5 analyst job and I'd be able to finish this thing. Alternatively, they told me, if you finish in the time we're giving you or you don't want to finish it, there's a real hot job you can have which is Deputy Director of Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs. I really had to decide, did I want a fast-track career. Obviously the Israeli Affairs office in NEA, that's all fast-

track. Or did I want to finish the Ph.D. I decided I didn't give a damn anymore about the Ph.D. So I went to work in this office in the Spring of '73.

Q: What were you after? What does the office do?

CLUVERIUS: It runs like any desk, it's the bilateral desk of US-Israel relations. But in addition, the reason the name is so peculiar- Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs- is that it was felt some years earlier, I think '65 or '66, that what was needed was one place to coordinate what we did in the Arab-Israeli context. We needed one desk to be the focal point. If we're going to do something on Egypt we should know how it is going to affect the Arab-Israeli relationship. If we're going to do something on Israel, we've got to know what the impact on Jordan might be. So Arab-Israeli things in that context were in that office as well. I joined it in spring of '73. Stack was a tremendous officer, but he had decided to retire. His wife was tired of life overseas. He really let me do my own thing, so to speak. To write think-pieces and send them up to the Front Office. The Deputy Assistant Secretary to which we reported was Roy Atherton and we also worked with the Middle East guy at the NSC who was one of the most decent people and the finest analytical minds I ever met, Hal Saunders. The Assistant Secretary was Joe Sisco, one of the most effective guys at that level in Washington. Of course the routine of a normal desk was soon to change and we would be literally living in the office for months. We were going to have a war, the '73 war.

Q: This is the October '73...

CLUVERIUS: The Ramadan War on one side and the Yom Kippur War on the other. I was in kind of an unusual spot; I was able to draft a piece that gave proper expression to both Israeli and Arab points of view, how each side would see or react to some move we were considering. No one else in the Bureau at that time had worked both sides in the field and, as a journalism major, I think I wrote well.

Q: Here you are working on a sort of coordination, was this, looking back on it, was this being telegraphed, that this war was coming? Or did it really hit us by surprise?

CLUVERIUS: It took us by surprise, at least as far as I was aware. September-October is the time of year when traditionally Egypt and Syria had military maneuvers.

There were the usual preparatory signs of this in August, as I recall. Everybody was checking, watching but nobody was urgent about it because it was routine for the time of year. You ran the usual checks of intelligence sources and nothing far out of the ordinary appeared. There was no human intelligence or communications intercepts or anything else to give a tip off. Most everybody believed that no one could really go to war anymore without something leaking out into the ether. Or some agent picking something up. It really was quite dead, quite. And of course, Israeli intelligence then had a much better, had almost a mythical reputation at the time. So if the Israelis didn't see anything urgent about these few little clues here and there, why the hell should we. Because they were believed to be damned near omniscient at that time. As it got very close to that very week, people did begin to get a bit jittery. Eban was in the United Nations in New York and so was Rodgers, I think, for the General Assembly. Kissinger was then

National Security Advisor. By Wednesday or so, I'd planned to go to the Annapolis boat show on the Saturday, Stackhouse said, "I think I'd like you to be in here on the weekend. I've got something, I've got to give a speech or something, I've got to be away. But I think the way things are, I don't like it, I'd like you to be here on Saturday, but why don't you take Friday off and go to your boat show. " So I did. And that Saturday, Stackhouse called me and said, "I'm not going and you'd better get in here, now" This is very early, 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning. "It looks like we're going to have a war." But meanwhile, of course, as you read later, and I didn't know until I got down to the Department, that there would be desperate back-and-forthing for the previous 48 hours on the highest levels, they'd been checking intelligence sources. Something was cooking, Israel still thought it was maneuvers but they were getting very, very nervous. All this was going back and forth on the highest levels and I didn't see those cables normally anyway. I saw them when I got to the office that Saturday morning, by then the War had basically begun, and we set-up an operation task force on the 7th floor. I don't think I went home for 3 days. My wife brought me changes of underwear and things into the Department. So I was very much involved right then and there in the Arab Israeli peace process. And from Then until I retired in '88, with the exception of the two years I was Ambassador to Bahrain, that was my major activity.

Q: What was the feeling when the October war broke out in the Department? What were you experts dealing with? What did you think at the beginning and as it developed?

CLUVERIUS: At the very beginning I think it was just the basic assumption of everybody that the Israelis would repeat '67. However, they didn't do very well at first. And of course the Egyptian crossing of the Canal was a brilliant military stroke. There was no doubt about that. But it was still felt that, as they went across and moved into the Sinai, it was still felt that the Israelis would repeat '67. But of course Israel takes 24 hours or so to mobilize, 36 to really get into action and perhaps 72 hours to hit full stride. So the first couple of days the Arab successes were rather discounted. The Syrians almost broke through on the Golan. An Israeli General friend of mine later told me that the Syrian breakthrough would not have happened if the Israelis hadn't had to divert some critical pieces of armor and APC's to protect and evacuate settlers. So much for the argument that the settlers contributed to security; they're a detriment. The conventional wisdom was that the Israelis would turn it around very quickly, even though they suffered initial reverses. I guess the 3rd day or 4th day it became apparent that that wasn't going to be the case, that the Israelis were having severe trouble. One thing that developed early on and changed some doctrine in this country, I think, or so I've been told, was the rate of fire in modern war had gone up. The rate of fire was enormous. Stockpiles had disappeared much more quickly than anybody had predicted on the Israeli general staff side or probably on the Egyptian and Syrian sides as well. Of course, in the middle of all this, is the hand-holding of Hussein to keep him out of it. Basically telling him, look what happened to you last time when Nasser sucked you in. The American and British basically holding him back, which was probably easier to do since he hadn't been informed anyway. He had been cut out of this one by Asad and Sadat. But as it became apparent that the Israelis weren't going to turn it around, that it wasn't going to be over in 4 or 5 days or 6 as in 67, it became apparent to us by day 4 or 5 really, that the situation might create leverage. Of course it was Kissinger's genius to sense this quickly. And we were writing papers about it. Maybe we'd have a chance here, we would have no chance if there's a real victor and a real vanquished in either direction. And we had a number of different levers. One, no one was getting decisive advantage quickly. There was time to gear up a real diplomatic effort, there

was time to be a little subtle here and there. That was one piece of leverage, that the situation on the ground wasn't going to resolve itself so fast that we didn't have time to do something creative. The other piece of leverage was Israel's desperate need for supplies, particularly of ammunition. We were then working to set-up the re-supply flights through the Azores, all of our European friends not too happy with all of that. When the Israelis broke through across the Canal in the north, the Egyptian 3rd army then gradually became encircled in the south. Then we pressed very hard on the Israelis not to destroy the 3rd Army. By this time we were in probably the most collegial policy-making environments that I had ever seen or heard of in the Department. Because it was evolving so rapidly and unexpectedly, people were open to ideas. We would get together almost every morning during those early days.

Q: We didn't see this as--oh, I hope our guys win or their guys lose? We were seeing this as an opportunity?

CLUVERIUS: A possible opportunity, that's right. And we understood the Arab psychology much better than the Israelis ever did. We understood that if the Arabs took another drubbing as they did in '67, they'd close off as they did then. In other words, the lose of pride and face would be so severe that they couldn't face the process. But if they kept a little of their gains, pride wouldn't be so badly damaged, maybe there'll be enough room to maneuver. And so early on we were discussing this; every morning in those early days of the war, we'd have meetings with Joe Sisco. As Kissinger seized on all of this opportunity and began to formulate his own diplomatic strategy, then we didn't have such a collegial thing because he didn't need it anymore. We'd put up what ideas we had. I remember raising some hell one day because it was clear, from an intelligence report, that the Israelis were cutting off the water pipe to the 3rd army which was effectively encircled. It was already clear that if the 3rd army was to be encircled and destroyed, the leverage would be gone. So I raised hell to get somebody's attention to not let the Israelis salami slice this way. We had to keep them away from the 3rd army. We were writing memos that Sisco took seriously. Some of them translated into policy that Kissinger later pursued. Kissinger was extremely adept. The Israelis, usually their Ambassador, Simcha Dinitz, would yell at him for delayed supplies and he would blame Schlesinger. It was quite a game that was starting to be played. But it then quickly became...

Q: Schlesinger being the Secretary of Defense.

CLUVERIUS: He could point at the Pentagon and say they were incompetent, dragging their feet. When in fact I suspect it was Henry Kissinger manipulating things. So it was quite an intriguing time. And I think very quickly, before the cease-fire was in place, I think Kissinger had the elements of his diplomacy in hand. And of course the Soviets were part of it. He had to deal with the Soviets. You will recall he made his first trip after the war. He started in Moscow basically to see if he had anything to work with there. The Soviets had done some saber-rattling in support of the Arabs, even sending some "advisors" or what have you to Egypt. There was that great dispute about the October 22nd line, that the Israelis had violated the cease-fire lines. Everybody had to go back to the October 22nd lines. At that point I was writing papers for Roy Atherton and Hal Saunders; I was probably the only munchkin, so to speak, in the bureau at the time who had served in both in Israeli and the Arab world. I could write a paper that fairly

reflected both interests and likely reactions on both sides to one or another possible move by the US.

Q: Trying to get somewhat the feel. If somebody had served only in Israel, within sort of departmental mentality or something, almost tainted that person. Or if somebody had only served in the Arab world...

CLUVERIUS: In that environment it wasn't a matter of being tainted; it was what your mind-set was as a result of being steeped in the views of one side but ignorant of what motivated the other side. It wasn't a matter of being tainted. It was also, I must say, a matter of drafting-skill. If you were steeped in the Israeli point of view or the Arab and wrote the paper, someone with expertise on the other side would have to go over it and put the balance in. And I'd done journalism school, and I was a pretty good writer. I could write it so that no one else would have to make an input for balance before it went to the front office and on to the seventh floor. It would save Roy a lot of time. But increasingly as the cease-fire took hold and diplomacy really began, the famous shuttle-period, the lower levels were increasingly closed off from access. Because you didn't need to know, fair enough. And obviously, Kissinger is a secretive guy and a firm believer that the fewer people that know what's going on the more likely you have a chance for success. And he's right. And we had plenty to do. So for a while there I was kind of out of it. Although I still did quite a bit for Roy. Kissinger being so secretive, I guess he really believed that all the papers which showed Roy or Hal Saunders as drafting, were really written by these guys. But obviously they had so much to do they couldn't do it all. They had other responsibilities. So I wrote a lot of things for those guys. But as it all went into higher gear, there was less and less of that kind of thing to do since it had been done. He had decided what he was going to do, how he was going to do it and at that point didn't need a lot more input from the munchkins, just needed to get on with it. But at some point, I can't remember exactly when, it may have been in early '74, after the shuttle period had started, one day by accident I saw a paper that I wasn't suppose to see. It had a lot in it about how to approach the substance of the issue like Israeli withdrawal and moves toward real peace. All the big issues. And I'd seen this paper and I told the boss, Stackhouse, that I'd seen it and I totally disagreed with it. But I said, so how am I supposed to have seen it? It's one of these, Eyes Only - Kissinger kind of things. So he said, "I'll talk to Roy." And he talked to Roy and said, "You know, Wat by mistake saw this paper and he thinks you guys are going at it wrong. " So Roy kind of laughed, according to Stack, and said he can read the paper and he can write what he doesn't like about it. What I didn't like about it, and this is from my Israeli experience, is that it was very mechanical. We'll go to DMZ'S, gradual withdrawals, troop and armament limitations here and a zone there. All in my own view very mechanical. I had a feeling that the Israelis were not going to give up territory gained for mechanical arrangements which were military almost completely military--demilitarize this, limited force zone that. So I wrote a paper back to Roy. I said, what you're missing here is the psychology of Israel. This is all mechanical, all military, and the Israelis aren't going to give you anything, give the Arabs anything except in exchange for what I think I called "elements of normalization, " They not only would not give up the territory, they would also have to know what is going to happen to it. They have to see some signs of being accepted as a people, as a country. If you don't get normalization in there, you aren't going to make this thing work. I wrote up quite a lot of stuff about kinds of things I thought would impress the Israelis over and above the purely mechanical military zones of this and that kind. Roy sent the paper over to Hal Saunders who was still at the NSC, who had

not yet come over to the Department as he did later. So one Saturday morning, Hal came over with the briefing book on Egypt Israeli negotiations and he said, "Well, you know, if you don't like the way we're doing it then why don't you rewrite the book." And I just sat down and started working. And that was really the beginning of my deep substantive involvement in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Which I continued. I never went on any of the shuttles with Kissinger but I worked and prepared every one of them. Hal and Roy always went, other people as well. But these were the main substantive guys, no doubt about that. And so I continued working in that sense through the Kissinger period, through the '75-'76 period. I was thrown out of Kissinger's office, by my count, I think it was 18 or 19 times, before I was allowed to stay. Because we had a new Director of the office who was going through a very difficult personal time, and was hardly ever there, I ran the office. So every time an Israeli leader came in, if you look back at the newspapers it was damn near weekly it seemed, like Dayan, I was the one who had the responsibility as the Desk guy to meet them at the door and, very often, in the basement actually, without publicity. I would take them up to the Secretary's office, take them into the meeting, and I would join the meeting and then Jerry Bremer, Peter Rodman or Larry Eagleburger would look at me, look at Kissinger, Kissinger would look at me, Jerry or Peter would come over and quietly ask me to leave.

Q: Kissinger by that time was Secretary of State.

CLUVERIUS: Yes, by this time he's Secretary. Interesting that all of this post-war period I think and remember only Kissinger as the mover and shaker, not the Secretary of State in office at the beginning of that period. And I would get thrown out and Roy would say you've got to keep going in to the meetings because it is proper that you be there. But I was getting thrown out frequently until finally one day Kissinger looked at me and said, "Hello Wat." Or something like that; he finally recognized me. But it was just his own style, the fewer people the better. I don't disagree with that. But it was a little bit damaging for my relations with the Israeli embassy for quite a time. So, finally, I stayed in most of the larger meetings until I went abroad in the Fall of '76.

Q: In this time, could you talk about the Israeli lobby because this is such a creature you might say of American politics. And I'd like to get an impression of how this worry on your operations in the period you were doing this.

CLUVERIUS: The lobby didn't care much care at all about the Desk or any of the NEA worker bees. Their targets, their sights were always much higher: The Secretary of State, the White House, Capitol Hill. Of course it was, and is, a very powerful lobby. Certainly the most powerful foreign affairs lobby. It ranks with the National Rifle Association and the Dairy lobby, certainly in the top 5 or 10 issue lobbies. Everybody was well aware that you had this other constituency when dealing with the Arab-Israeli problem, dealing with Israel. You had an enormous domestic constituency looking over your shoulder, trying to push you this way and that. In the post-war period there was increasingly a knee-jerk approval situation on Capitol Hill. Almost anything that they would circulate would get signed by more than 70 senators and 300 or 400 hundred representatives. They were riding very high. And of course the Arabs were seeing us as bad guys, and vice versa in many quarters. Israel started the '67 war in a technical sense-- they preempted rather than wait for the expected attack--everybody understood that Nasser sort of

bungled into that one. But in the '73 war Israel was attacked by surprise and that doesn't go well with Americans. We still had our memories of Pearl Harbor. So the support for Israel was very high, the lobby riding high, being listened to.

Q: As you saw it, did you find the lobby made much of a difference in how we were going about the peace process?

CLUVERIUS: Right then not a heck of a lot in my mind. Right then, '73 right after the war '74, no I don't think so. Because we quickly got to a process which held promise of actually moving beyond simple cease-fire toward settling the conflict. There were the Kilometer 101 talks under UN auspices and Kissinger-led diplomacy. A disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt was in the works, even got something later on started with the Syrians. We might have gotten something started with Jordan. It was probably a mistake not to have tried with Jordan in the summer of '74 or later, in '75. But that had a lot to do with Sadat too. We'd done one with Egypt if you recall. Then there was the Golan agreement in mid-74. The famous 33 day shuttle for the Golan agreement. Then the logical thing would have been--even though Jordan didn't get into the '73 war-- to attack the results of the '67 war and bring Jordan in to set the precedent that withdrawal and arrangements have to be made on all 3 fronts. I think Sadat sabotaged that, the Israelis were definitely not interested and I don't think Kissinger was at all anxious to do it. The West Bank and Jerusalem set up a whole different set of issues than either the Sinai or the Golan in terms of emotions and history. Not to mention in terms of population. So I don't think Kissinger was anxious to tackle that can of worms. If Sadat didn't press it, why should he, I suppose that's how it came out. There were some of us who argued very hard and I worked very hard in creating possibilities, briefing papers, and options books. What it might look like on the ground. How you might structure a Jordan-Israeli negotiation. But basically Sadat wanted to go back and do something even bigger with the Israelis. It was done. Sinai II for which we paid an enormous financial price. By this time of course we have (Sinai II, yes '75, September '75) Henry as Secretary of State, Ford is President coming up to '76, elections. We paid a very high price for Sinai II particularly the language on not talking to the PLO. Which if you look back at the Congressional record, it was not meant. And of course in between we had those 2 Geneva summits and all that nonsense. We launched those negotiations obviously with the Soviets in Geneva and never reconvened the Geneva conference. But it's never been adjourned either, by the way. That's a technical and legal historical point. Anyway, the language on the PLO. It says we will not recognize or negotiate with any other party except in consultation with Israel or something like that. It didn't say "not deal with" and that was very carefully drafted. I think you probably have that on record, maybe from Roy Atherton because I think he drafted it with the Israelis. It was a negotiated statement with the Israelis. They knew what it meant and what it didn't mean. It did not mean "not talk to them." It said "not recognize or negotiate with." They were afraid we would negotiate issues of substance behind their back with a party they couldn't deal with--the Palestinians. But later it just got expanded into a "not talking to" by Congressional pressure and Carter's problems later on. But we didn't do it with Jordan, did the second one in '75 with Egypt after that very difficult period of getting the one with the Syrians. Including the arms embargo against the Israelis in the spring of '75 because they balked at the Sinai II agreement badly and it was aborted and had to be picked up again in the summer. But it was a fascinating period. You had a lot of differences on substance with the Israelis that didn't surface because we weren't getting at the tough substance. We were still in the disengagement kind of thing. We

weren't addressing some of the tough issues like the West Bank, certainly not Jerusalem. So, Kissinger got outraged with the Israelis during the early efforts at the Sinai II G agreement. And held up arms shipments and things like that. Put some real pressure on. Nevertheless we were still going down a road with both sides, with this very fantastic Sadat-Kissinger relationship and the Israelis. Things were moving, there were stops, fits and starts. And our differences on substance with the Israelis, we didn't really get into it that much, We weren't getting to that kind of substance where things were going to be really nasty.

Q: Had Begin come in at that point?

CLUVERIUS: No. Begin came in the spring of '77.

Q: We'll come to him later. But you felt you had an Israeli government that was middle of the road, somewhat responsive. And also Sadat became sort of a surprise, didn't it. That he was considered at first sort of a minor, ineffectual character.

CLUVERIUS: That's because he had been Deputy Pharaoh. You never know how Pharaoh is going to be until he's actually Pharaoh. There's no doubt that Kissinger found on his first trip, after the war, his first swing to Moscow, Tel Aviv, Cairo (I forget how it went.) That here was a guy that was willing to negotiate with Israel without having an outcome guaranteed in advance. He didn't say: I'll talk to them but I have to be guaranteed now that I'll get all my territory back. Which had always been the Arab line. And here was a guy much more open to the subtleties of negotiation. And instantly, I think, Kissinger realized here's a guy he could really work with. Because the newspapers were full of the Israeli violations of the October 22 lines and the Soviets were rattling sabers--Israel must go back to the October 22 lines. And here's Sadat looking at Kissinger and saying to hell with the October 22 lines, I want something bigger with Israel. That's basically what happened. And so Kissinger came back knowing he had leverage, that here was an Arab willing to deal without guarantees in advance about the outcome. And a man with a very creative mind about these issues. And a government on the other side which however traumatized by their failure in '73, and this is the time, to recall now, when people were throwing tomatoes at Moshe Dayan, Minister of Defense, because he should have seen it coming. There was a lot of turmoil. This was the beginning of the downfall of the Labor Party, basically. But still a government willing to look at anything, willing to try to move forward, though it didn't want to deal with Jerusalem or the West Bank. But neither did Sadat, neither did Kissinger. So they could focus on Sinai and the Golan, which was very painful in any case. But something was done. So all of this sort of goes into a kind of limbo after September '75, as these things do when you approach an election year. And certainly in our traumatized society in '75-'76, a President resigning just ahead of impeachment, the pardon and all of that. By this time I was pretty exhausted; actually I think most of us were. Those were 7 day weeks and 14-15 hour days and they kept going. There wasn't a spurt that lasted a couple of months, it was years of this kind of thing. And so I went looking around for a job outside of NEA. I thought that would be a good idea. I went around to other bureaus and talked to people. NEA was prepared to take care of me, there was no doubt about that. By this time Roy Atherton was Assistant Secretary, Joe Sisco had moved up to Under Secretary, Hal Saunders was in the Department as Deputy Assistant. So I went looking around. My tour had been much longer than normal. In fact at one point, it was early '74, Hermann Eilts wanted me to come out as he'd reopened the Embassy in Cairo. And

Roy said, you can go, but I really need you here. So I stayed. NEA was clearly willing to take care of me but I'd really thought I'd like to do something else and get away from these pressures. Also, it was clear that for a year or so it would get difficult to get the process started again, disengagement had gone as far as it was going to go. You were going to have to touch tough issues, and I felt I needed a break. In fact, I couldn't find that quality of job outside of NEA, that NEA would give me. I was looking for a DCM job in a medium size post in Africa or a small European post or something like that. We had what was called the "Global Outlook Program." You were suppose to go around and sprinkle your careers with experiences outside your main interest, your main career line. So I went in to Roy Atherton one day and said, "Roy, the kind of job you are giving to people from other bureaus coming to us,, their bureaus are not giving to us." And I laid it down for him. And he said, "You're right, it's not equitable, so what do you want to do in NEA?" And I looked around and I said, "Look, Joe Twinam is about due to come out to Bahrain, I'd like to be Ambassador to Bahrain." He looked at me and he said you're right. Kissinger had agreed that we could use these new posts, which were relatively recent, in Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE.

RICHARD McCOY
Consular Officer
Tel Aviv (1969-1971)

Richard McCoy was born in 1934 in New Jersey. He graduated from Cornell University in 1959. He served in the United States Marine Corps during the Korean War and in the Air Force from 1960 to 1966. He entered the Foreign Service in 1966. His posting include San Jose, Tel Aviv, Adana, Zagreb, Georgetown, and Washington D.C. He was interviewed by William Morgan on March 13, 1989.

Q: Going to a larger post like Tel Aviv, you brought those same lessons along, but could you translate them now into what particular lessons you learned at a large post, such as Tel Aviv, which has a very large consular function?

McCOY: In a major post like Tel Aviv, you are truly locked into more or less one area. Tel Aviv is somewhat unique because of its nature, from our perspective, the administrative capital of Israel. We had tremendous numbers of distinguished visitors, congressional delegations, and visits by the Secretary of State. So you had a chance to do things other than just a straight-line consular job. The advantage of a large post for a consular cone officer is that you learn how to supervise both American officers as well as a large number of Foreign Service nationals. The issue you have at a small post is there you're not so much supervising large numbers of people, but rather you're starting to learn how to manage a wide variety of programs.

Q: You have also, in a post like Tel Aviv, a high visibility work and consular function, or to put it differently, you were closely tied with economic realities of the country. Any particular messages there of that relationship and how you worked particularly, perhaps, in visas, but also in protection and welfare with the highly politicized society?

McCOY: Visas were fairly simple. We didn't have, in those days, a problem relating to whether people would return or not. In fact, that was a rather sensitive issue as to whether they would return, because in the war of 1967, you may recall the Israelis returned in great droves from wherever they were around the world. So that was not quite of an issue as, let's say, it would have been in Costa Rica or in later posts like Guyana.

Protection and welfare was extremely difficult. We had large numbers of American citizens, many of them elderly, and quite a few of them with mental problems. The result is that what you had was, from a citizenship, protection and welfare area, the problems were much more difficult and intense.

For example, one Christmas, I remember, we had a woman who was mentally deficient show up with three children under the age of five. And the Israelis, even though she was Jewish, did not want to accept her under the law of return. So, consequently, I had a very difficult Christmas holiday that year. But fortunately, through the help again of our distinguished Foreign Service nationals we were able to resolve the matter.

Q: It would seem to be also, particularly in protection and welfare, that you would get a lot of so-called intervention as we say in our trade congressionals. What kind of congressional intervention, pressures or from other parts of the government did you have?

McCOY: Well, obviously there was congressional interest, I suspect not as much as there is now, though, primarily except for the issue of the Soviet Jews coming out who immediately then would want to travel to the United States and would be sponsored by some very prominent American citizens. The protection and welfare issue was much more intense, but not as involved with Congress as you would think.

Q: In that relationship or others, how did you find support from the bosses, the ambassador or others in the post, in what you were trying to do, in some cases almost contradictory influences bearing on you?

McCOY: We had an interesting ambassador. He was one of the old-line Foreign Service ambassadors from the George Kennan and Llewellyn Thompson era who had come in in the early 30s, a man of independent means, a bachelor but a man who would give us the time if he thought we needed it. He pretty much allowed his DCM to run the embassy, and he concentrated primarily on the political and economic issues that went on between the two nations, a bilateral relationship which, as you know, is a very complex and important one.

I had two different consuls general when I was there. They both pretty much left me alone which in some cases was wrong because I could have used some help. But I must say, I learned a tremendous amount there, probably more on the protection and welfare and citizenship than I could have in any place because, as you know, at that time, we were dealing very heavily with cases involving people who were serving in the Israeli army and who had voted in Israeli elections and this had resulted in a Supreme Court decision.

Q: Put differently, you feel you did get support then from top management both practical as well as advisory?

McCOY: Yes and, of course, they were very, particularly the DCM was very, sensitive to the desires of the officers in the consular section particularly the more junior officers -- that was my second tour -- to get involved in other areas of the embassy. That was very important for us. I must say, I learned a lot from that gentleman in terms of how an embassy should be operated and run.

Q: What form did this take, this training of other junior officers, and what kinds of things were they encouraged to do and could you help them do in terms of their own responsibilities in the consular section?

McCOY: Well, basically what you try to do is to explain to the officers the function of their jobs, how they should perform them, the relationship in dealing with the Foreign Service nationals, the culture under which they were now operating in terms of dealing with Israelis and their relationships outside the embassy. To develop working relationship with the police, local attorneys, doctors, and other areas such as prison visits. Then, of course, within the embassy, if they are going to travel to make sure they touch base with the political and economic section and the DCM to see if there is any particular interest they might have.

Q: Did these junior officers, in turn, sense what they were doing in terms of total mission objectives? Did they feel it was important?

McCOY: I think so because in the case of Tel Aviv, in particular, we were all on a roster to perform control officer duties, as one example. So, therefore, we would find ourselves very much involved in the whole issue relating to that in addition to others. The DCM was very good about having periodic meetings with the junior officers within the mission to make sure that they reviewed the reading file frequently or went to staff meetings and other things of that nature. And that was very useful.

...and the issue relating to whether Jerusalem should be unified with Israel or remain an independent entity. In any event, I began collating this information, and I found out that the ambassador was particularly delighted, as was the head of the political section, because as it turned out, we had very little contact with Israeli students and their attitudes. Then I arranged to have several other officers work with me to begin, without abridging on their visa function, to discuss with them various attitudes within the course of their visa interview.

Q: Was it sort of "anything to get me off the visa line?"

McCOY: No, not really. I enjoyed visa work. It never particularly bothered me. I had spent a very tough year as a protection and welfare officer in Israel and, in fact, had asked after a year to move to visas, because I can assure you I had some very difficult -- nothing to compare with Jonestown -- but some other very, very difficult protection and welfare cases in Israel.

Q: For example?

McCOY: I had one gentleman who came in to see me and wanted to know if they buried people alive in Israel. He had been a Polish Jew who had been captured by the Nazis, and buried alive, shot and left for dead, and still suffered mental problems. We had an enormous number of mentally ill Americans in the country who had come back to find God. One woman, middle aged, continually wandered out into the Sinai and a couple of times was found in the middle of mine fields by Israeli Army patrols.

So over a period of a year, this was a fairly wearying experience, because it was not only just work days, it was nights and weekends. As you can imagine, a large number of people travel to Israel, regardless of their religious affiliation. We had a very heavy workload, and I was the only protection and welfare officer.

Q: Since today the world knows the battle between the Palestinian and the Israeli, it's on the front page in every paper, did that involve you? Did you find yourself protecting American Arabs, for example?

McCOY: In some cases, yes. Most of them were handled by the consulate in Jerusalem, but we did handle those who were from the Gaza Strip. This was a particular problem. The other problem we had was the forced induction of American Jewish people into the Israeli Army; once they were inducted, they were forbidden to visit the embassies. We had some interesting problems with the Israelis over this issue.

This was at the time when there were a number of hallmark citizenship cases relating to voting and to serving in the Army. It was particularly because the Israeli Government and the way they acted on the law of return and how they implemented the law of return for American Jews. Initially, when a person voted, they lost their citizenship. It was considered an act of allegiance to a foreign country. It was taken to the Supreme Court, and the plaintiff won.

So consequently, as a citizenship and protection and welfare officer, I had to go through literally hundreds of cases dealing with people in this area, as well as protection and welfare. So after a year, I was ready to go to the visa unit.

Q: These examples you are giving in protection and welfare, and I'm sure visas was the same, were coupled with those that I had in Beirut about that same time, which reminds me -- and I ask for your comment -- how closely tied the consular function is in an area like that with political realities and political function, if you will, of the entire mission.

McCOY: That's true. That report that I did was very well received except by my consul general. He got very irritated with it. He thought that I wasn't doing my job; I was "wasting my time" doing things which were not my job. I, of course, disagreed with him. He was an officer who believed that the consular function was the consular function and not a political function, and never the twain shall meet.

Q: How did you deal with this?

McCOY: I disagreed with him.

Q: Beyond disagreement.

McCOY: I basically dealt with it on the basis that I felt that many times we did get biographic and other information through the visa interview and our travels in our consular function, and therefore I felt that as a Foreign Service officer, I was obligated to work on this. He had been an old-line staff officer who had never done anything but consular, primarily visas.

Q: What does "old-line staff" mean, for those who might not have heard about this?

McCOY: Basically, there were a large number of people who had come into the Foreign Service as clerks, and when that function was abolished, they adjudicated passport and visa cases. Our workload in those days, from what I could see when I arrived in the sixties -- and you know better than I do about this, Bill -- was labor intensive. You had to have all these documents, and it was very much involved in citizenship. Of course, this was an outgrowth of the displaced persons that came out of the Second World War, and also the requirements of the McCarran Act for visas, in which you had to have everybody fingerprinted. We went through a very bureaucratic exercise. We had people who were required to adjudicate these cases, and who were very fine and very conscientious about it, but who believed that that was all they were supposed to do.

It was an attitudinal problem in the sense that they also resented the fact that in those days, many officers within the embassy looked down upon them as simply glorified clerks who were not really capable of doing substantive work. I remember one of my bosses in Costa Rica, the second boss I had in Costa Rica in the consular section, who was a man who was almost selected out as a political officer, and they told him he could stay on if he went into the consular cone.

Q: Sounds like consular work is second class.

McCOY: It was, very definitely. People told me that if I ever expected to have a successful career, I should leave the consular function and should have gone to the political cone, because at that time it had always been put in my efficiency report that I had reporting skills. But I felt that I really had the best of both worlds, because I really did enjoy the consular function, and I believed that if I did the job properly, I would be recognized for it. I think that's been borne out.

Q: Hopefully, just for history, hopefully today this is not a reality, but how did the large mission of Tel Aviv handle a technician as the consul general and some younger or at least more junior officers that didn't look at their work that way?

McCOY: It became rather embarrassing, because the consul general tended to get pushed aside. I found myself, and some of the other officers would find themselves, constantly pulled out of the section, being used as control officers for congressional delegations. When we had the Black September fight between the Jordanians and Palestinians in September 1970, we were literally working 24 hours a day. We'd work during the day in the visa unit, then we'd all pull shifts commanding the operations center that we had in order to maintain a voice link with our

embassy in Amman, which was under direct attack by Palestinian forces, and also helping to provide communications and support to the military airlift that was going on at the time into Jordan. We also had the Sixth Fleet that came in, and our officers were involved in coordinating with the Israelis.

I literally, one time, thought the Third World War was starting. I mean, it was an interesting period and dramatic, but also very scary. One night, in 30 minutes of traffic, I had 24 immediates and six flash messages, three of which were directly from the President to the Chargé of the embassy, because we thought the Syrians were going to invade Jordan to assist the Palestinians, and the Israelis had said if they did that, they would invade Syria. And so on and so forth. So this got to be very tense.

As I say, the consular officers were the backbone of the support, because there were a number of junior officers in the embassy, but for example, the junior officer in the political section was off doing other things, the junior officer in the economic section, who was Wat Cluverius, who has had a marvelous career and is a marvelous officer, was responsible for providing relief assistance to Jordanian and Palestinian refugees by leading convoys from the Gaza Strip across into Jordan. So consequently, what you had was, I think there was one junior officer in the admin section plus the consular section, who provided the support for the embassy to run the operation's center during this crisis, which lasted about three weeks.

Q: So the Middle East is a good place to serve?

McCOY: Oh, yes, it's very interesting. Never dull.

MARK C. LISSFELT
Israeli Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1969-1971)

Mark C. Lissfelt was born in Pennsylvania in 1932. He received his BA from Haverford College and his MALD from Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1959. He served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1956. His foreign posts included London, Tel Aviv, Bamako, Brussels, Bonn, Berlin and Paris. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 22, 1998

Q: So you left Mali and Africa never to return for a posting in '69 to go back to Israeli affairs on the Desk.

LISSFELT: That's right. I went back to IAI, as it is called, Israel-Arab Affairs, to work for a very fine guy, Roy Atherton, and then for Heywood Stackhouse, who succeeded him, another fine man whom I'd known and worked for in Israel. This would have been in early '69, leaving Mali, of course being seen off at the airport by the whole embassy staff, with champagne toasts and tears of those left behind. I know it wasn't because we were leaving, but it was because they were staying. I spent the better part of two years in NEA-IAI, until April of '71. I was doing my share

of speechifying, going around the country with "truth squads," we called them, before the Zionist organizations of America and other campus groups, where generally anybody from the State Department was raw meat thrown before the dogs, and we were eaten alive more often than not.

One time before the Zionist organization in Pittsburgh, a few blocks from my home, where my mother accompanied me and witnessed with horror on her face as her son on the stage was eaten alive by others on the stage and in the pro-Israel audience. It was horrendous. The main preoccupation then was what we called the Jarring mission. That was the name of a Scandinavian diplomat who was trying to get things going by way of peace talks. Joe Sisco was the extraordinarily active and able, although gritty and scratchy, not particularly friendly Assistant secretary who led us and who was considered by Henry Kissinger over in the White House at the time to be the only assistant secretary in the Department of State who knew how to do the job right.

Q: You were really there between Arab-Israeli wars, weren't you?

LISSFELT: That's right. Between the '67 and the '73 Wars. I had had my Israeli war. Anybody who's had any experience with Israel talks about "their" war; mine was the '67 War. And I must say, I left that assignment, when by the way we started for the first time plotting on a big map of Israel after the Six Day War, Israel and the West Bank (the famous long map with the green line on it that everybody had in their offices at the time) the various new settlements that were being established. As Moshe Dayan, the minister of defense of Israel, the leader of the extraordinary Six Day War effort, used to say, "We are creating facts." And they were creating facts that we are living with still today, but I can remember with a colleague, Mike Sterner, starting to put these pins in a map, and it was only a sprinkling of them across the West Bank of the Jordan, which have, of course, grown to their present dimensions. We were wondering why we never as a government did much to stop it, but we didn't. Anyway, those were the main preoccupations of the time. There are lots of records of conversations in Joe Sisco's office which had to be done up by us note-takers and sent out in NODIS (No Distribution) cables after visits by various ambassadors calling on him. Then Sisco often ushered in a lady journalist of *The Washington Post*, whose name has long since escaped me, and then briefed her thoroughly, and so the whole story of his advancement of the American cause in the Middle East was in *The Washington Post* the following morning. Often, many lines that were in our highly classified cables, which we were compelled to do up the day of the conversation and get to his office to be sent out in a rush that very day appeared in her stories.

Q: Being present there as these settlements were moving forward, facts on the ground - you've watched it since - it's now October '98 - what do you think about a settlement, what about this new Wye Agreement, with the background you have on Israel? Are you optimistic?

LISSFELT: Well, you now, you have to curb your optimism in any conversation about the Middle East and any relations between the Arabs and the Israelis, Palestinians and the current Netanyahu Israeli government. I think it's the only straw we have to hold onto. It may be a weak read to mix my metaphors, but I think recent events in the newspaper, in the aftermath of the killing of the Israeli soldier, the effort to bomb a bus just yesterday, the things that Arafat has done, give reasons to show that he means business this time, and I think probably Netanyahu, the

prime minister of Israel himself, may be even impressed.

Q: Well, Mark, you talked about speechifying and outreach to various Zionist groups. One has the impression that your assignment, and that office generally, has a lot of preoccupation with domestic politics and outreach. Were the groups then as vociferous and articulated as they now are and did you find through ties to them difference of approach and view between the career and the political levels of the department?

LISSFELT: Well, I don't remember on the very last point much difference. At our level, my exposure to people up the line really ended with Joe Sisco. At this time, William Rogers was the Secretary and I use to see him regularly bringing in a group of American Jewish leaders. I think it's the American Presidents' Conference or Conference of Presidents of various major American Jewish organizations.

Henry Kissinger was over in the White House till Rogers left. And Rogers struck me as very reasonable and a very moderate man, extremely - I'll go back to the word *reasonable* in his conversations with these American Jewish leaders. They were a very distinguished group of people, as you can well imagine, very cordial, very high-level, and always prefixed their conversations with the Secretary by protestations of affiliation and loyalty as American citizens to their own government with a keen appreciation for what might be done to help the situation in Israel.

Q: Was there a feeling that much of the action was with Henry Kissinger in the White House, the NSC, and that Rogers was frequently struggling to catch up?

LISSFELT: ...With the boss of the building in which you worked, namely Mr. William Rogers, but the contacts were constant between him and Kissinger or Kissinger's office, and we didn't kid ourselves that the shots in this area, particularly because of the domestic political considerations, were very much directed from the White House, by whomever, and the domestic politics we mentioned a minute ago were constantly on our mind. We forgot them at our own peril.

THOMAS B. KILLEEN
Consular Officer
Tel Aviv (1970-1971)

Thomas B. Killeen was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania in 1940. He joined the Peace Corps in 1964 and was posted in Chile. He entered into the Foreign Service in 1967 and his career included posts in Israel, Bolivia, Thailand, Ghana, Venezuela, and Somalia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: Yes, there were these periods of time to encourage retirement.

KILLEEN: And he did that out of the blue and there is some poor guy back in Washington looking at Tel Aviv and saying, "Where in the hell am I going to find someone to go into a

consular job in Tel Aviv a couple of months before the summer?" And probably the same guy saying, "What am I going to do with Killeen who now needs an assignment to an Arabic speaking post," only to discover that Arabic is co-equally with Hebrew an official language in Tel Aviv. Killeen, Tel Aviv, go. So I was then in Tel Aviv for eighteen or nineteen months, whatever it was. I liked it a lot.

Q: What were you doing, consular work?

KILLEEN: Consular work. I was the number two man in a two-man American citizen services unit in the Embassy in Tel Aviv. It was my very first job in the real foreign service part of the Embassy. And I liked it because I liked the work, I liked the content, I liked the place, I liked the way things worked in Israel. Things actually functioned. And I liked it because it was an Embassy job, a real mainline Embassy job. There were some adventures there too but... Though maybe this is an adventure of the foreign service of the kind that you are interested in. I was working the counter and there was another guy, another foreign service officer who was on a rotational program with us, who came up to the counter and said, "Tom, come on to the men's room with me." "There are a lot of people here; no, no I can't." He said, "No, you've got to come." "For Christ's sake, I can't." He says, "You've got to." So we into the men's room. There was a small room and then there was a doorway with the john. The door to the john was closed with a rope hanging down over the end of it and I knew what was happening and I kicked the door open, mad as a hatter at this guy who could have done the same thing and I said to myself "if the poor son of a bitch is dead.."; he should have been knocking down this door. I got the door down, heard and felt the fellow clump, couldn't get in, kept pushing on him and jamming him up alongside the toilet bowl until I could get in, got the rope from around his neck and saved his life. The rope that was hanging on the other side of the door had signs on it, "Let My People Go," "Free the Jews from Soviet Domination," things like that. Police came, the Israeli ambulance came and took the guy away, he was mentally disturbed, he was hospitalized, and a cloak of secrecy was dropped on the whole thing. My supervisor, a couple of days afterward, came to me and said that he personally wanted to thank me very much, the guy was going to survive and he was going to survive with all his marbles, although he didn't have many of them left; but he was not going to be a vegetable. But there would never be anything documented about this because of the fact that it had taken place in the Embassy; the Embassy did not want any kind of publicity about the fact that there had been an attempted suicide on the premises. The Israelis, for their own purposes, didn't want any kind of publicity or any possibility of publicity about that particular protest being made in the U.S. Embassy. The fellow said he would never be able to mention it in an efficiency report. I accepted that; I was a young officer and I accepted that. I don't know whether I should have had a pat on the back or an "Atta boy" or what, if anything. Maybe I shouldn't have, maybe I should have been formally reprimanded... But, nothing! And I accepted that. It didn't occur to me at the time to say to the guy, "Just put your thank you in writing for me and classify it if you want."

Q: Yes, that is sort of odd. Were Americans getting into trouble in Israel, and how was it dealing with the Israeli authorities over the problems of Americans?

KILLEEN: There were substantial numbers of tourists and there were young tourists. The Israelis in those days were, and I suspect still are, very worried about dope. They were most

specifically worried, it sort of diminished them I always thought, that their success in battle, some of which they attributed to the fact that their Arab opponents were always stoned out of their mind, would be undermined if the drug habit found its way among their own troops. They were tough on dope. Some of the Americans that came to Israeli were interested in dope. There was some hashish available, even some heroin, not too much but there was some. The Israelis had tough laws. If I remember correctly, one of the laws was that any person within thirty feet, in any event it was space denominated in feet or meters, was deemed equally in possession of the dope. So that quite literally you could be standing on a street corner, or any place on the street, and if some guy ten paces away with whom you had no connection whatsoever was in possession of marijuana or hashish, you could be charged with possession. But there were some Americans that got in trouble. There was one kid who, at least he said and I suspect he showed me some evidence because I know I believed him at the time, had lost half his jaw. He said he had been in the Marines and had it shot off, just barely ticked with a .50 caliber bullet. When he went before an Israeli judge on a possession of hashish/marijuana charge, he had explained to the judge that that was the mitigating circumstance, that this whole Vietnam business had been so excruciating for him and that dope relieved him of his travails. And the judge, with tears, set him free.

The Israelis were very cooperative. Formally and officially they required themselves to notify foreign Embassies, which really meant us, if somebody were arrested, and to do so within twenty four hours. They prohibited their police from having any direct police initiated contact with foreign embassies on the same matter. To the best of my recollection, if somebody was arrested and wanted to call the Embassy they were free to use the phone. One of the guys on the staff, an Israeli guy on the staff who among other things had been -- do you know what a capo is, or was in the concentration camps?

Q: Sort of like a trusty or something, with certain powers.

KILLEEN: Yes. The guy had been a capo and he was on the Embassy staff, a peach of a guy. He was not proud of having been a capo, he did it to survive. He had, as far as I was able to figure out, established a personal relationship of trust and confidence with every police officer in the whole country, so that when any American was arrested, he got a phone call. Some of the phone calls came at the office, I guess most of the phone calls came at the office, but enough of them came at his house so as to create a patina for the police officers that it was just a phone call to a friend; he got a phone call whenever an American was arrested. It was nothing like what it became say in Mexico with Americans and dope, but there were substantial numbers. Others got in trouble, in trouble is not the right word, out of joint, because of the operations of Israeli law. The Israeli nationality law provided that any child born in Israel of a Jewish mother was automatically an Israeli citizen, period. And that every Israel citizen had a military obligation that required among other things, from age fifteen forward, that he get the permission of his local military commander to depart Israel. What would happen, especially in the summertime -- and it was tough -- some fifteen year old kid, generally of a more observant nature, (the Yeshiva students, those who wore the dark suits, the dark hats and who we in this country generally refer to as Orthodox Jews) would come to Israel for one reason or another, often having entirely to do with religious reasons or school reasons. When they were about ready to leave, usually on group flights, Israeli immigration people would say, "Let me see your permission from your local military commander to depart Israel." The kids didn't have a clue as to what was being talked

about. They did, however, understand when the immigration officer said, "Well you have to go and get it and you can't leave now." And they would call Mom, who would then call the Embassy. Sometimes Mama would call the Congressman who would then call the Embassy. Sometimes the kid himself would call the Embassy. But it was always the same, the Israelis would not allow them to leave until they had this piece of paper and the getting of the piece of paper was not so difficult. It cut in, under Israeli law, when somebody was fifteen which is of sufficiently tender years so that it rattles a kid; and it rattles Mom and Pop and Congressmen and everybody along the line. And everybody justifiably so, except the Israelis, who knew, knew that the immigration officer would tell the kid to go get it and it would take a couple of days; maybe, with a lot of luck, a couple of hours. Now he was going to miss that flight unless he had been fortunate enough to get there at eight o'clock in the morning for an eight PM departure, which hardly ever happened.

Then there was one case where an American guy -- funny guy -- who had spent some time living in Germany; when he finished his assignment in Germany he got a repatriation loan and went back to the United States. When he was back in the United States, rather than repaying the repatriation loan, he stole a roommate's birth certificate and some other identification and got a new passport in that other persons' name which he then used to go, maybe to go back to Germany, but in any event he came to Israel on it. And he had his original passport in his luggage! During his incoming customs inspection the Israelis opened it up and discovered this healthy young man of military age, long time in Germany, coming to Israel with a brand new Land Rover, or something like that. The security bells started flashing, they didn't know what was going on, they didn't know who he was, they had no reason to believe anything that he was saying because he was in possession of credible evidence that contradicted itself. So they put him in jail; I think if I remember correctly that it was thirty days after they incarcerated him, incommunicado under their security laws, before they finally communicated to us that he was being held and asked us if we would help them sort out who he was. Some of that was my job because I was the passport officer as well. I saw him in jail; the eventual disposition of his case, I don't remember how long he spent in jail, was that he was tried and convicted by the Israelis of some offense such as entering Israel under false pretenses or with false documentation, something like that. He was fined, the fine was just about what the brand new Land Rover brought at auction, plus the cost of his airplane ticket back to the United States. I gave him a couple of bucks of walking around money for the day or two that he was half at liberty, after time served, of course.

Oh, there was another guy, it was a funny case. I don't remember whether he was an American or not, but he was being held by the Israelis on the complaint of his wife because he refused to grant her a divorce. Under Israeli law the civil status was determined by the religious community to which one belonged. That particular fellow's religious community provided for divorce but only if initiated by the husband. Civil law provided that a guy could be locked up if he declined to give his wife a divorce and this guy had been in jail for several years if I remember correctly. I am saying to myself, "Was he an American?" I had dealings with the guy but I don't remember whether, maybe he just used to hang around visitors to the jail when I was there visiting someone else.

WALTER B. SMITH II
Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1970)

Chief, Political Section
Tel Aviv (1971-1974)

Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1974-1978)

Walter B. Smith, II was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1929. He graduated from Princeton University in 1951 and subsequently served in the U.S. Army as an officer. Mr. Smith joined the Foreign Service in 1958. His career included positions in Moscow, Frankfurt, Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Berlin, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: Well, then, what happened to you after you left Moscow?

SMITH: I was assigned for two years to the Soviet part of INR under Helmut Sonnenfeldt, who was running it then. He was an interesting character. I was given the Middle Eastern portfolio [in the Soviet part of INR].

As you may recall, the Soviets kept trying to engage us throughout 1968 in major power talks about the Arab-Israeli problem. This is what the Arabs wanted them to do, to spare them having to negotiate with Israel. They wanted the Soviets to work out a deal with the Americans and to bring in the British and French if necessary. We resisted this, but the Soviets kept inching closer to the Israeli position in these highly confidential discussions. I was called in on New Year's Eve 1968 by Sonnenfeldt and sent to Roy Atherton [then Director of Arab-Israeli Affairs in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs -- NEA]. Atherton was already Joe Sisco's right hand man. Joe Sisco was shifting from the position of Assistant Secretary of State for UN Affairs to the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. The Soviet Ambassador [to the U.S.] had come in once again on or about December 29, 1968, with still another position paper on the Arab-Israeli problem and had delivered it to the Under Secretary of State. I was sent by Sonnenfeldt to be of assistance to Atherton in analyzing what the Soviets were up to.

That fired my interest. Over the next three months I went furiously through every recorded conversation between senior U.S. and Soviet officials and also second hand reports from our people of Soviet discussions with Western officials. Generally, my objective was to tabulate the evolving Soviet position on the substance of the Arab-Israeli points of contention. I distinctly sensed a progression between 1967 and the beginning of 1969. I wrote this paper, listing all the Arab-Israeli points of contention and showing an evolution of Soviet classified posturing in our direction. I also did a tabulation of published Soviet positions on these issues to show how much daylight there was between their diplomatic stance and their public, propaganda stance.

Sisco suddenly was called in because the Soviet Ambassador -- Dobrynin -- came [to the

Department of State]. Out of this flowed what were called the Sisco-Dobrynin talks on the Middle East. These began in March 1969. Sisco was given the "green light" from Secretary of State William Rogers to start, on a tentative basis, secret talks with Dobrynin on the Middle East. The Israelis did not know about them, and SOV [Office of Soviet Affairs in the Department of State] did not even know about them, at first. Sisco wanted an assessment, at the outset of these talks, of the Soviet position. And guess what? Intuitively, I had done just what he needed. Sisco yanked me out of INR, and I worked for Sisco intensively for the following eight months, together with Roy Atherton, as one of the three participants in the Sisco-Dobrynin talks on the Middle East. For a relatively junior officer -- I was, I guess, 39 years old -- this was a heady experience. We went to Moscow and met with Andrei Gromyko [Soviet Foreign Minister] for two weeks because the Soviets, for reasons of "amour propre" [self esteem] had to be able to say that the talks were also taking place in Moscow and not only in Washington. We stayed in Spaso House. Jacob Beam was our Ambassador to the Soviet Union -- this was in the summer of 1969, my last visit to Moscow, I am sorry to say. But staying in Spaso House was fun, too, per se. That was one of the most important moments in my Foreign Service career.

Q: Before we get to what you were seeing going on, may we go quickly back to INR? Sonnenfeldt was your immediate superior. He's a figure that keeps cropping up in foreign policy matters.

SMITH: He is a senior personage today.

Q: How did you read him at the time? How did he operate at that time?

SMITH: Sonnenfeldt was a very smooth operator. He is an astute, political animal. I do not think that he believed for an instant in my view that the Soviets were behaving relatively responsibly and that it behooved the United States to hear them out and see what kind of relationship we could work out with them. I think that he was instinctively very suspicious of the Soviets then and, until not too many years ago, continued to be rather a "hard liner." He saw that I had a commodity which was in demand, as far as the Secretary of State was concerned, and he pushed me to a fare-thee-well. That is how I got into the Sisco-Atherton operation. Sonnenfeldt pushed me in their direction. I think he must have felt that, from a political point of view, it was going to be very helpful to him. Actually, the minute I "belonged" to Sisco, I did not "belong" to Sonnenfeldt any more, although on paper I did for about six months. Then Sisco eventually had me assigned to NEA.

Q: From your point of view, what did you see in those secret Soviet-American talks on the Middle East? What were the major points and how did they develop?

SMITH: In light of the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict since then, the points at issue seem ludicrous, but, based on the history of the question up to that time, they were not so funny. The Soviets were twisting the arm of the Egyptians, in particular. The Soviets cleared their position with the Egyptians each step of the way. We gave the Israelis only a general idea of what we were up to. We did not clear our position with the Israelis. I guess we thought that that would create too big a row. We were going to have a showdown with the Israelis when and if we ever got to the point of what we considered a balanced or tentative arrangement with the Soviets. We knew, from intelligence that I cannot go into -- incontrovertible intelligence -- that the Soviets

were twisting the Egyptians' arm. Since I still had an INR "portfolio," I was able to have access to certain rarified intelligence. It was just fascinating to me to see what the Soviets were doing. They were moving very slowly, playing "hard ball" with the Egyptians -- but they were moving. And so were we.

Then the "deep penetration raids" began after the first U.S. "Phantom" jets [F-4 fighters] arrived in Israel, in September 1969. To our dismay the Israelis began using these planes to do "dare-devil" things across the Suez Canal. By October 1969 they were bombing targets around Cairo, if you remember.

Q: The "war of attrition..."

SMITH: Yes, indeed, and the windows were rattling in the American School [in Cairo]. We complained to the Israelis, and they said, "Move your school." [Laughter] They were not about to stop bombing Cairo for our convenience. I guess, in retrospect, that I can understand that, but it sounded a little arrogant at the time.

After that the Soviets introduced Soviet pilots because the Egyptians were being humiliated. Gradually, Soviet planes began pushing the Israeli air campaign back. The United States was so upset by this, in late 1969, that we broke off the U.S.-Soviet talks. We knew that this was something that meant more to them than it did to us, at least potentially. So, I suppose, we figured that this was a way of showing them how angry we were at what they were doing in Egypt. You can hardly blame them for what they were doing in Egypt. If you reverse the situation -- if the Soviets had been the "sponsor" of Israel and we had been the "sponsor" of Egypt -- you know perfectly well that there would have been U.S. pilots in there. So it was really the pot calling the kettle black, I thought. It was foolish of us to break off the talks. The Soviets resisted doing anything to help the Egyptians until Nasser blew the whistle on them. Nasser died in September, 1970!

There was an interplay between the situation on the ground in the area, which the Israelis really provoked, and our ability to continue any kind of dialogue with the Soviets. So, of course, anything the Soviets had to say, starting in 1970, was suspect, and instead of making any further effort with the Soviets, we launched what became known as the "Jarring Initiative," which the Israelis made sure would fail, and which did by March or April 1970. At that point Joe Sisco, who had an extraordinarily fertile imagination, dreamt up the so-called "Proximity Talks." He tried to get an Israeli and Egyptian to sit on different floors in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. He was going to run back and forth [between them]. The effort to organize the "Proximity Talks" continued through 1970 and 1971 and gradually sputtered out after the change of administrations in 1972, with Henry Kissinger's arrival on the scene [as Secretary of State].

Kissinger went through an interesting metamorphosis on the Arab-Israeli problem, which blew up in his face, as you know, in the fall of 1973. All of a sudden he realized that a) this problem was much more important than he had understood, and b) there were two sides to the story. In fairness to Kissinger he achieved what seemed impossible at the time because he concentrated on the problem. He saw what were legitimate Israeli concerns and what were wholly exaggerated Israeli concerns. He was able to deal with this in a balanced way. But there was nothing balanced

in Kissinger's attitude toward the Arab-Israeli problem when he came on board as National Security Adviser. He was so totally preoccupied with trying to wind down the Vietnam War that he would not allow any initiatives to be taken on the Arab-Israeli problem.

Fortunately for me, in mid-1971 I was assigned as chief of the Political Section in the embassy in Tel Aviv [Israel], and so I was spared the agony of the slow death of Joe Sisco's initiative, the so-called "Proximity Talks."

Q: Tell us a little about Joe Sisco -- how he operated.

SMITH: Well, Joe Sisco and Hal Sonnenfeldt had something very important in common, and that was that they were both political animals. As you know, most career Foreign Service officers are not political animals. Neither of them was career Foreign Service. That may have something to do with it. They understood "the game," so to speak, between the agencies in Washington. They accurately sensed what was on the mind of the White House, and they sought out "targets of opportunity." I am not trying to suggest that either man was intellectually dishonest. I am simply saying that they played U.S. domestic politics, at least "Washington Insider" politics, to try to achieve what they wanted to do. Most of us career Foreign Service people are allergic to doing that kind of thing. That is why I draw a certain parallel between Sisco and Sonnenfeldt. They were "operators."

But Sisco was also an extraordinarily clever man who managed to keep all kinds of balls up in the air at once. That was one of his methods. He would meet with foreign ambassadors -- at least two or three a day -- and cultivate the ear off these guys for an hour. He was throwing sand in people's eyes -- deliberately, in many cases. He was getting messages back to the Soviets, in some cases; he was trying to manipulate the French and British, with some success, in other cases; and he was trying to influence the White House in still other cases. I was one of his regular note takers, and after a while I began to see the method in his madness. The guy worked about 18 hours a day. He was an indefatigable operator. He did not speak correct English. I could never get over the fact that such a bright person -- he had a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago -- would make egregious errors, like: "I'm glad that this has happened to you and I," and that kind of grammatical error. That is uniquely American. You would never find a British official at that level, with his brilliance, making that kind of hash out of the English language. Pardon the digression.

Q: No, it gives us a feel for the man.

SMITH: He was a rough diamond -- let us put it that way. He came out of the poorer part of Chicago. He was tough. He was hard on people who, he felt, had let him down. He was loyal to people who, he thought, were supporting him. So he was a controversial person within the Foreign Service, not to mention within the interagency bureaucracy. I never ceased to admire and like the man, even though we did not have much in common at the time except a burning interest in the same general set of problems.

There is a strong case to be made a) that we had a good chance, not so much to solve the Arab-Israeli problem after the 1967 War, but certainly to move the situation light-years ahead in terms

of the security of Israel and the normalization of the problem. And we missed the boat. It can be demonstrated, in minute detail, that the first Israeli- Egyptian disengagement agreement, which was no mean achievement on the part of Henry Kissinger in January 1974, was almost identical to an arrangement which Sisco, the Israelis, and the Egyptians were moving toward in the spring of 1970. A lot of thought had gone into the preparation of U.S. positions and thinking through how such a partial disengagement could work in the Sinai area back in 1970-71. This material was just dusted off and handed to Henry Kissinger. He was the man, more than any other U.S. official, who made sure it did not happen in 1970-71. He had the benefit of some careful thought when he went into those disengagement...

Q: Well, now, this brings up a point which has cropped up other times, talking of Henry Kissinger. You say that he made sure that it didn't happen in 1970 or so. Was this because he wasn't involved?

SMITH: He says in his own memoirs that he deeply resented the fact that Nixon would not let him get involved in the Arab-Israeli problem for two reasons: 1) Kissinger is Jewish. Nixon is a life-long anti-Semite and was very distrustful of Kissinger's ability to be objective. Let us face it. Until he learned more about the problem, he was not objective. But that was not the only reason that Nixon kept Kissinger out of the Arab-Israeli problem, before he became Secretary of State. 2) The other reason is that, behind the scenes, he was giving Kissinger a free hand to run circles around Secretary of State [Rogers] in every other field. He [Nixon] felt he had to reserve something for the self-respect of William Rogers. The Sisco-Dobrynin talks became known as the Rogers-Dobrynin talks. Without much justification Secretary of State Rogers claimed credit for such progress as was initially achieved in those Two-Power Talks. At the same time we had the Four-Power Talks going on in New York, in which Bob Oakley was involved up to his ears. Have you interviewed him?

Q: Partly. I haven't gotten too far with the White House on that...

SMITH: I think you should. [Oakley] is a very bright guy who was very much involved in some terribly important developments, and so I hope you are able to pin him down.

Q: You were there viewing Israeli operations. We always had the feeling that the Israelis could play the domestic political card or something like that. Did you feel that they were looking for a compromise?

SMITH: No. They were not looking for a compromise. They had all this territory, and it enabled them to avoid any kind of difficult decisions. They had total distrust of the Arabs -- even beyond that which was justified. Obviously, a good measure of distrust of the Arabs was justified. But the Israelis were blind on the subject. They certainly did use the U.S. domestic political card to try to nip U.S. initiatives in the bud, frequently with success, although Sisco gave them a real run for their money.

I have a wonderful story to tell you -- let us save it for next time -- when Sisco outmaneuvered the Israelis and I heard Golda Meir calling him [by telephone] from Jerusalem and telling him that what he had done was absolutely outrageous. He had spoken for Israel to the Soviets. This

was the cease-fire-standstill agreement of August 1970 -- the time he stopped Soviet and Israeli pilots from shooting each other down over the Suez Canal. Sisco really deserves a lot of credit for pulling that off. He had to "out-fox" the Israelis to do it. Mrs. Meir swore at him on the telephone and said, "There is no way in heaven that Israel is going to abide by this arrangement." Guess what? The Israelis did abide by the arrangement, and it gave them a nice, long, misleading period of tranquility which I soon got to see from the other end, because I was then assigned to Israel.

Q: Could you explain how that assignment came about?

SMITH: After about six months of being "parked" in various corners of NEA, while I was working with Assistant Secretary Sisco in connection with the U.S.-Soviet Middle East Talks, I finally was "parked" on the Israeli Desk for about six months, in early 1970. I then spent a year as Deputy Director of Egyptian Affairs but, because I had worked both sides of the equation, I was deemed a satisfactory person to send to Israel -- and I was sent there as chief of the Political Section. In light of the fact that major power peace efforts had stalled it made a certain amount of sense to have someone in the Embassy in Israel who was familiar with them, on the chance that [such talks] might get cranked up again.

What I was starting to address -- what I mentioned last time and may have started to address -- was the feeling, that you rightly asked me about, of being "beleaguered" in Washington, at a time when Israel became extremely nervous about U.S. intentions in the Middle East and was fearful that the United States might come up with a persuasive-seeming kind of equation -- and then insist that Israel struggle with it, in terms of an Arab-Israeli settlement. One does indeed feel beleaguered in Washington because of the power of the pro-Israeli lobby.

What I discovered very early on, when I arrived in Israel, was something that I had not expected. That is, the Israelis -- rational and logical people though they are -- in fact are quite emotional and irrational on the subject of the Arab-Israeli conflict. They were dead sincere -- not conniving and devious -- in their efforts to stop diplomatic activities which they honestly believed spelled only danger and [even] ruin for Israel. That is a lesson which anyone assigned to the Embassy in Israel ought to understand, because you realize that, rational as your discussions may be with Israeli colleagues and as soon happened with Israeli friends, there were certain areas, particularly during your first few months of assignment to Israel, where you "pulled your punches," lest the Israelis, who were also sizing you up, as a friend or a foe of Israel, get the wrong idea.

Now a little "black book," in effect, is made on newly arrived diplomats -- above all on American diplomats -- as to whether the individual is sympathetic or not sympathetic to Israel's plight.

Q: I've heard this again and again, but not in quite as strong terms as you are using. Well, since this is very important and since this is a thread running through the whole situation, were you told this before you went to Israel?

SMITH: I had been told this but I did not believe it, because in Washington you become convinced that the Israelis are cynical, after you have been hit on the head and shoulders by all

kinds of clever political operations. It is only when you get there that you realize that it is not cynicism at all. It is mortal fear of the imminent destruction of Israel. There is no Israel citizen who goes to sleep at night without wondering whether his country will be at war the next day. If you look at the map -- the Israelis say this in a coy fashion: "Look at the map and you'll understand the problem." But it really is true. It is a tiny, tiny country. The minute you understand this, then you understand where the Israelis are coming from. You do not ever agree with them if you have studied the problem, but you certainly have to be sympathetic to them. Only by being sympathetic to them, without necessarily agreeing with them, will you ever get anywhere with them, if you have to nudge and cajole them in directions that they are fearful of.

I had a high success rate in Israel. When I came back [to Washington], I became Director of Israeli Affairs.

Q: First of all, let's talk about what your job was [in the Embassy in Tel Aviv].

SMITH: I was chief of the Political Section.

Q: How was the Embassy set up? Who were the Ambassador and the DCM?

SMITH: The Ambassador was Walworth Barbour, who, at that point, had been there for 10 years. He remained there for the first two of my three years. In my third year he was replaced by Kenneth Keating, a former U.S. Senator [Republican, from New York]. Ambassador Barbour was very ill. He only made it to the office for one or two hours a day. He was drinking heavily and smoking very heavily. He had serious lung problems. The man could barely breathe.

Q: Then why was he kept on in what is considered one of our "high tension" posts? Certainly...

SMITH: I have read some of Barbour's reporting during the early years of his assignment there, when he retained his objectivity. When he was convinced that the Israelis were wrong, he did not hesitate to say so, both to them and, especially, to Washington. But by the time I got there, Barbour had begun to lose a) his objectivity about Israel and b) his intellectual sharpness. I do not like to say things about such an esteemed character, but he was almost ineffective.

The DCM during the first two years I was there was Owen Zurhellen, a fantastic individual who recently died, I gather. He was a "crackerjack" officer -- very abrasive and disliked by the people [in the Embassy] because he was blunt and abrasive. But he was effective. He and I were very dissimilar in personality but we took to each other. Thank goodness. Because he really was very dubious about whether I was going to "cut the mustard" during the first couple of months I was there. I worked my tail off -- not because I wanted to have a good relationship with him but because the assignment was so challenging to me. At the end of three months he called me in and said: "I am surprised to find myself saying this to you, but I want you to know that you are doing a good job." And so it went.

These were the halcyon days when the Israelis lived in never-never land, thinking that the 1967 War had solved their problems and that war was not going to come at any time soon. Israel was enjoying unheard of prosperity.

Q: What was the period when you were there [in Israel]?

SMITH: I was there from 1971 to 1974. So I saw the unrealism of Israeli thinking that preceded the 1973 War and the devastating psychological effect of the 1973 War which, as you know, the Israelis won. And if we had let them go, as often happens with those wars, they would have won it on both Syrian and Egyptian fronts with a resounding bang. We pulled their punches for them. They won the wars, but the Egyptians and the Syrians were not convinced that they were defeated. Henry Kissinger had "seen the light." In a very short span of time he realized that if there was any hope of reaching some kind of accommodation after this war, the Israelis could not be allowed to occupy Damascus and Cairo. So Kissinger had something to do with the fact that we and the Soviets -- as had happened in 1967 -- imposed a cease-fire just as the Israelis were finally regaining their strength and getting ready to do something.

Q: Going back to when you arrived [in Israel]. Here you've arrived, you have to pull your punches, you can't overly engage Israelis without their feeling that you're not "with them."

SMITH: Which you can on lots of issues, but there are certain "gut" issues.

Q: But you have to watch it at the same time. You've got a DCM who's effectively running the Embassy, who's putting you on trial...

SMITH: Right.

Q: Everything you write is going to end up on the desk of a pro-Israeli Senator, probably.

SMITH: Well, I do not think that it was that bad, though it could be...

Q: It could. It could also wind up -- I mean, you've got all of these minefields.

SMITH: You just work extremely hard and do your best. I found living in Israel exhilarating. My garbage collector had a Ph.D. degree, spoke four languages, and was a very charming man, indeed. There are, of course, a great many poorly educated and not very refined Israelis -- mainly those of recent Arab extraction [the Sephardim]. But certainly the European Israelis [the Ashkenazi] at this time -- in 1971 -- ran the whole place and were the people one dealt with and ran into. There were certain slum areas in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem inhabited by a different kind of Israeli. But the Israelis I knew were bright, extroverted, energetic, creative, talented, and very, very entertaining and funny people. I adored being there, and this showed -- and thank goodness that it did. Because I think that that helped to persuade the Israelis that a) I was someone enjoyable to know and b) I was on their side. It was a fabulous experience.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the reporting. I've talked to other people who say that if you're reporting a telegram or a cable or a despatch -- whatever one is sending out -- a lot of it is not stating just plain fact. It's also trying to accomplish something at the other end. Here you were in this highly charged atmosphere. No matter what the State Department did, Congress or the White House could overturn it for political reasons. Things could leak. How did you and the officers working

for you deal with this?

SMITH: Well, I think you are referring in particular to reporting on the Israeli internal political situation.

Q: Yes.

SMITH: In this case we handled it with absolute intellectual honesty. Israeli politics are vibrant, very fractious, and very open. There is, of course, some back room dealing, but, by and large, Israeli politics are open. It is quite a contest. Israelis are willing to talk to foreigners, particularly if they take the trouble to learn Hebrew and already know a good deal on the subject. They are delighted to talk about the political situation and give their views and their opponents' views. If an Israeli -- a senior Israeli figure, for that matter -- had seen what we were reporting a) he would not have had any major disagreement with its accuracy and b) he certainly would not have had any question about our motivation. We were simply trying to describe what was happening and analyze where things might go. I had four or five political officers. Most of them were working on different segments of the Israeli internal scene. At least initially, I concentrated on Israeli external affairs. The Israelis had lost their relationship with most African countries, thanks to the 1967 War, but they still had diplomatic relations with some African countries and a lot of Asian countries. They had an interesting relationship with West European countries and North America. It was interesting to get the Israeli perspective, not only on the Israeli bilateral relationship with those countries but the Israeli perception of where things were heading in the European Community -- remember, this was 20 years ago -- and to get the Israeli view of economic developments in North America and East Asia.

It was interesting. So I reported this stuff with considerable care. What else can I tell you? The one member of our Political Section who might have gotten the Israelis' dander up, who spoke both Hebrew and Arabic, Wat Cluverius, covered the occupied territories beat and also Israeli domestic Arab population developments. You realize that there are almost one million Arabs who were born in Israel and are Israeli citizens. They have become a real problem. At that time those people were not disaffected. They were quite loyal [to Israel]. We tried to stay in touch with them. We certainly wanted to know what was going on in that community. We never did anything that any Israeli had any right to be suspicious of. But if they were going to be suspicious of anything that the Political Section did, it would have been our relationships with Israeli Arabs and especially with those from the West Bank and Gaza. And we also took turns visiting the West Bank and Gaza. My wife and children and I would go down every three to six months and stay in the Gaza Strip which, at that time, it was possible to do.

Q: Well, how about the West Bank? We've talked about the relationship in reporting with our Consulate General in Jerusalem.

SMITH: The West Bank [of the Jordan River] was part of Jerusalem's consular district. You are quite right. The Embassy also tried to understand what was going on in the West Bank area, not for reporting purposes, since it was Jerusalem's prerogative, but more so that we would understand what the Israelis were talking about, when they referred to their problems on the West Bank. I am glad you reminded me of that. The Consulate General in Jerusalem then -- and,

I am sure, still today -- is responsible for reporting on internal developments on the West Bank. The Gaza Strip was the Embassy's responsibility. I do not know whether that division of labor continues.

Q: I'm not sure either.

SMITH: To the extent that the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinians in the West Bank can do anything in unison, which is somewhat doubtful, then it makes sense for one U.S. post to do the reporting. These were relatively calm times in Israel -- those last two years before the outbreak of the so-called "Yom Kippur War" in October 1973. As I said at the outset, this was an economically vibrant time. The Israeli economy just grew like Topsy during that period. It was a good time to be there. Naturally, it led astray those of us who had only been in Israel during those two years. We found that out, as the Israelis themselves did, when it all came a cropper in October 1973.

Q: How did we look upon the Likud Party, Menachem Begin, and his supporters at that point?

SMITH: We did not take them very seriously. We did maintain some contact with them. In fact, to my amusement, people whom I had for dinner in my home ended up by being members of the Israeli cabinet during the several years that the Likud Party was in power. The betting was that the Likud Party was not going to be able to come to power any time soon. As you recall, it was not until 1977 that Likud came to power for the first time in the history of Israel. So we certainly paid attention to the opposition and kept track of them. One of my political officers used to say, partly with tongue in cheek but not entirely so, that it might be a better thing for both the United States and Israel if Likud did come to power.

The Labor Party was, first of all, in its heart of hearts, ambivalent about the [efforts to achieve peace between Arabs and Israelis] that we were forever promoting. Labor was dubious that peace, in fact, could be made with the Arabs. However, the Labor Party was clever about sounding "reasonable" on these issues and sounding as if it were ready to compromise, if only given the chance. Because the Labor Party was so sophisticated, the United States would listen to its advice and would sometimes compromise efforts that we were trying to make to accommodate their views. In fact, to some extent we were emasculated. This [political] officer's thesis was that if Likud ever came to power, it would "come right out with it" and would articulate the fears that the Labor Party also had about peacemaking and the future. They would call a spade a spade. And then the United States would have "to get off the dime," if we ever did get to a situation where we had our hands on a balanced compromise with the Arabs as a possibility. If the Israelis tried to walk out of it, we would have to put some real body pressure to Israel. It would have been a hard thing for us to bring ourselves to do with Labor, this officer argued, whereas with a Likud [government], if that moment ever came, it would be so abrasive that it would not be so hard for the United States to do what it had to do.

In reality, to his everlasting credit, President Carter personally persuaded Menachem Begin that the Sinai deal and the interim arrangement for the West Bank and Gaza were in Israel's interest. I know that Begin had tremendous misgivings [about these arrangements], but, by dint of sheer personality, I think that Jimmy Carter turned the leader of the Likud movement into a supporter

of the Camp David arrangements. So it never did come to a question of push and shove between the United States and Israel.

However, there was plenty of pushing and shoving between the United States and Israel during the period in office of Secretary of State Kissinger, just to get the Israelis to agree to those two disengagement agreements: one with Egypt and one with Syria, and then the second agreement with Egypt. There should have been an agreement with Jordan while there was a chance. Kissinger knew that, but that would have been very tough to carry out.

Q: You were sitting there, reading an awful lot of the telegrams coming out of Egypt, Jordan, and Damascus -- I mean, from our Embassies.

SMITH: We did not even have a U.S.-staffed Interests Section in Damascus from the 1967 war until after the 1973 war.

Q: We had an Interests Section in Cairo. What was your impression? Was it "us" versus "them?" I'm talking about two Foreign Service posts.

SMITH: You were getting two different perspectives. Even pro-Arab people who may have served in Tel Aviv -- and there have not been many because most people who have been assigned to Tel Aviv, no matter what their background -- have been, as I was, rather fascinated by the Israeli people and sympathetic to the perceived Israeli plight. Anyhow, you were getting two perspectives. We, naturally, even when we did not fully agree with the Israeli point of view, tried to report accurately and sympathetically, with the thought in mind that Washington could never do its job if it did not hear both sides of the argument. Obviously, our colleagues in the Arab countries were reporting with some degree of skepticism regarding current Arab points of view on the same issues. But we never got into "pissing" matches between Foreign Service personnel reporting on Arab politics and those reporting on Israeli politics.

We knew many of the individuals concerned. There were occasional regional get togethers of reporting officers in Cyprus, covering this area. I think that that only happened once in my time. That was enormously helpful. In the past it had happened that the American Embassy in Cairo and the American Embassy in Tel Aviv engaged in a "feud," if you will. There was a danger of friction between the reporting sections of the Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Consulate General in Jerusalem, which has always tended to be quite unfriendly to the Israelis and sympathetic to the Palestinians. That is the job of the Consulate General in Jerusalem. Our colleagues in Jerusalem sometimes seemed to feel that the deck was so heavily stacked against the Palestinians that they were fighting an uphill battle. That was not necessarily the case. We would sometimes call them up and say, "You have got to realize that your reporting [on some particular issue] is not entirely accurate. We do not want to point that out in a telegram to Washington, but we want you to reconsider what you are saying on this particular issue." That sometimes helped, but it sometimes did not. The greatest danger was to have a feud going on between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Q: Which has happened.

SMITH: It has happened, rather often, in the past. It did not happen on my watch. I had a few bouts of knocking heads with the Consul General in Jerusalem.

Q: Who was Consul General then?

SMITH: It was Pete Day.

Q: Well, now, I didn't interview him. Someone else interviewed him.

SMITH: Where is he now -- do you know?

Q: He's here in Washington. You had this very open society in Israel, and maybe it's gotten worse or better. The Israeli intelligence service is well known for its disinformation. It can muddy the waters if there's a problem...

SMITH: Not inside Israel, it can not.

Q: Not inside Israel, but outside Israel. Did you find that the Israeli intelligence operation was a problem for you or not?

SMITH: No, I do not recall any such instance. I have no doubt that the Israeli military intelligence operation was running circles around Uncle Sam, but as far as political intelligence and political disinformation are concerned, I do not recall an instance where this affected what we were trying to do.

Q: Who was the [Israeli] Prime Minister at the time -- was it Golda Meir?

SMITH: It was Golda Meir, right up to shortly before my departure in 1974. She finally stepped down, and Rabin became Prime Minister -- in the spring of 1974.

Q: What was your reading of Golda Meir and also of Rabin?

SMITH: Golda Meir was a very impressive personality, a very strong willed person, tough as nails but tired, a fine brain -- not a very refined person but a very intricate, competent person. My Hebrew was not good enough to tell whether she had an atrocious American accent in her Hebrew, but she must have had, because her English had the strongest Milwaukee accent that you have ever heard. It must have made those who speak British-accented English wince to hear her talk. Just as, I gather, Abba Eban had a rather British accent in his Hebrew. As he was an intellectual, I gather that he spoke a rather purist, classical Hebrew, which made people chuckle when they heard him on the radio. Golda Meir was just as tough as nails.

The 1973 War threw her for a real loop because she had so completely failed to anticipate it. Just after that war Kissinger said -- how did he put it? It was clever. He said that the Israelis had "brain-washed themselves" [convinced themselves] that the Arabs were incapable of launching a surprise, coordinated attack on Israel. And then the Israelis turned around and "brain-washed us" into thinking the same thing. That is exactly what happened.

Q: We'll get to the 1973 War later. I assume that you shared information with our military attaché and our Agency [CIA] people.

SMITH: They read our output. We did not read their output.

Q: Well, let's just take the military side. Were they pretty well captives -- were they impressed by the Israeli military and sort of bought their whole story?

SMITH: I do not think so. Most of the people serving on the attaché staffs were very much impressed by the Israeli military. They were amazed by the ability of Israel, working with such comparatively limited resources, compared to our own, to pull off such extraordinary feats -- in all three branches, but especially in the air. They were impressed, but they were not captives of the Israeli point of view because, I think, all of them -- before coming to Israel -- had worked on the military dimensions of the Middle East problem. If anything, they tended to be very uncomfortable about the ability of Israel to get in the way of Pentagon planning for "the big show" -- namely, dealing with the Soviets. In terms of U.S.-Soviet rivalry, Israel has never been an asset. Israel has always been a liability. Nobody ever dared say this, but it is just a fact.

If you look at it very carefully, you will see why I say this. The Israelis had tremendous military capabilities, but they would not be of any major value in stopping the Soviets. They certainly were capable of getting into a tremendous ruckus with the Arabs which could provide a beautiful opening for the Soviets to come into the area. As we were saying in the last interview, that was beginning to happen along the Suez Canal in 1969 and 1970. Fortunately, Joe Sisco turned that off, just in time. The Israeli and Soviet pilots were shooting each other down. That created really serious problems for the Pentagon.

So the military attachés we had in Israel really worked. They were pressed professionally by their Israeli counterparts. Of course, they liked them as human beings, but they were also worried about Israel's ability inadvertently to cause huge defense problems for the United States.

The CIA people were not reporting on Israel during that time. I do not know whether that is still the case or not. They had an understanding with the Israelis that they would not report or conduct covert operations in Israel. They exchanged views with the Israelis on Arab problems and so they were not, really, part of the equation.

What else could I mention? The FBI briefly had a Legal Attaché in Tel Aviv who, at one point, under instructions, began to report back to Washington without running his reports by the DCM. The DCM, who was chargé d'affaires at the time, wrestled with [the Legal Attaché] and "forced" the State Department to wrestle with the Justice Department, and he won. The Legal Attaché was required, when requested, to show his reporting to the chargé. That was the time when my already high opinion of Owen Zurhellen went way up. Zurhellen had absolutely nothing to gain from this and possibly a great deal to lose, but to him it was a matter of principle. It is the kind of principle the State Department has always tried to sweep under the rug when, in fact, if it is going to carry out its charter and responsibility as the "umbrella organization overseas," it has got to fight for its rights. Pardon the digression.

Q: No, no, I think that it's important. Tell me, how did the war of October 1973 impact on you? How did you see it?

SMITH: I did not expect it any more than anyone else did. During the 10 days leading up to the outbreak the military attaché went in, under instructions, with a warning [that war might be imminent]. The Israelis laughed. Then the [CIA] Chief of Station went in to talk with his counterpart, under instructions, with a warning that we were afraid that [an Arab attack] might be coming. The Israelis laughed. The military attaché went back in again. Then, without instructions, I went in and talked with the head of the Arab Affairs Division of the Foreign Ministry and said, "I am afraid, not based on what my military colleagues are saying, but just from my reading of the tea leaves, that something very serious may be in the offing."

Q: Where were you getting this? In the first place, was it intelligence?

SMITH: A few smart people in Washington began reading things right. I should not say 10 days -- probably a week before the war broke out, because the Egyptian preparations for the war took longer than a week. In fact, [both Egyptians and Israelis] were engaged in major maneuvers near the demarcation line when -- bang! -- the war began. In retrospect it was a major intelligence failure, not only on the part of Israel -- but also on the part of the United States -- not to have been able to say, 72 hours ahead of time, that there was no question about what was going to happen.

Ambassador Keating and Nick Veliotis, the DCM, arrived on post just as I got back from home leave in August 1973. I remember accompanying Ambassador Keating down to the Suez Canal about three to four weeks after he arrived in September 1973, less than a month before war broke out. The Egyptians had, if I remember, 35,000 troops on their side. The Israelis had 900 troops on their side. The Israelis delighted in showing us how they could cover the whole Suez Canal line with 900 men. It turned out that they could not.

Q: The Bar Lev Line.

SMITH: That is right. The Bar Lev Line. It was a masterful piece of fortification, very carefully thought through, with all kinds of intricate electronic warning devices. But the Egyptians, to their credit, breached the line within the first 24 hours, I think. Then the Egyptians were so amazed at their success -- and the same thing happened to the Syrians on the Golan Heights -- that they stood there in disbelief, when they should have been moving fast.

Q: OK, now, the attack starts. Was the Embassy [in Tel Aviv] ready for it?

SMITH: No, nobody was.

Q: So what were you all doing? Tell me what you thought about it.

SMITH: I was sitting at home, working on an Arab-Israeli peace plan of my own, when Nick Veliotis came by at about 2:00 PM on Saturday and said, "Walter, come with me, the balloon

has gone up." Off we went to the Embassy. We were there for about three days. We did not remember to bring any change of clothes, but we stayed for about three days, sleeping maybe two hours a night. Then he and I, and a couple of others, started taking turns, going home and getting a decent night's sleep. There was not anything we could do except report on what the Israelis were saying about the war. We did that quite methodically. Needless to say, the communications ear in Washington turned to the Middle East at that point. There were virtually no limits on our reporting in terms of quantity. We reported every single Israeli announcement and also reported on the mood in Israel, to the extent that we could plumb that. We were terribly worried for Israel's sake.

I remember the first night -- the night the war broke out -- Veliotos and I and some others were working almost all night long. We never thought of closing the blinds on our Embassy windows facing the Mediterranean Sea. That was the only night when Egyptian aircraft got close enough to Tel Aviv that they could actually see the city. They lobbed some missiles at Tel Aviv which missed. Had they struck Tel Aviv, it would have been so psychologically upsetting to the Israelis that I do not know what would have happened. Had they struck Tel Aviv, the fact that the American Embassy was lit up like a Christmas tree, without any blinds drawn, might have contributed to their accuracy. From the next night on we had a little sense and we pulled down our blinds.

Q: Did you have any feeling, at that particular time, that if it really reached a certain point, the Israelis would go for nuclear weapons or did we believe that they had nuclear weapons then?

SMITH: Somebody may have known -- but I did not know. I doubt that the Ambassador or the DCM knew whether the Israelis had nuclear weapons or not. There was no question that they could assemble a nuclear weapon on very short notice -- and maybe they started doing that during that war [the 1973 war]. I do not know. I was not concerned.

Q: It can come almost by word of mouth, whether it's true or not. But was it accepted at the time -- was it the accepted wisdom within the Embassy -- that the Israelis had a nuclear capability that could be used?

SMITH: The folk wisdom within the Embassy at that time was that the Israelis were within one to four weeks of assembling a nuclear weapon, if they decided to go that way. They had the know-how and the technology, but [it was believed within the Embassy that] they had not done it. They did not have them [nuclear weapons] stored. I do not know whether that was true. That war lasted over three weeks, as I remember. They [the Israelis] may very well have assembled a bomb in the course of the war. It was not something which, during the first two or three days of the war, we thought could be just around the corner.

Q: You say you were experiencing the mood of the place and you were at the Embassy all of that time...

SMITH: Toward the end of the war, we were not [always at the Embassy]. I had four or five political officers whom I could send out. Veliotos [the DCM] and I were at the Embassy all of the time, but the other reporting officers were fanned out, to the extent that they could locate

their Israeli contacts -- usually the wives of the contacts, as the contacts [themselves] were at the front.

It really is an impressive thing to see mobilization in Israel. It is no laughing matter. The postal service stops and the garbage collection stops because everybody is at the front -- and I mean everybody. The street in front of our house in Herzliyya Pituach, the suburb north of Tel Aviv where virtually all of the married Embassy officers had their houses, was a troop collection point. My wife and our then teenage daughters ran a soup kitchen during those days to help feed these reservists who had been called up and were waiting and living on trucks, waiting to be told to go south or north. It was a very nerve-wracking time for them [the reservists], of course. My wife talked with them fairly extensively.

As I recall, it was three days before they finally got orders and were sent to the Sinai front. They got two-thirds of the way down there and then were sent north to the Golan Heights. They passed by again -- that was how we knew this. They stopped for a couple of hours of rest and then proceeded north to the Golan Heights. So Israel was expecting a much bigger problem in the south than in the north. If you look at the map, the distance from the Golan Heights to Tel Aviv is [nearly] nothing. The distance to the Suez Canal is quite substantial. They had to forget about what they wanted to do in Sinai initially in order to plug the hole on the Golan Heights, because the Syrians really broke through. As we were saying a while ago, the Syrians simply stopped instead of pushing on. They could have pushed into Israel proper with no difficulty. This was at the end of the first day and a half or so. But they [the Syrians] did not do it.

Q: How about the Ambassador, Kenneth Keating? He was brand new. He had been an ambassador in India, but he was getting on in years.

SMITH: He was indeed getting on in years. He became very emotional, to the point where he was taking up a fair amount of Nick Veliotis' time, because he was getting downright irrational. He had been a colonel during World War II, and he was so moved by the situation that he said to Veliotis, I am sorry to say, in deathly earnest, that he was going to go and volunteer in the Israeli Army.

Q: [Laughter]. Can you imagine?

SMITH: Nick Veliotis practically had to put him under house arrest to keep him from doing or saying something irrational. He was a minus in this situation. May he rest in peace.

Q: It is interesting. Here is Israel, which is among the most important countries for the U.S. and also under threat of attack. Yet for a while Barbour was getting too old and was basically dying at the post, and then we sent an elderly New York politician...

SMITH: Pushing 80.

Q: Pushing 80.

SMITH: Not too smart.

Q: Not too smart. It was handy that we had somebody like Nick Veliotos, but, at the same time, people like [an unsuitable ambassador] can trip you up. Well, let's stop at this point and figure out what we want to talk about the next time. We'll put it on the tape right now. We want to end our discussion...

SMITH: We might have a few words about the disengagement agreements and Kissinger's style, because I was involved in all of that during the first six months of 1974. And then I came back and was involved in it in Washington.

Q: I'm thinking of sticking strictly to the time you were in Israel and also how the Embassy saw things at the very end of the 1973 war.

SMITH: That [involves] the disengagement agreements.

Q: Disengagement agreements. Okay. So we'll pick it up there.

Q: Today is June 25, 1993. Walter, can you figure out where you want to start now?

SMITH: You asked a good question, which I did not do justice to: what was the feeling of the Embassy at the end of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War [the Yom Kippur War]. I said that that is the same thing as discussing the disengagement agreements, which is what [Secretary of State] Kissinger was getting into. But, naturally, people who had spent, at that point, at least a year and, in several cases, two or three years in Israel, felt out of the big picture. I believe that those of us in the Embassy in Tel Aviv in late October 1973 had the same instincts that Middle East watchers had in 1967 -- for a different set of reasons, of course. That is, is there not some way to make this the Arab-Israeli War that ends all [such] wars?

We recognized the main theme of Kissinger's diplomacy toward the end of the war, which was to make sure that Israel, in effect, won the war and, at the same time, to leave a sense of honor with Israel's Arab adversaries, as the Arabs were forever putting it. So that they would not [appear to have] lost face and make sure, in other words, that Israel would not appear to have "trounced" them at the very end of the war as, indeed, Israel might have been able to do. The Arabs could thus summon the political courage finally to get into some serious negotiations with Israel. I must say, to Kissinger's full credit, he did end the war in a way which left the Israeli public dismayed and disgruntled, but not totally depressed. The depression which was palpable in Israel was not related so much to the way the war ended but to the fact that the war had broken out in the first place, despite all of the predictions on the part of every responsible Israeli that no such war was conceivable. That war really took Israel by surprise. That alone is an interesting subject which we can not take the time to go into now.

There was, indeed, an enormous feeling, not so much of desperation, but depression in Israel. It was primarily focused on the fact that Israel had not ended the war with a resounding defeat of the enemy, which was therefore unfavorable from the point of view of negotiations. So that was

the big picture: how can that [the outcome] be crafted into some kind of lasting settlement? And we all felt rather elated that the war ended the way it did, and Kissinger, who had had a very limited attitude toward the Arab-Israeli problem, had become an instant expert and was going to be Secretary of State for at least a year or two longer.

Q: Were you, as an Embassy officer, and others in the Embassy as well, taking any heat from "important" Israelis because they felt that we had stopped them from going to Damascus and Cairo?

SMITH: Not from "important" Israelis. There were demonstrations outside the American Embassy -- rather nasty, potentially violent ones. There were a few windows broken. So there was anger at the United States. I do not think that it was focused on the alleged U.S. "responsibility" for stopping the Israeli forces before they could do a proper job. As I remember it, it had to do with a misunderstanding on the part of Israeli public opinion with respect to prisoners of war. Kissinger crafted an exchange of prisoners of war, knowing how important this was to Israeli public opinion. It was fair and reasonable. It was misrepresented, as I recall -- and this gets a little hazy in my memory -- in the Israeli press. Some Israeli young people believed a false story that the Americans had deliberately "delayed" the release of Israeli prisoners in order to gain some negotiating advantage. I think that was the only cause for violence against us in Tel Aviv at the end of the war.

Q: We're trying to keep this as much focused on the Embassy and you, particularly. The war ended. What were you all doing?

SMITH: Kissinger's first "shuttle" began before the war ended. It entailed zigzagging between Tel Aviv, Moscow, Damascus, and Cairo to pull off a cease-fire. This I remember well. He did not come to Tel Aviv. While in Cairo he sent Joe Sisco to Tel Aviv, which bothered some Israelis. It should not have, because, as Kissinger rightly put it in a confidential message to the Israelis, he knew that the Israelis knew him and could trust him, whereas the Arabs did not trust him at all. That was why he was "stroking" the Egyptians in particular, as well as the Syrians, and letting Joe Sisco talk to the Israelis. It was not an untenable proposition. You can not do everything simultaneously.

My admiration for Sisco, which was already high, went up still higher because the man a) understood what Kissinger wanted and got it done; and b) did not hesitate to "buck" Kissinger when he thought he was wrong. I just got a glimpse of this Sisco, who was with us only about 24 hours in Tel Aviv at that point.

Your question was, "What was the Embassy doing at that time?" It was supporting this kind of frenzied activity on the part of the Secretary of State or the Under Secretary of State, which was quite demanding. We did not have a big Political Section. We wound up by lassoing our colleagues from the Consular, Economic, and Administrative Sections to keep the place covered, because there had to be "round the clock" officer coverage by all possible means, on behalf of our visitors.

Let us see now. This was the end of October 1973. Kissinger was back by the end of November

1973 for a shuttle visit and for another shuttle visit in early December 1973. There was a lot of shuttling. I do not know how any other U.S. business got transacted in that period of time. In January 1974 he stayed almost a whole month in Egypt, if you will recall, to nail down the first disengagement agreement. The agreements between the end of the war at the end of October 1973 and the beginning of the negotiations leading to the first Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement, reached in early January were several. The agreements had to do with troop disengagement and prisoner of war exchange. Both of these agreements were extremely important, especially the troop disengagement agreement. You will recall that the map of the situation on the Egyptian front -- and also on the Syrian front -- was not to be believed. There were "pockets" of Egyptian and Israeli soldiers deep behind the other party's lines. How to straighten this out while assuring the two belligerents that they were not giving up anything of consequence and that a straightened line did not lose them any negotiating or military advantage -- that was not a simple matter. On the other hand they could not possibly feed the troop pockets, especially the Egyptians.

Q: There was the whole [Egyptian] Third Army sitting out there...

SMITH: The [Egyptian] Third Army was an obvious sore thumb, but there were little bits and pieces of Egyptian units elsewhere, too, in extended and unsupportable locations. And there were Israeli [troops] in unsupportable locations behind the Egyptian lines. So that kept us busy.

I was summoned back to Washington by [Under Secretary of State] Joe Sisco on December 30, 1973, as was Bob Oakley, who was my counterpart as chief of the Political Section in Beirut. That was done because [Secretary of State] Kissinger, as you may recall, at the peace or non-peace conference in December 1973 (which the Syrians, at the last moment, refused to attend), created the illusion of an ongoing peace conference after he and the other principal [figures] left. I do not know whether he appreciated its value at the time, though he did very quickly after that, but this was a device to keep the Soviets somewhat distracted by implying an important [degree of] collaboration with the United States. It gave [the Soviets] a place of seeming prominence, namely, in Geneva. It was a way of keeping them out of his hair as he dealt with the parties concerned. To do this, he had to have somebody, some ostensible interim or acting chief of the U.S. Delegation in Geneva. That was why Oakley and I were summoned back to Washington on December 31, 1973, given our marching orders, and sent initially, with Mike Sterner, to Geneva to be a "pretend" U.S. Delegation to the non-existent Middle East Peace Conference, at which the Soviets had their former ambassador to Egypt and Iran as our counterpart.

Sterner was by now a Deputy Assistant Secretary. So there was at least a smidgen of Soviet face-saving in having Sterner there. But Sterner only stayed for a week. I had a wonderful time with Sterner in Geneva. Sterner and I went to school together. Oakley had gone back to Beirut, and from that point, until the end of April 1974, Oakley and I took turns, leaving our posts in the Middle East to go and sit for two weeks [at a time in Geneva].

Q: Were you told that this is what you were doing or were you given something to do but not much?

SMITH: It was self-evident why we were doing what we were doing. And we were given

absolutely nothing to do. We were told not to leave Geneva either. One weekend I did go down to Monaco to see an old friend who lives there. I did this with some apprehension, I might add, because even on the weekends we were supposed to be there, in Geneva, and visible to the Soviets and on call, for the Soviets or for Washington, whoever wanted to be in touch with us. The Israelis, at Kissinger's insistence, kept a delegation there, too. I happened to know the Israeli delegates. They were Foreign Ministry people who were as frustrated as I was at this fiction. That is what I was doing [during the period] from January to April 1974. In fact, my two sons were scheduled to be confirmed at St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem in April 1974. Because, as often happened, I had no travel orders, I finally telephoned Roy Atherton from Geneva and said, "Please see if I can't go back to Israel for this coming weekend, to be present at my sons' confirmation." And Roy arranged it.

Q: How about the Soviet delegation that was there [in Geneva]? What were you doing [with them]?

SMITH: The Soviets were sore with their delegation head Vinogradov, who had botched things recently as Ambassador to Egypt. They were using [this occasion to "punish" him]. They were not stupid. They figured out what Kissinger was up to and were very frustrated. I think that Kissinger met with his Soviet counterpart at some point, somewhere in Western Europe, to "stroke him" and pick his brains, so that the Soviets could continue the masquerade of major power collaboration for their own people. I do not know how we figured out that the Soviets wanted to "punish" their ambassador, but there was no question that this was the case.

Q: Well, if you have to be "punished," Geneva was not the worst place in the world to go. It could have been Khartoum [Sudan] or some place like that.

SMITH: That is true. We would go and call on this Soviet ambassador every third day or so, just so that he would know [that we were there]. We had nothing to say. We had to "invent" things to say to him. In fact, he was a likable man.

That takes us up to the spring of 1974, and then, of course, Kissinger began his Syrian shuttle -- about the time we wound down this silly exercise. Actually, after I left Geneva, Bob Oakley had to continue to hang around there for several more weeks. As I remember it, this began in April or May, 1974.

Q: Now we're in the spring of 1974. Then you went back to...

SMITH: [President] Nixon, of course, was on his last legs. We had Nixon's grand visit...

Q: This was sort of Nixon's grand tour that he was undertaking to get away from the Watergate Affair.

SMITH: That is right. To emphasize his strong point of foreign affairs, [President Nixon] made a very high profile visit to several of the major Middle Eastern capitals. I think [he visited] Egypt, Israel, Syria, Jordan, and...

Q: Were you in Israel when he came through?

SMITH: Of course.

Q: How did [the visit] go? Because it was my understanding that everyone knew that this was a dying, a failing presidency. Did it come across that way where you were -- or how [did it look]?

SMITH: In fairness to Nixon, he comes off very well when overseas. I had seen him in action when I was his escort officer in the Soviet Union in 1967 for two or three weeks. He has a lot of dignity and wit about him in a foreign situation. He thrives on that, too. He held his head up high, at least when he was in Israel. I am sure it was much more of a dilemma for the Israelis than for the Arabs because, when push comes to shove, Israel depends very much on its "special relations" with the White House -- not with Congress and obviously not with the State Department. So the Israelis were hoping against hope that Nixon, who had proved himself, on the whole, to be a good friend to them would survive. They did not want to see an interim president. So the Israelis were nervous about the Watergate business. The [Nixon] visit came off very well in Israel. Nixon said the right things, he paid the proper courtesy calls, he did not have an impulse to do anything zany. We got him in and out of there. He got enormous, positive coverage in the Israeli media, as I am sure he did in the Arab media, too. It was the first time a president of the United States had visited any of those countries.

The ability of Israel to absorb the enormity of its miscalculation in the outbreak of the [1973] war in the first place really occupied us in terms of our reporting on the Israeli domestic scene. In addition to that, there was a crisis within the Israeli government. As you may recall, Golda Meir was interim prime minister for about five months. Finally, Rabin became prime minister when she stepped down. She had already resigned but she was required, under the Israeli constitution, to stay in office until a certain point. And then Rabin became Prime Minister in the spring of 1974.

This was a unique situation. It had never happened before that Israel had a caretaker Prime Minister who had the courage, bless her, to sign the agreements on the cease-fire, the prisoner of war [exchanges], the straightening out of the line [of contact between the Israeli and the Egyptian armies], and the disengagement with Egypt. I think she was still in office at the time the agreement on the disengagement with Syria was negotiated. I think she was already a caretaker Prime Minister at the end of the war. She signed these agreements. That was because of the tremendous moral authority that Golda Meir had in Israel. Since then, Israel has had caretaker prime ministers who have been scared of their shadows, because they really did not have the constitutional authority to do that kind of thing. So we got away with murder in terms of the Israeli domestic political situation at that time, thank goodness.

So back I came from Israel, at the end of July, 1974. I was sitting at my desk in Tel Aviv one day, and exactly one day later, I was sitting at my desk in the State Department as Director of Israeli and Arab-Israeli Affairs.

Q: You served from when to when...

SMITH: From July 1974, until July 1978, a very interesting period. Kissinger was there -- let me get this right -- for the first two of those years. Then [I served under] Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Yes, Kissinger stayed on, did he not, as Secretary of State under President Gerald Ford?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: I cannot recall whether it was because Kissinger or Sisco asked for it, but those of us at the working level knew that it was the logical thing: I threw myself with a frenzy into writing a series of papers in July, August, and September 1974, explaining how he should try to pull off a so-called disengagement between Israel and Jordan, even though there had been no combat between Israel and Jordan. Kissinger instantly recognized the desirability, if we could manage it, of persuading the Israelis to pull back from a token portion of the West Bank. [If this were done] we would strengthen the hand of the Jordanians as possible spokesmen for the Palestinians. If we did not do this, in rapid fire order in the summer of 1974, then [Yasser] Arafat and the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] would be institutionalized [as the representatives of the Palestinians], which is precisely what did happen, I think it was in November 1974, at the Arab League Summit meeting. After this King Hussein [of Jordan] just washed his hands and said, [in effect], "I can no longer negotiate an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank on behalf of the Palestinians. I have been rejected." This greatly complicated the political life of the United States in the area.

Through Joe Sisco, I did get a backhanded compliment from Henry Kissinger. I guess it was just before the Nixon resignation. [In effect Kissinger reportedly said that] all of this makes eminent sense, but the White House is so weak and is going to be so weak for such a protracted period of time that he [Kissinger] could not pull this off from a U.S. domestic political standpoint. He sent that word to me, which was the closest thing I ever got to a compliment from him. Kissinger also said, "For once the State Department people are writing a paper that takes all aspects of the problem into account." I had looked at Kissinger's own writing and now saw papers relating to the disengagement efforts up until then, the summer of 1974, and recognized that Kissinger did not want a simple analysis of what the smartest thing would be to say to the Israelis and, in this case, King Hussein and what the carrots and sticks for the parties should be. He wanted to know what would be happening in Algeria, what would be the ability of the Algerians to undercut King Hussein, what would be happening in Western Europe, what would the Soviets be up to -- you know, the global [perspective]. It was not that hard to do. It was not our style in the Department at the time [to do this kind of thing].

Q: Tell me, just to give me a feel [for the situation]. Here you are, as the Arab-Israeli desk officer, and you're thinking of what would the Soviets do, what would the French do, what would the Algerians do -- you're treading on all sorts of toes. How do you handle this? Do you call up and ask? This is sort of a nuts and bolts question. How would you go about it?

SMITH: I do not remember whether I ever cleared the various sections of my action memorandum to Kissinger with the desks concerned. If it had not been urgent, obviously, I would have done so, as I should have. I am not sure if I did. It was not a profound study. I simply put myself in -- who was it? -- Boumedienne's position [as President of Algeria]. I was vaguely aware of what the Algerians had been [accustomed to] saying about King Hussein and I had paid

close attention to what they had done and said about the Arab-Israeli problem since the [1973] war had ended. We had been talking with the leaders of the entire region, and so I kept track of them in the telegrams. Simply on the basis of the existing short record, I extrapolated what they would probably do in this case and came up with suggestions which may have been faulty but looked obvious to me of things that we could do or at least say to the Algerians to keep them quiet -- little hints of future U.S. favors in other contexts. I am sure I did not clear this with the Algerian desk officer because he would have wanted to make a Ph.D. thesis out of it, and there was not time. Also, it was sketchy. It was not a prediction to Kissinger of what would happen. It was a scenario suggesting that this was what might happen, and this was a possible way to contain these actors on the margins who could disrupt what you wanted to do otherwise.

Q: What you're really talking about is the [widespread] complaint that the State Department can't produce [such studies] because, even if you wanted a thumb-nail sketch of what Algeria and the Soviet Union [would do], by the time you get it [cleared] you get a tome...

SMITH: Or if you do not get a tome, you get a wishy-washy [study]...

Q: This is how the NSC [National Security Council] operates. You make your best shot, which usually isn't too bad.

SMITH: It is better to have [such a paper] done in effective, real time than to belabor the points. But you can make major errors. The point of this paper was that it was not a rigid scenario, under which Kissinger was going to move, step by step. It was simply a picture. Kissinger would fill in the picture as he went along. He was going to "ad hoc" it from day to day, anyhow. But it [the memorandum] was to jog his memory on the fact that, if Kissinger made a public statement about this or that aspect of King Hussein's role in relation to Jerusalem or the West Bank, it would -- I am just making this up -- irritate the hell out of Boumedienne, who had a propaganda machine in the Arab world to make life horribly difficult for King Hussein. So [the idea was] that you do not go public with this or that viewpoint, if you want to avoid riling the waters. This is the kind of thing that we are talking about here.

Q: You know, the Arab-Israeli desk officer...

SMITH: Let me interrupt. That is a pre-1967 term. What it really meant was that [I was] the Israel and Palestinian desk officer. The "Arab" part dealt only with East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

Q: Now, were you doing the normal things that a desk officer does, such as taking care of visitors and all of that? Because I imagine...

SMITH: That was not the purpose of this desk at all. It was the desk for Palestinians. It sounds as if it was a regional office operation. But the Israeli desk -- the Israel and Arab-Israeli desk -- can not speak for any Arabs except for those then under Israeli occupation and inside Israel before 1967. [In fact], not under Israeli occupation but under Jordanian and Egyptian occupation, but still intimately associated with the Israel problem, let us say. Namely, the Palestinians.

Q: Well, you must have been inundated with visitors and all that, which must have taken an awful lot of your time. Could you turn them aside, particularly Congressional visitors and all that?

SMITH: Yes, but most prominent Americans considered themselves instant experts before they even left, so they were not screaming for State Department briefings. They knew it all, already. Furthermore, the Israeli Embassy [in Washington] was happily giving them all kinds of briefings, and we would like to have given [these visitors] what we considered the "straight" story, but, as you have sensed, we could not stretch ourselves in that many directions at once. A great deal of the Arab-Israeli stuff, regionally speaking, did, indeed, fall in our laps. Somebody had to do it. NEA [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] did not have regional offices any longer. Those had been scrapped when the country directorate system was created. There was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State [DAS] for South Asia, another DAS for North Africa, and another DAS for the main part of the Middle East. So we at least had a person with authority to deal with these matters, and, starting a year later, it was Nick Veliotes who came back from Tel Aviv, where he had been DCM, and took over this work.

Even though there was a deputy assistant secretary for the pieces of the NEA region, because there was no office dealing with those pieces, some country directorate within the Middle East would have to function, in effect, as a [regional] office, as far as getting the papers together was concerned, making sure that people all wrote their bits and pieces, and it all got assembled. That fell to us. So we did have, in the 1974-76 period, quite a bit of regional paperwork to do, if you will. We were stretched, then. Thank goodness, prominent Americans wanting to go to Israel were not pounding at our door.

Q: What about the Israeli lobby? Are we talking about this time and its effect on you -- AIPAC [American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee] and you and the various issues?

SMITH: I knew it well from back in December 1970, when the Israeli lobby went berserk after [Secretary of State] Rogers' Peace Plan Section II, which dealt with the West Bank and Jerusalem, came out. [The lobby] flooded the Executive Branch [of the U.S. Government] with so much correspondence that normal operations came to a halt. So I was familiar with all of this. There was a fair amount of confusion in the [Israeli] lobby. There was no clear signal from Israel to the lobby in 1974-75, and many prominent American supporters of Israel recognized that Kissinger, even though he was having a lot of friction with Israel, was displaying a lot of good sense in maneuvering in the Middle East. No matter how little confidence the pro-Israeli lobby, like the Israeli Government, had in Kissinger at the beginning of 1974, within four months he had pulled off disengagement agreements with the two combatants, Egypt and Syria. The Syrian disengagement [agreement], if you look at it carefully, was really extremely difficult and a tour de force for which alone Kissinger deserved the Nobel Peace Prize.

Naturally, the American-Israeli lobby thought that we had a Secretary of State who was not pounding on Israel and was displaying a lot of wisdom in what he was doing -- and was a real activist. Kissinger barely had time for anything else in 1974-75. Things slowed down a little bit in 1975 after the second Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement, which was reached, if I remember correctly, in September, 1975. The purpose of this agreement was to nail the Israelis

down. To do this, Kissinger made some very unfortunate commitments to the Israelis, which plagued us later on, about what the U.S. would or would not do in the future in pursuing Middle East peace efforts. He did not have to do that. I do not know what made him think that he did. But that is getting a little bit ahead of the story.

I do not know what else to say on this. The Israeli lobby was not a problem in 1974 or in 1975 -- at least not more than it always is for anybody in the State Department trying to carry out U.S. Middle East policy. They were checking on us. I spent a lot of time, as Director of Israeli Affairs, with major supporters of Israel. I went to a lot of receptions, almost to a point above and beyond the call of duty, to let them see me, talk to me, show them that this is the guy who, at the working level, is responsible for Israel in the State Department. Was this guy an Arab lover? Was he a Jew hater? They could see that I was not. I think this did some good. Now that I think about it, I spent an inordinate amount of time, not exactly stroking these people but just exposing myself to them. I honestly think that this did some good. I got my staff -- the FSOs [Foreign Service Officers] working with me on that desk -- to do the same thing. Then, as things calmed down, in 1976-77, the NEA Office of Public Affairs "discovered" me and put me into their speaking meat grinder. I spent about 25 percent of my time traveling around the United States, talking about United States Middle Eastern policy -- as often as not in front of American Jewish groups of all stripes. And, of course, academic and business groups and so forth. That was quite exhausting, as I look back on it.

Q: The various Jewish groups throughout the United States have been such a major factor in our Middle Eastern policy, because they are so politically powerful. Did you find yourself up against "true believers" or did the people asking you questions have what I would call a "rational approach" to the role of Israel at that particular time in the Middle East?

SMITH: On the whole, I was impressed with the degree of sophistication of Israel's supporters in the American hinterland. I should not have been surprised, because these people were: a) well educated, whether it was Des Moines [Iowa] or Little Rock [Arkansas] or wherever I was. They were always interested in international affairs, partly because of their attachment to Israel but, I suspect, not only because of Israel. They were quite knowledgeable about American foreign affairs. Also, they were very grateful to have somebody come from the State Department and try to explain to them what the State Department and the Secretary of State were seeking to do. The fact that we had a dynamo for a Secretary of State, who was, by now, a proven friend of Israel and also a very smart character in handling Israel and the Arabs -- and who happened to be Jewish -- this was not lost on these people that I was dealing with. I sometimes found myself dealing with blue collar, relatively ignorant, American Jewish groups, who tended to be extremists in their belief or their willingness to believe the cliches about how the State Department was the enemy of Israel. But that did not happen often. On the whole, I found the American Jewish community to be intelligent, perceptive, well informed, and willing to listen to somebody from the State Department.

It was a reassuring experience. The fact that I had just lived three years in Israel, spoke a little Hebrew, and was not a "buddy" of the Arabs by any stretch of the imagination did not hurt, naturally.

Q: How did you find the change when the Carter administration came in? Let's talk about the transition and that period. Here you were -- there was a new administration coming in, with Democrats coming in to replace Republicans. This was a major issue. How were you treated or perceived by the new people coming in and how did you deal with the transition period?

SMITH: Every new administration brings in a bunch of political figures who think that they know it all and push aside the career people. I know what you mean. As far as the Jewish community is concerned, though, it is worth mentioning that Nixon and Ford had been so weak that they were pleased to have a properly elected president. Until Nixon the Democrats had seemed to be friendlier to Israel than the Republicans. Nixon turned that idea on its head in the view of the American Jewish community.

This is an aside, but even though Nixon seems to be on record as having made some extraordinarily anti-Semitic remarks, he nevertheless will go down in the history of the American Jewish community as one of the most pro-Israeli presidents that we have ever had. That is really what is called "squaring the circle."

Q: Well, he was a politician.

SMITH: But back to President Carter. The American Jewish community and the State of Israel had no reason to think that Carter was not going to be a true friend of Israel. But what made them nervous was the fact that -- I do not know whether it was [Zbigniew] Brzezinski or [Secretary of State] Vance or [President] Carter himself who set something of a deadline to get back to a major effort toward a total settlement in the Middle East, as opposed to these "piecemeal" arrangements which Kissinger had concentrated on. I think that it was Vance who did this, and he lived to rue the day, because he could not meet his own schedule. So there was a great burst of Middle East consultations, travel by Vance to Moscow, Western Europe, and to the Middle East, because he set a deadline for reconvening the Middle East Peace Conference. I have got all of this written down at home, because I wrote a paper on U.S. Middle Eastern peace efforts from 1967 to 1982, which is about 250 pages long and which has never been published.

Vance made some gaffes early on which made him look much less sympathetic to Israel than the facts justified. He made some statements on the eve of visiting Arab capitals which made the Israelis nervous. But I do not think that the Israelis were really worried about the Carter administration at all until the Camp David negotiations.

Camp David was a bewildering event. The Camp David meetings took place just after I had left the position of Director of Israeli and Arab-Israeli Affairs -- in fact, two months later. To me it was spellbinding. Some very good books have been written about it.

Q: Did you have any problems with the transition? I'm talking about the teams that came in to look at things, or was that a fairly professional transition, at least in the NEA area where you were working?

SMITH: I do not recall any upheaval in NEA or with respect to the Middle East, resulting from the change of administration, other than the rhetoric of the incoming administration, spurning

any further effort on partial arrangements and calling for a major effort to go right to the fundamentals of the Middle East peace problem. This looked very optimistic to us at the time, although Carter had the will power, and Camp David was the result. No, I do not remember a transition problem.

Q: Is there anything that you can add?

SMITH: Vance, in my view, was one of the best Secretaries of State that we ever had. He certainly went out of his way to consult the professionals [in the State Department]. He was not abrasive with the career staff of the Department of State. On the contrary, he relied heavily on career officers. So there was a good working atmosphere within the Department after Vance took over.

Q: Is there anything else that we should cover before we move on to your next assignment, because we want to stick to your experiences, rather than...

SMITH: My last year or year and a half -- 1977-78 -- in this position which we have been talking about entailed more and more time spent on the road in public speaking. This was partly because the Department needed me to do that and partly because my office was not directly involved in those preliminary stages of groping with the Middle East problem. Therefore, this was a good way to use me and my time. I did not have a problem with this, other than the fact that it was exhausting. To make a long story short, I do not think that there is anything else that I was directly involved in during the 1977-78 time period which we need to go into.

Q: Just another, quick question. What was your impression, during the 1974-78 period, of the reporting from the Middle East? Because now you were in a different position. You were looking at the reporting coming from Cairo, Jordan, Beirut, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv. Did you have any feel, at that particular time, [about the quality of] the information that was coming from our posts in the Middle East?

SMITH: I recall that the reporting on the domestic political situation seemed to me to be very good, even from capitals such as Damascus, where we had very little access. I thought that it was impressive. On the Arab-Israeli problem, it was of limited value, as long as Kissinger was Secretary of State, because he was conducting it all "out of his hat." There was no way for a reporting officer in the field to have any true sense of what was likely to happen next in Washington. Because Washington was the major player, not the local folks. But on the domestic political scene, I thought that our reporting was darned good.

CLIFF FORSTER
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv (1971-1973)

Cliff Forster was born in Manila, the Philippines in 1924. His father was the field director for the American Red Cross in the Middle East. After serving in the U.S.

Navy, Mr. Forster attended George Washington University and Stanford University. Mr. Forster served in the Foreign Service in the Philippines, Burma, and Israel. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt on May 29, 1990.

Q: What do you have to say about the program in Israel? Of course, that was the period before Israel became quite so belligerent worldwide.

FORSTER: Their settlements on the West Bank certainly had a negative impact on world public opinion.

Q: What was the thrust of your program for Israel in those years?

FORSTER: When we were there, Golda Meir was running the show and doing a very effective job of it with leaders like Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres. Israel was not having the problems that it's having today. Cairo was under blackout then and Sadat was coming out with a strong anti-Israeli line at that time. You certainly had the feeling that Israel was surrounded by hostile regimes, and that they needed some kind of support.

I'd say at that time we were generally more sympathetic to their problems. We -- when I say "we," I am referring to those of us in USIS, who were on the cutting edge of this because we would continually be up against a very active and vocal Israeli media, who felt that the U.S. did not fully understand the position they were in. This is when we were pressing them very hard on the "Rogers Plan" to try and work out some kind of adjustment in the Sinai and to avoid retaliatory raids in depth into Egypt and Lebanon. We felt this would be counterproductive. Of course, they continued with those for a while. Lebanon was not the major problem then; it was Egypt.

Then along about 1972, we could feel the Arab-Israeli tension building up fast. We were very close to some of this, both in Jerusalem and in northern Israel. You had terrorist strikes across the border from Lebanon, a family killed after a Bar Mitzvah not too far from where we were traveling on the road, which caused great resentment in Israel. Then came the "Munich massacre" as they called it when several of their best team members were killed by PLO terrorists at the Olympics. That had a devastating effect on the Israelis and found them striking back in force. Then there was the capture of the Sabena plane with Israelis aboard by the Palestinians right on the Lod airport tarmac outside Tel Aviv. Dayan personally led the commandos who rescued the passengers. Now, they were really beginning to retaliate in force each time, and the policy made sense to them since these terrorist strikes were increasing.

Next came the Lod Airport massacre, which was a surprise attack by three Japanese "Red Army" or Sekigun terrorists who had been trained in Lebanon. They just opened fire indiscriminately on the passengers after the landing while waiting for baggage in the terminal. The airport was like a battlefield with dead and dying, women and children, everywhere. Those of us involved at the time will never forget the carnage. And many of those victims were Puerto Ricans coming on a pilgrimage to visit the Holy Land, American citizens, many of them. Those of us in the embassy went out as pallbearers the following day. The Japanese ambassador and his wife, who were visibly moved by this "massacre" involving Japanese went from one hospital to another to visit

the victims. Being Japanese, they took personal responsibility and went on television to apologize to the Israeli people. Of course, many of the Israelis couldn't understand why they should take it so personally since they were in no way responsible. The Japanese sent a delegation immediately from Tokyo to take care of all the claims and this was also immensely impressive to the Israelis.

But you could see and feel the Israelis steeling up. At that point, they were mad and this is when they started striking back, as you recall, with their own agents in various parts of Europe, and they would throw it back at us in our sessions. "You see? You see this? How do you deal with this? You have to strike, strike, strike." It was clearly an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

Then came the raids into Lebanon. Nancy and I were skiing on Mt. Hermon, I remember, at the time of one of the first raids. Their jets just came screaming right across Mt. Hermon to attack the southern Lebanon area. The tension simply increased and it got worse with the passage of time.

Q: This was in '72, wasn't it?

FORSTER: The winter of 1972.

Q: Before the '73 War.

FORSTER: That's right. We left Israel just before the outbreak of that conflict. We were coming back for a second tour, and were on leave at the time of the "Yom Kippur" conflict as it became known. We went to their twenty-fifth anniversary celebrating the creation of the State of Israel. It was their big anniversary celebration in Jerusalem in the spring of 1973 and the Israelis were riding high. You could just see that they were feeling very good about things, in general, and were convinced that their forces were adequate to cope with any invasion threat. So it was a great shock to them when the Arabs struck on Yom Kippur Day and moved in so rapidly over the Sinai and across the Golan Heights.

I would just like to say one or two things about this period of service in Israel. Because of the kind of tensions building up between us, we were cautioning them to avoid over-kill pointing out that our retaliation raids in Vietnam were often counter-productive. We urged them to work out some kind of solution with the Palestinians, the Peace for Land thing. But the Israelis were not prepared to buy this.

I even arranged for a number of leading Israeli journalists to go as a team around the U.S. to get some idea of the feeling that was building up in the U.S. even then about some of the Israeli intransigence. I don't know whether it resulted in much, because they felt they were beleaguered and that we had no conception of the real problem -- survival. But at least they had a chance to have face-to-face talks with editors outside of Washington. So many of them were tied in with the Washington scene. They had not gone around the country to get a better idea of American public opinion and it was both educational and disturbing for them.

At that time also I felt that my USIA colleagues in the Arab countries and, indeed, myself,

should have more of an opportunity to understand the points of view of our different constituencies.

For example, I had never been to Israel before this assignment and I couldn't quite figure out why they were assigning me there after all these years in Asia. Perhaps they thought this would make me more neutral. After five or six months of discussions in Israel, I felt I needed another perspective. The Israelis are great people, but you can go on all night arguing your points of view, and it gets very intense after a while. You find yourself sort of steaming up.

I was so exposed to their perceptions, I felt, "Boy, I've got to get out of here for a while and find out how the Jordanians, Egyptians and Lebanese feel about this situation and how the PAOs in these neighboring countries are reacting".

So I was able to work out an arrangement with Mike Pistor and Bill Payeff, who had the Middle East area, to go around to the other posts. I just asked my colleagues to please arrange for me to meet with -- in the case of Beirut, Palestinians, Christians, all the various elements who are at each other's throats now, and then the same in Egypt and in Jordan. I just wanted to know how they all viewed the Israelis and our policies there and in the Middle East in general. You read about their reactions but I wanted to know face to face. I felt this would be an opportunity also for me to try and give them some idea of our positions on Israel and the Arab world as viewed from Tel Aviv.

This exchange of views turned out rather well and I began to arrange for visits by my PAO colleagues to Israel to meet with Israelis in different fields. Dick Undeland, from Amman was one of the first to come over. Ed Penny from Cairo followed with others. I would arrange to get Israeli journalists, scholars, a good mix together with our PAOs, so they could get some idea of their perceptions at first hand.

This was a gamble. I certainly felt it was worth trying and it got off to a good start. Whether you're in Israel or in one of the Arab countries, you sometimes find yourself taking on the coloration if you are not careful. It's the old problem, rather like China when it went under, all the strong feeling over what happened there in '49.

We had a series of good meetings. The whole idea was ultimately to arrange very selectively for Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians, and Egyptians to meet informally at USIS-arranged programs. This was about the time of 1973 just before the Yom Kippur conflict. Then, of course, everything ended with the war and the whole effort went under.

What has happened since then, I think has been a disaster. I was appalled by the changes in Israel with the settlements in the West Bank and the rigidity of Israel's new leadership after Golda. I felt it was going to boomerang on them, and I think it has.

Q: The whole Begin period started with that settlement policy.

FORSTER: And it was just so entirely different from the earlier Golda Meir period. I mean, sure, you did have some hostility, but they were very correct then, Lew, about the West Bank. You

had a few incidents, yes, but I remember traveling into the West Bank quite often, and for a while Nancy and I lived in the old city of Jerusalem, the Arab quarter and relations were quite good then. We used to try and get residents, leaders of the Arab quarter, together with our American and Israeli friends, just to see if we couldn't break some of this down. Sometimes it worked; sometimes it didn't. One of the great guys -- you read about him now -- was Mayor Teddy Kollek's advisor, Meron Benvenisti.

Q: Kollek is the mayor of Jerusalem?

FORSTER: Right. He and Benvenisti have tried to follow a middle road and have a sympathetic understanding of Palestinian concerns in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Another one is Amos Elon who wrote an interesting article on the Peace Now Movement in Israel which appeared in the New Yorker. I'm amazed how much has been happening there with moderate Israelis who oppose Shamir's policies and Begin before him. The feeling, I think, of so many of us is, "Wow! They're all going along with this tough Shamir line." That is not true. I've met a number of Israeli friends recently who I worked with earlier in Israel who say, "Look. We're not for this, for what's happening. We're very upset about this extreme policy that the government has in Israel now."

So I would say the experience there prior to being pulled into Washington as deputy for the Middle East area, was a traumatic one for me, certainly. There were successes, there were failures. It was, overall, the kind of experience that you never forget because it is so intense and because you do meet so many really outstanding people in that country on both sides of the issue whether you agree or disagree with what they're doing and saying. Most of them, including the media people and many of the scholars, feel the way we do about current Israeli policy. Certainly the opportunity to be there when Golda was running things was a special experience.

Q: You were back in the States either on home leave or perhaps going back or not, when the 1973 conflict erupted?

FORSTER: Right. We had just left that summer. We had the kids and were en route to Washington, to report in and then go on home leave. I had a call from Bill Payeff from Washington, my old buddy in East Asia, while we were in Paris. He said, "Cliff, we want you to come on in. I'm going to head up the Near East and North Africa Division and want you as my deputy."

I told Bill, "Look, I haven't figured this area out in two years. It's going to take me another two, at least." Regardless of all the problems, we were all enjoying our time there just from the standpoint of the history and archeology of the area. There's just so much, not to mention the tremendous psychological challenge for us from the policy standpoint, too. So I was eager to return to Israel but they wanted me in, and they assigned Stan Moss to replace me in Tel Aviv.

So I reported in, and it was just shortly after I arrived -- I had to cancel my leave, as I recall -- that all hell broke loose with the Yom Kippur war. The kids lost some of their Israeli teachers, who were killed in that conflict, so it had quite an impact on them. We lost some very good Israeli friends. It was clearly an Arab invasion in our view although there was a lot of conjecture

about it at the time, but when Syria struck Israel on that day, it was reminiscent of Pearl Harbor. They were all observing Yom Kippur, and the Syrians just came across their borders as did the Egyptians with their tanks to the south.

We immediately set up this Middle East task force. VOA played a terribly important role during that time and we were working with VOA to make sure that U.S. reaction, official and unofficial, was getting through to both sides and particularly to the Arab states since we felt it was important for them to know just where we stood in case there were any major moves with Soviet support. VOA was also an important channel to let the Soviets know where we stood since the Soviets were actively supporting Syria, as you may recall. Kissinger, when he sent in those planes, the cargo flights, to Israel, couldn't get any support at first and they finally had to come through the Azores to refuel en-route. It was a dicey time and USIA's support in getting the message through to the different parties became very important.

So we went through that conflict with the task force, working with our State colleagues. It was a good group. Joe Sisco and Roy Atherton over in State, Bill Payeff, Bill Rugh and others with USIA. I think you had on that task force, as you did on the Vietnam task force later, a very special kind of professional cooperation between the State and USIA officers. There was a lot of respect for the expertise that we could provide, the importance of the Voice in getting the word through, and an acceptance and understanding of what information tools we could use during this crisis to support our policy actions.

Q: On the other hand, the Arabs never forgave us for that intensive supply effort to the Israelis. We probably saved the Israeli nation at that time.

FORSTER: You're absolutely right. The incrimination and the rest of it. But you couldn't just let Israel go under.

Q: And they would have.

FORSTER: Oh, no question. The Israelis say this themselves. The way the Egyptians moved in across the desert until Sharon, who was right of Attila politically (their General Patton), pushed their tanks back into Egypt. A number of those generals that they had were not as extreme as Sharon. Many of them were fine men and they sustained great losses. Dayan was still going strong then although it was not too long after that when he and Golda passed on. It's amazing how there was such a political change in Israel after their departure from the scene.

Q: Labor lost.

FORSTER: Labor lost, and then there was the era of Begin. We never saw Begin around during our time in Israel. He was simply out of sight. As a matter of fact, when Begin moved into power, it was only Stan Moss and some of the USIS people who knew him. The ambassador, in order to get together with Begin, worked this out through Stan, I understand. It was a case of where USIS officers had been in contact with all sides.

AUBREY HOOKS
Rotation Officer
Tel Aviv (1971-1973)

Ambassador Hooks was born and raised in South Carolina and educated at Brevard College and the University of South Carolina. He entered the Foreign Service in 1971 and served abroad in Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Ankara, Port au Prince, Tel Aviv, Rome, Helsinki and Harare. He also had several assignments at the State Department in Washington, DC. In 1995 he was named United States Ambassador to the Republic of Congo at Brazzaville and served there until 1999. He subsequently served as Ambassador to Democratic Republic of the Congo (2001-2004); and as Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire from 2004 to 2007. Ambassador Hooks was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: So you were in Israel from '71 until?

HOOKS: 1973.

Q: Who was the ambassador and what was the situation? How did you find Israel when you got there?

HOOKS: I arrived there at the end of May, 1971. Walworth Barbour was the ambassador at the time. Barbour had been in Israel about ten years or so; he was appointed by President Kennedy. He had been there so long that he knew everyone, often before they became known on the political scene. He was Boston-born and had been in the Foreign Service for close to 40 years. He was a very courtly gentleman of the old school.

I started off working in the visa section. We had a fascinating DCM, Owen Zurhellen, who went on to become ambassador in Surinam. Zurhellen took a great interest in junior officers, and he really mentored us in a great way. He used to play volleyball with us once a week, for example. He managed a great rotation program in the embassy. I worked for three months in the consular section, and then Zurhellen asked me to become the staff aide to the ambassador. I think it was the one of the most fascinating jobs I had in the Foreign Service. I was Staff Aide for almost a year, followed by rotations through the commercial, economic, political, and citizenship sections of the embassy.

Q: Well, you said you were staff aide mainly working for Barbour? How did he operate? What was your impression of him as an ambassador?

HOOKS: He had the advantage of having been there for ten years already, so he knew every senior official in the government, he knew the history of the country better than most Israelis. The country at that time was less than 25 years old, so he had been there almost half the life of the country. He knew all the political actors, he knew all the issues inside and out. Because of health issues, he never came to the Embassy before 9 o'clock, and he always left shortly after 12 o'clock, although he often received people in his Residence in the evening. That's the way I

thought all ambassadors operated but discovered later in my career that that wasn't the case.

Once he left the Embassy, I had to prepare his reading folder for the following day, and I learned quickly what he was interested in and what he was not. I went through all the cable traffic and selected the telegrams that he wanted to see. In the afternoon, if anything needed his signature urgently, I would take the document to his residence. Actually it was a wonderful time because I got to meet lots of interesting people and to follow key events very closely. Everything came through my hands and it gave me a great opportunity to see how an embassy works.

Barbour was a very bright man, a very courtly man, very reserved, perhaps even a bit shy, but he and I just seemed to click. He would often call me into his office and he would reminisce for a few minutes about various events. I had the impression he was pleased with what I was giving him. He would occasionally take me with him to special events and so it was a wonderful, wonderful experience.

Q: Was there a Mrs.?

HOOKS: There was not, which was unfortunate in many respects given his social obligations. He became dean of the diplomatic corps, which was quite unusual for an American ambassador, because he had been there so long. That honor brought more responsibilities for me. I met all the other ambassadors; I had to arrange farewell gifts and events for departing ambassadors. We had lots of visitors, CODELS and senators in those days, and so I ended up being control officer for a lot of those people. The Ambassador would receive members of Congress at his residence for drinks at 6 o'clock. That was his standard way of dealing with senators and congressmen.

And so this was my introduction to the Foreign Service. It was exciting. I can't imagine a better introduction to the Foreign Service and so I was thrilled with that first assignment.

Q: What was your impression -- obviously it was your first government but you couldn't have asked for a more active government -- of the Israeli government and how it operated.

HOOKS: Well, Israel was always a unique and special place, and even in those days, because of domestic interest in Israel, our relations with them were very unusual. As I mentioned earlier, we had a very large number of members of the Senate and Congress coming through Israel, and it was interesting to me to see how members of Congress became involved in our foreign policy, particularly in the case of Israel.

Israel was also a very pro-American place. It was very friendly. Golda Meir was prime minister; she herself was American at one time. We had such close relations while I was there. I recall one of the things the DCM did which I thought was really incredible: he would invite senior government officials to his house for dinner and he would invite all the junior officers to attend. I met Menachem Begin at his house for dinner. I recall he also invited the head of Israeli intelligence the very evening that an El Al airline was hijacked in Cyprus. Believe it or not, the guy actually came to dinner and was able to brief us on what was taking place while negotiations were underway, so we felt we were being involved in history in a very immediate sense, something that I had never experienced before. I found those events exhilarating and exciting,

and I give the highest marks to the DCM for his mentoring of junior officers. It also created a feeling that being in the Foreign Service was not just a job. There is something unique about it. It is a mission, a call. You are involved not only in just closely observing history but actually involved in the making of history.

Q: In the embassy, especially among the junior officers, was there any questioning of the Israelis and their view towards the Palestinians and the West Bank and Gaza at that time?

HOOKS: No, there was not. This was before the intifada. I call this time the “golden age” of Israel in the sense it was after the euphoria of the Six Day War in 1967 but before the trauma of the Yom Kippur War (the intifada came later on in 1980s) and it was a time when the pioneering generation was still leading the country. Ben-Gurion was still alive; Golda Meir was prime minister, Abba Eban was Foreign Minister, Moshe Dayan was Minister of Defense. All those historical figures were there and I saw them. At Fourth of July receptions I shook hands with them. At the same time, Israel was a fairly poor country and hiking was the big thing. I came back there 15 years later in 1988 and of course it had really changed. It was Southern California located in the Middle East. I recall I was there for the 25th anniversary celebrations in 1972.

Q: Did you sense a divide between our consulate general in Jerusalem and our embassy in Tel Aviv in attitude or not? Or was that not during your time?

HOOKS: I do not recall a divide between the Embassy and the Consulate. I was staff aide to the ambassador at the time. I can't recall the consul general's name now but he came to Tel Aviv frequently to meet with the DCM and the ambassador and I would see him there. I was never aware, and I think I would have been aware as staff aide, of any sense of division.

The Arab issue I think was seen in a different light in those days. Again, this was before the intifada, before the Yom Kippur War, and so it did not figure as a divisive issue. I don't recall any sense of division between the consulate in Jerusalem and the embassy in Tel Aviv.

Q: Did you get any feel for the pro-Israeli groups in the United States? I don't think AIPAC was as powerful as it later became; maybe it was but there were other groups including the religious right wing. Did you get any feel for that?

HOOKS: Yes, in two respects. One was again members of the House of Representatives and the Senate who came through, such as Jacob Javits, a strong supporter of Israel, who would meet with the ambassador and they obviously played a role. They clearly followed very closely what was going on in Israel and the ambassador regarded them as very important interlocutors.

Secondly, there were visits on a regular basis by distinguished groups, mostly of American Jews, who met with the ambassador for briefings and who would express great interest in various issues in our relationship with Israel. I thus became aware of the fact that there was a much larger domestic constituency for Israel, which I discovered later on did not exist nearly to the same degree in other countries I have worked in.

Q: What about you and your wife on the social side? How did you find that?

HOOKS: Israel is a unique and special place. Israeli society is very open, a friendly and gregarious society, so it was not like we were dealing with a very conservative and closed society. We met friends that we kept in contact with over the years. We went to Israel on vacation to visit friends at one point. So we had friends, Israelis and others that were there. We found at the embassy people who were open and friendly. However, there were still -- my wife reminds me -- very traditional Foreign Service people who had grown up in the old school from the '50s. I recall the consul general's wife wanted a formal visit from my wife and so on.

So it was a very friendly embassy and a very friendly host country. It was so easy to travel around the country on weekends. It was exciting to go off to the many archeological sites, one of the things I found fascinating, or to spend time in Jerusalem. I recall we received our car the very first week after our arrival, if you can imagine. The first thing we did was to drive up to Jerusalem to celebrate our first wedding anniversary. We spent the day exploring the Old City in Jerusalem. Israel really was an exciting place. Every weekend you could go places and do the things that are hard to duplicate elsewhere.

Q: How did the October War impact on you?

HOOKS: The October War came after we left. The October War was in 1973. We left in July of '73.

Q: Was there a feeling of while you were there of imminent danger of something happening or was the feeling that things were pretty well settled?

HOOKS: No. There was a sense that there was still a very imminent threat to Israel. Not, however, in the sense that it is so imminent that it was about to happen, but a general sense that there was still insecurity. Israel of course was riding high from the overwhelming victory of the Six Day War in 1967. The Yom Kippur War was still a long way away in the sense that it was a surprise to everybody, especially the Israelis. I think that the experience of the Yom Kippur War brought home again the fact that security in Israel is never permanent and can never be taken for granted.

Q: Did you get to travel in the West Bank or in Gaza?

HOOKS: In those days you could travel all over Israel and the occupied territories without any difficulty. Only Gaza was a little problematic. I went all over the West Bank.

Q: Did you get any feel at that time for the hand of the Israelis on the West Bank?

HOOKS: At that time there was not a sense of restlessness among the Arab population. There was a very visible Israeli military presence in the West Bank, but not in an oppressive sense. Clearly the Israelis controlled those areas, but there was freedom of movement. The situation was very different when I returned to Israel in 1988 when the intifada was fully underway.

Q: It was before a real settlement policy had gotten going?

HOOKS: That's right. It was before a real settlement policy, although settlements had already begun around Jerusalem.

Q: How did you view the strict orthodox community there?

HOOKS: The strict orthodox community constitutes probably about 15 % of the population and there were certain neighborhoods that were very orthodox, Mea Shearim being one in Jerusalem. There was a representative of the Chabad community, Rabbi Posner who was an American, who came to the embassy and maintained good relations with everyone. He invited us to visit their community, but in general we had very little contact with the ultra-orthodox Jewish community. Our friends were more on the secular side.

Q: What sort of work were you doing besides being the ambassador's aide?

HOOKS: I started off working in the visa section, doing visa interviews at an open counter. I then worked for a year as staff aide. After that, I worked very briefly in the consular section in the citizenship side, followed by longer stints in the commercial, economic and political sections.

Q: On the consular side I would think that you would have been very busy with visas, citizenship and all that.

HOOKS: Everything is relative. In fact, it was not all that busy in the sense that we had one vice consul on the visa side who handled non-immigrant visas and the officer in charge of the visa section handled immigrant visas, so there were only two people in the visa section in those days. There were two officers on the citizenship side and the consul general managed the entire operation, so generally speaking it was not all that busy. Certainly a vice-consul could easily handle all of the non-immigrant visa work.

Q: When you were doing economic work, or what sort of work were you doing?

HOOKS: I did mostly spot reporting, dealing with the econ issues of the day: agriculture, industry, those sorts of things. I recall one of the interesting reports I wrote was about the flow of goods over land from the port in Eilat to the Haifa port as the Suez Canal was closed at the time.

Q: What was your impression of the economic possibilities of Israel?

HOOKS: Israel in those days was a relatively poor country but perhaps it was trying to overreach its grasp. It produced its own cars, for example. These cars reminded me of the old Trabant in East Germany, very cheap and not terribly efficient. But certainly tourism had tremendous potential. Computers had not entered the stage at that time so the whole business of software and information management was a thing of the future.

But certainly in terms of agriculture Israel was already a world powerhouse in terms of exporting fresh fruits and vegetables and flowers to Europe, but I think what particularly struck me about the Israelis is that they were so dynamic. They had developed drip irrigation which made much

more efficient use of water. They were already involved in a number of projects in developing countries, sometimes financed by USAID, especially in the area of agriculture. They were very dynamic in that respect.

Israel has always been unique in having outside help, assistance from the outside that most countries don't have. What I found unique was the fact that they utilized so efficiently that assistance to invest in their future..

Q: Well, then you left there in 1970?

HOOKS: July of 1973.

JOHN H. ADAMS
Consular Officer
Tel Aviv (1971-1976)

John H. Adams was born in 1939 and entered the Foreign Service in 1966. His assignments included initial positions in France, Israel, Trinidad, and China (Hong Kong). Mr. Adams was interviewed by William D. Morgan in 1992.

ADAMS: The next overseas assignment was in Tel Aviv, Israel, a larger post but not an overwhelmingly large embassy. There I had, again, a wide range of responsibilities, having worked in all units of the consular section, which was very busy, in both visa and American services work. It was an interesting time to be there. We had the Lod Airport massacre in which over 20 American citizens were mowed down. I was very much involved in that particular incident. The Yom Kippur War [1973] broke out while I was there, so it was a devastating time for the State of Israel. In the latter part of the war, when the Israelis rolled back the attack, there were some dramatic moments for everybody who was there.

Q: Sounds as if these are examples of the intimate role you play as a consular officer in the total foreign affairs relationship. You don't escape it.

ADAMS: There was that, and even as a consular officer there, I was part of the cadre that supported Secretary Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy," which went on for a good part of the remainder of my assignment in Israel. That's quite right. That's quintessential foreign policy, even if you're just on the fringes of what the Secretary was involved in trying to negotiate settlements with the Egyptians, the Syrians, and the Israelis. After Israel my next overseas assignment was as consul general in Trinidad, which was more of the typical Caribbean visa operation. There was a lot of Third World pressure to emigrate and get to the United States.

ARTHUR R. DAY
Consul General

Jerusalem (1972-1975)

Arthur R. Day was born and raised in New Jersey. He served in the U.S. Naval Air Corps during World War II. Upon completion of his military service, Mr. Day received a master's degree from Chicago University. His Foreign Service career included positions at the Palestine Desk, the National War College, United Nations Affairs, and in Japan. Mr. Day was interviewed by John A. McKesson in 1990.

Q: Let's go back to some of these various posts you were at, starting with the beginning of your career in NEA. Do you have any particular overall comments about how this launched you into your connection with the Middle East?

DAY: At that time, in the summer 1949, the Palestine problem, as it was called then, was still very much in the forefront of our concerns in our Middle East policy. So I became very well acquainted with the Arab-Israeli issue and that wove itself throughout my career and I ended my career being a deputy assistant secretary in that same bureau in which I began. There are a lot of constants in the Arab-Israeli problem in all those years and consequently every time I revisited it throughout my career I felt pretty much at home in dealing with it. The Arab manner in dealing with the problem and us did not change; much to the despair of those who wished the Arabs well, they often did so badly in handling their affairs. And the Israeli manner of dealing with the United States did not change much; they always practiced a very intensive, very aggressive and very effective policy, and the Congressional pressure that we felt in the department throughout was a very important factor, always, in dealing with the Israeli problem. That did not change, it just increased through the years. Aside from that there were many practical changes in the problem which we can come to as we go along, but those constants certainly remained.

Q: As a general thing, Israeli intelligence has always had a great reputation for its outstanding abilities. I assume that you would agree with that statement and did you get the feeling that the Israelis not only were always on top of knowing what was going on in the Middle East and the world but also what the U.S. position was?

DAY: That was their main concern, even at that time. Prior to 1967, of course, we had far less to do with the support of Israel than afterwards. We had not supplied them with any substantial weaponry up to that time. Nevertheless their diplomats tended to know on whose desk at a given time a certain paper was in which they were interested. I remember one of the third secretaries taking me out to lunch and wanting to know on whose desk a certain paper was. I was surprised to know it even existed, but he did. They seemed to have no trouble keeping track of American policy and certainly had little trouble influencing it.

Q: Let's move on to the whole issue of the Arab-Israeli problem. I know that you served in Jerusalem; before coming to your tour of duty there do you have any comments to make before we move to there?

DAY: I think we can just pick it up there. I had lost track of the Middle East problem to some extent in that I had been off on other details. I was in arms-control for a couple of years.

Q: That's right, you were in ACDA and arms control. Do you want to say something about that?

DAY: I don't think there was a great deal going on at the time that is worth recounting. Perhaps the most interesting thing was that the organization, the negotiating organization, that I happened to have the most to do with at that point, was called the CCD, the eighteen member, I believe, international negotiating organization that was situated in Geneva.

Q: What did CCD stand for?

DAY: Conference for ? No one ever remembered what CCD stood for. It was a subordinate UN body to negotiate arms control on a less than full UN membership basis. It began with fifteen, then moved up to eighteen, then became at some point twenty-one. The interesting thing about it was, I thought, it was under the chairmanship of the US and Soviets and it worked quite well, oddly enough, partially because on arms control, especially at that level (this was not strategic arms control, these were things like the nuclear proliferation treaty which had been negotiated just before I got into that business, the treaty to ban biological weapons, the treaty to ban mass destruction weapons on the seabed) on these somewhat subordinate issues we and the Soviets found ourselves often on the same side as opposed to the Third World non-nuclear powers. Consequently the joint management of that body worked quite well and we, on the American side, and our counterparts on the Russian side, became quite close associates, friends to some extent, people I have followed over the years and met in other places. It showed what we are now seeing on a much larger scale, where the interests are now common, how we and the Soviets could work together quite effectively. They had some first class diplomats, quite as good as we certainly, and they and we together ran a relatively tight ship.

Q: Moving on to Jerusalem, you were consul general there. I gather that was a period when the Israeli government considered Jerusalem its capital and that created a somewhat awkward situation for consuls general. Would you care to comment on that?

DAY: That is certainly true; the Israelis wanted us out of Jerusalem because we were there largely as a symbol of non- acceptance of the claim that this was their capital, even that it belonged to Israel officially and legally. Our embassies, a dozen or so countries in the same situation, were maintained in Tel Aviv and we had consuls general in Jerusalem. All of us had two offices in Jerusalem, in what had prior to 1967 been Israeli Jerusalem on the Jewish side of the city and the other in what had been Arab Jerusalem. That was another burr under the Israeli saddle; they felt we were doing this to emphasize the fact, as we saw it, that Jerusalem was not a single city, that there was an Arab side and an Israeli side. Of course, to a certain extent, that is why we were doing it. We got along fairly well with the Israeli authorities. Teddy Kollek [the mayor] was a savvy political person and understood the problem. He was a little sarcastic with us from time to time, but on the whole we did not have trouble with the city authorities, in fact we were somewhat grateful for Kollek in one sense. He stood between us and some Israeli national ministries that were located in Jerusalem, which had authorities who would have been much more difficult to deal with -- especially the Interior Ministry which was run largely by very conservative orthodox religious Jews and who were really not happy about having Christians in Jerusalem at all, especially consuls general. Kollek understood he had a polyglot city on his

hands and if he was going to run it successfully everyone had his niche, and we had ours. In general we got along with Kollek fairly well.

I found some of my colleagues, the other consuls general, to be a little petty at times in their opposition to the Israelis. Some disliked the Israelis and I am afraid some disliked Jews in a more fundamental way. I do not say that in a broadcast way, but there were some who had the problem. Consequently I found myself, from time to time, isolated from them, not going along with what I felt were their more extreme expressions of opposition to the Israeli rule there. I was willing to do that and American policy would not have permitted anything else. We maintained quite firmly our right to be in Jerusalem and to claim that Jerusalem was not legally a part of Israel, but on the other hand the State Department was not going to make any bigger an issue of it than it had to because it certainly was not a thoroughly popular point of view in the Congress of this country where the Israelis had a lot of influence. We got along. It was one of those situations, a little like Berlin, where you arrived at a *modus vivendi* and you parted from it at your peril.

One example I might mention, when I first arrived in Jerusalem I went to pay my call on Teddy Kollek as the mayor of the city and he brought up a problem which had been bothering the Israelis quite a bit. The consuls general, obviously as diplomats do, had from time to time large receptions, national days or other occasions. All of them had two receptions; they invited Israelis to one and Arabs to the other, largely because the Arabs did not want to come where the Israelis were, they did not want to be in a position of accepting the *de facto status quo*; they were very unhappy and they did not want to be put in a position of mixing with the Israelis. When I called on Kollek, he mentioned this and said he would like very much to have receptions in which the two would mix. I told Kollek that I was not there as a missionary, to change peoples' views, I was there as a diplomat and was prepared to accept the way they felt, both the Arabs and the Israelis, about each other. If there were Arabs who were willing to come to receptions where there were Israelis, I had no problem with that and would invite them, but I certainly was not going to put myself in a position of pressuring the Arabs to do this. That was the policy I followed throughout my stay there. There were some Arabs who met Israelis in their own personal lives with no trouble and I had them to receptions and other gatherings where Israelis came, but on the whole I followed the general practice of having most Arabs to separate meetings because simply they would not have come and would have felt aggrieved if I had pressed them to come.

I remember one particular case which impressed me with the depths of feeling on the subject. I got to know quite well the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem -- the non-communist Orthodox Church, the one that fled Russia and had its headquarters in the United States, which is why I got to know them quite well. Father Graby -- which was the man's name who was the head of the church -- would have me quite often to receptions at his place in the old city of Jerusalem quite close to the Holy Sepulcher. I remember one occasion when he had both Israeli officials and Arabs, all of whom I knew, and he also had photographers, as people do at their parties to take pictures of the guests and give them out as souvenirs later. I remember one poor harassed woman, Dora Salah, who was the head of the YWCA....

Q: Arthur, you were telling us about your experiences in Jerusalem, would you continue.

DAY: I was describing this reception at the Russian Orthodox Church in which the Archimandrite had invited both Israelis and Arabs, some Arabs who did not at all care to be associated with Israelis. In this one case, the woman I mentioned, Dora Salah, head of the East Jerusalem YWCA, which was very active in the Palestinian resistance, I remember seeing her at this reception with the haunted, hunted look trying to avoid ever being caught talking to or near an Israeli at a time when the photographer was there so that she would not have her picture taken with an Israeli showing in the same picture because it would have really been awkward for her among her constituency. It was a very telling example for me why it was unfair to put them in that position. I never did; I tried very much to avoid doing that.

Q: Would you care to comment on the relations between the American consuls general in Jerusalem and our embassies and our ambassadors in Tel Aviv?

DAY: That was a very tense relationship, in some ways more than the relationship directly with the Israelis. Only with the ambassadors, the other officers in the embassy were professionals, some of whom were close friends of mine, but both the ambassadors who were there when I was there were very, very pro-Israeli, anti-Arab.

Q: Could you tell us who they were?

DAY: Wally Barbour had been there ten years when I arrived and was there another year or two more before he became too ill and retired. He had become an institution in Israel. They had named schools after him and he was very pro-Israel. As he told me one day, his solution for American foreign policy in the Middle East was to arm the Israelis and forget the Arabs. Let the Israelis take care of the Arabs. He on the other hand was not very active. He was not very well during that period. Consequently I disagreed with him but I had no real run-ins with him. His successor, on the other hand, was a politician from New York named Keating; he had been a senator, and very, very pro-Israeli, as I guess a senator from New York would get to be associating with pro-Israeli groups in his constituency. I did have trouble with him.

I remember one occasion, which was quite embarrassing actually. I had heard from his DCM (his deputy chief of mission) in the embassy that he, the ambassador, had an appointment to come up and see Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem. [after first saying Berlin rather than Jerusalem] (I am going to make that mistake from time to time having served in two divided cities one after the other it is hard to keep them straight. Both have an east and a west. Interesting though, one city was a city that was psychologically thoroughly united but physically split, Berlin - and Jerusalem when I was there was physically united but psychologically deeply split.) Keating had an appointment with Kollek in Jerusalem and under the rules of the game this was not to be done. The embassy was to deal with the national government and I was to deal with the city government although the Israelis were always trying to water this down. I knew there was no point in my calling Keating about this since he regarded me as pro-Arab and consequently would not have paid any attention to what I would say. So I called Washington and told the desk officer what was going on, and asked him if he could just let Keating know what the rules were so there would not be a struggle here. To my utter dismay, in opening my telegrams the next morning I found a State Department telegram signed by the Secretary of State to Keating saying that they

understood he had this meeting with Kollek, that he was not to do that, that was not the way business was conducted and he was to look to me, as the consul general in Jerusalem, for his guidance on how to deal with Jerusalem. I knew that would put Keating in a flaming fury and he would know on the face of it that I had been the one to put the Department up to it. I called Keating on the telephone, there was nothing else to do, and said I was very unhappy with the way things had worked out and the way it had been worded, that I agreed with what it said but I hoped it would not ruin what relationship we had. He was very unhappy, not nasty, about it on the phone. I don't think I ever spoke to him again after that. There was no occasion to; there certainly was no occasion found. I had him to our residence once in Jerusalem thinking he might find it useful to meet some Arab leaders from East Jerusalem and some church people, very substantial people like Pio Laghi, the head of the Roman Catholic church mission in Jerusalem who later went on to become the apostolic delegate in Washington. A very fine Italian. The Ambassador came up with his wife to have dinner with me, but I understand he never really forgave me for it -- to face him with actual Arabs was more than he could tolerate. So it was a difficult relationship, but fortunately it really did not affect anything. It just made life a little less pleasant.

There was a constant push in the embassy to become more active in Jerusalem and the West Bank, but Washington was very strong on that and kept them from going off the reservation. So I had no really serious trouble, it was just a friction.

Q: Who were the State Department senior people on the Arab- Israeli problem during that period?

DAY: Roy Atherton was the assistant secretary and Hal Saunders, who later became the assistant secretary, was the deputy who dealt with my area. I can't remember who the desk officer was. There were a series of fairly professional well-acquainted officers dealing directly with the problem. One of the complications was that jurisdictionally, Jerusalem came under the Israeli desk although my job there was really was entirely with Arabs. My role was to keep in touch with the West Bank leadership and West Bank population primarily and to report what was going on in the West Bank, which from time to time became important. That was of course primarily of interest to people on the Arab desks back in the Department, especially the Jordan desk. Jordan had at one time been in control of the West Bank and the West Bankers were still Jordanians by passport if not actually by loyalties. Actually they detested the Jordanians almost as much as they detested the Israelis.

My jurisdictional managers were not the ones who were most substantially interested in what I was doing, but it did not matter since people in NEA got along very well and there were no brouhahas between the desks.

Q: As you know, the State Department officials have been traditionally accused by the press as being too pro-Arab, at least a certain segment of the press in America. From your vantage point, which seems excellent, in Jerusalem and from your previous experience, would you care to comment on how you assessed the attitudes of the Department senior officers and the desk officers. You have already told us the two ambassadors you have served under in Israel were very, very pro-Israeli. How would you assess the evenhandedness or lack of it among our

senior personnel in Washington at that time?

DAY: I think the proclivities which you referred to existed back in my previous incarnation in the Middle East; then there was no doubt that the officers in the State Department handling Arab-Israeli affairs, at least up through the office director level, were very pro-Arab. This would have been in 1949-50, in that early period. They were officers who had in their earlier careers been entirely in the Arab context and they knew the Arabs and felt that Israel was a dangerous intrusion into the area from an American political point of view. Although they carried out American policy as it was set out by the American presidents and secretaries, they still wished that we could be more favorable to the Arab side. By the time when I became more directly involved in it when I was in Jerusalem, which was quite a lot later, that was in 1972, well over twenty years had passed, a new generation of officers had come along, like Roy Atherton, and Roy himself was as evenhanded as a human could be about everything. I would say most of his officers were much more cold-bloodily American-policy-oriented and less sentimentally attached to the Arab mystique, which does exist. The orientalist had a kind of attachment towards the Arabs that went beyond policy. They were not so much in evidence as before.

I thought that NEA, that was the bureau that handled this issue in the Department, really was quite objective in its dealings with it, which is not to say, nevertheless, that it was well to the side of the Arabs from most of the American Congress, which was as unevenhanded as you can get. The American Congress was really totally, for the most part, committed to the cause of Israel. Some of the staff people on the Hill, I am convinced, spent most of their time promoting the cause of Israel, which as far as I am concerned is a foreign country. I, and many State Department people also, resented the fact that these Americans in official positions seemed much more concerned about the fortunes of a foreign country than the fortunes of their own country.

Q: You are talking about the staff on the Hill?

DAY: On the Hill. This led to what I thought was understandable resentment on the part of the State Department on having our policy so strongly effected by forces and people who weren't primarily interested in the success of the American policy but who were primarily interested in the success of Israeli policy. But they understood the name of the game, which was politics when Israel was involved, and they lived with that, as I lived with it, and ceased tilting with windmills.

Q: What would you say was the role of the consul general in terms of policy and practice during your stay there?

DAY: It was in the first instance a symbolic role, to symbolize our unwillingness to accept that Israel had acquired Jerusalem. Beyond that, as I mentioned earlier, we kept in touch with West Bank Arab trends. We were really the principal reporter on Palestinian attitudes, which became at times, and certainly after I left there, became very important to American policy. I think our contribution to American policy was as expert observers of the Palestinian side of the equation. There was no country, no embassy, that had a direct focus on Palestinians. The Jordanian embassy certainly didn't. The king and his government were almost as opposed to Palestinians in some respects as the Israelis were at times. So I was the Palestinian embassy in a certain sense. That is what I tried to be; while not becoming an advocate of the Palestinians, in fact I became

rather discouraged in the way that they conducted their affairs and felt always that the best solution for the West Bank was the solution in which it became part of Jordan again, rather than become independent. I was convinced that it would become a very troublesome entity. Nevertheless my role was to deal with and to report on the Palestinians.

Q: When you say the Palestinian embassy you mean the American embassy to the Palestinians?

DAY: That's right.

Q: How would you assess your contacts with the Arabs and the Israelis? Would you have any comments to make on that?

DAY: The Arabs with whom I dealt with in Jerusalem were mostly non-political people; there was not a political hierarchy, of course, on the West Bank. I did deal with mayors of the towns, who were the most senior political people. The mayor of Bethlehem, Freij, best known in this country, I knew quite well. I knew the mayors of some of the other towns, but beyond that the people involved in politics, so to speak, were lawyers, pharmacists and whatever, teachers and principals of the schools run by the United Nations agency that dealt with Palestinians, so I had a wide and very varied list of contacts on the Arab side. It was not always easy to keep track of the movements there, because the people who became most influential were people whom we saw very little; they were much more obscure. This became much more true in later years after the uprising there. The people who seemed to become influential were a new generation that shoved aside the people I knew in my day and I think none of us, nobody on the American side, really knew them terribly well.

On the Israeli side, I talked about my relationship with Kollek, which was not bad, but wasn't too warm. I got to know his deputy very well, a man named Meron Benvenisti who was really in charge of Arab affairs for Kollek and later left the Israeli government and became an academic, then in later years ran the West Bank study project in Israel which provided much of the information on which we and the Israelis both assessed West Bank activities. I also happened to know some of the Israeli Foreign Office people whom I had met in my previous incarnations dealing with Israel. Although they were not supposed to be dealing with me officially, I nevertheless kept in touch with them to some extent, including Eppie Evron, who had been ambassador to the United States at one point and now was a senior officer in the Foreign Office. He came to lunch one time, which I am sure was the first time he ever did that. We got along on a personal level and I have no complaints. The military who ran the West Bank were inaccessible to me by their choice. They were not supposed to deal with anybody but the embassy and the embassy would not deal with them, so they were really out of touch with American officialdom, but there again I occasionally met one of their occupation colonels in some Arab mayor's house and got to know him slightly. I never had a contact so that I could call them up on the phone and ask what was going on.

I also knew the Israeli press people who dealt with the West Bank, some of whom were very pro-Palestinian. I knew a few press people who were on the Arab side and kept in touch with them as a diplomat would anywhere.

Q: This was of course the period that Kissinger was active with his shuttle diplomacy. We know that Secretary Kissinger remained very, very involved in this whole issue. What were your general feelings and assessment of this issue, how Kissinger operated and how effective his policies were?

DAY: Of course I got to know Kissinger much better when I became deputy assistant secretary, though I saw him somewhat in Jerusalem. I was in a rather odd position because he was coming to Jerusalem, "my town" so to speak, to meet with the Israelis. He was not coming to Jerusalem as the separate entity that I represented the Americans in, but he was coming there to meet the Israelis. My role was a minimal one, and should have been. The embassy people came up to Jerusalem when he came and took care of him, which was fortunate because it took the whole embassy to do it. I could not have begun to staff it. I used to go, each time he came, over to the King David Hotel where he would arrive and stay, and when he came in the front door, I would be there together with the manager of the King David Hotel. The two of us would rush out and shake his hand. I always thought after that whether he had thought of me as the deputy manager of the King David Hotel, which I must have looked like, although later on I got to know him. So I had very little substantively to do with him although I thought very highly of what he was trying to do. I thought he was on the right track and that he was being as tough with the Israelis as he was with the Arabs. He established good relations with Arabs that no other American had worked with, Hafez al Assad, the Syrian leader in particular. He put up with a lot from the Israelis. I remember one time -- he was not very popular in Israel -- on one visit he went through the streets -- he was trying to make the Israelis give up the Sinai in a deal with Egypt -- and there were signs up "Jew boy, go home!" They felt he was a traitor to the race. At one point, Golda Meir, who was prime minister, and a pretty tough cookie herself, felt she had to speak out to her own people. She said, "Look we have a tendency, we Israelis, to deal with a situation like this, by *ad hominem* means, by attacking the person of the policy, rather than the policy itself. We have to stop that with regard to Kissinger, in particular." It was getting out of hand. He was subjected to really personal abuse, but he persevered. Kissinger was a pretty tough nut and I don't think it got to him too much. He had some very difficult times there and I could tell from dealing with his staff and seeing him, that they were difficult. But I thought that he was on the right track and in general was very successful.

There are some comments that I think I would like to add concerning my service in Jerusalem. One of them concerns the Yom Kippur war of October 1973 in which the Egyptians and Syrians attacked the Israelis on both the Egyptian front along the Suez canal and the Syrian front along the border of the Golan heights. During the week before the attack there had been rumors of troop movements and activity, especially in the Syrian sector. U.S. military officers had inquired several times of Israeli military intelligence whether these movements did not presage some kind of hostile action by the Arab armies. The Israelis, having been burned by predicting Arab attacks early in the year that did not materialize, dismissed the reports as groundless. Toward the end of the first week of October, though, they were sufficiently concerned that they began to move troops of their own up towards the Golan front with Syria.

My involvement began on the night of October 5th, which was a Friday night and a night on which, at sundown, the very holy observance of Yom Kippur began in Israel. My wife and I were to go out to dinner that night to a staff member's in the Arab side of Jerusalem. In order to avoid

driving through Jewish Jerusalem, in which we lived and where the driving of automobiles was virtually prohibited from sundown on that Friday night until sundown on the day following, we had parked the official consulate car on the border of the old city, that is the border of Jewish Jerusalem, which was only about three blocks from our residence. We walked to the car and drove on to the Arab side where the Yom Kippur observance did not apply. Sometime during the meal I was called on the phone and informed that an urgent telegram had arrived for me from Washington -- presumably, although I do not remember the details, an "immediate, night action" which would require my attention at once. I returned alone to the consular office which was in the same building as our residence, leaving my wife at the dinner. My recollection is that I drove back to the edge of Jewish Jerusalem and walked the few blocks on into the very still and quiet Jewish city where there was no traffic in the streets. The Department's message instructed me to go to the headquarters of the UN truce supervision organization, known as UNTSO, which was located on a hilltop just outside the city of Jerusalem in buildings that the British had once used for their headquarters during the mandate period. I was to tell the UNTSO commander that the US government was concerned that Arab governments might misinterpret Israeli troop movements on the Golan Heights as having hostile intent and might be lead thereby to some response that might precipitate hostilities.

It so happened the UNTSO commander himself, a Finnish general named Enio Silasvuo was away from headquarters that night and acting in his place was the senior American officer assigned to UNTSO headquarters. I got back in my car and headed off for the UNTSO headquarters which required at one point my going into a section of Jewish Jerusalem. I had to get out at one point and remove a barricade that was designed to keep traffic from entering the city and then replace it behind me, driving on through the quiet streets and hoping that none of the more aggressive orthodox Jews, who were inclined to throw rocks at automobiles, even on the ordinary Sabbath day of every week, would see me and react. They apparently did not and after having removed the barricade that let me out of the Jewish community, I proceeded on to UNTSO and delivered my message. The American colonel agreed to convey this through the UNTSO team stationed in Damascus and I returned to Jerusalem in the same manner as before. Ultimately my wife and I concluded the dinner and returned home to bed. We were awakened at an early hour the next morning by an aircraft, a fighter I presume, flying very low over the city. An extraordinary event at any time but especially so on such a holy day as this. When I made my way upstairs to the office and looked at the cable traffic I found that the Israeli government had finally become convinced that an Arab attack was imminent and had ordered military mobilization. Since Jewish Israelis did not have their radios on because of the holy day, the fighter plane pass was intended to alert them that something was afoot and they should turn on the radios to receive the mobilization instructions.

Later that day, it must have been very shortly after two o'clock in the afternoon, I received a phone call from UNTSO telling me that their observers along the Egyptian-Israeli line on the Suez canal had just that minute reported an attack by the Egyptian forces past their observers, their observation points, towards the Israeli lines. I was able to get a flash telegram back to Washington within minutes of this attack having occurred, which was the first time, but not the last by any means, UNTSO's presence along the borders and the good relations that existed between the consulate general and UNTSO headquarters enabled us to report quickly and accurately on the progress of the war. Throughout the next week or two as Syrian and Egyptian

armies crossed the Israeli lines and then ultimately were driven back across the lines in the other directions, the UNTSO observers pinned down in their observation posts in the midst of the conflict kept up a stream of reports to the headquarters in Jerusalem about the progress of the war. The consulate forwarded these to Washington as they were received since the reports, especially in the early days of the war, reflected much more serious difficulties for the Israelis than the Israelis were publicly acknowledging. Our reporting was able to keep Washington more accurately informed of the true state of affairs, although I assume the Israeli government was informing our embassy in Tel Aviv a good deal more accurately than their press was informing the public.

The period of the Yom Kippur war in Jerusalem was a strange one. In the first week while no one really questioned whether the Israelis would really be able to defend themselves in the end, the fighting did strike quite close to the Israeli heartland in the north of Israel where the Syrians pressed down from the Golan heights. But there was an almost eerie atmosphere of business as usual at the same time, so swiftly had the war come. On one occasion an American religious tour group wanted to visit the Christian sites on the Sea of Galilee which were only a few miles from heavy fighting and which could conceivably have been overrun had the Syrians been more successful than they turned out to be. The group leader inquired of the consulate general about the situation and was told that this was just not the thing to do at that time. So far as I was aware at the time, he decided to proceed in any case, and disappeared in the direction of the front with his entire tour group. Within the city of Jerusalem there were several hundred American students, some of them Jewish students at Hebrew University, as well a sizeable group of Christian students who were visiting the old city with its Christian sites for a period of study. I was kept busy the first week of the war briefing these students, as best I could, about the security situation and about how it affected them, especially in the case of the Jewish students, giving them assurance that they could pass along to their worried parents at home, that it seemed unlikely that the city of Jerusalem would come under attack. Living in the city was an odd experience in other ways, especially since it was blacked out at night with cars driving through the streets with their headlights dimmed by blue paint or laundry blueing. It so happened that it was a period of full moon and no doubt for the first time in a long, long time, it was possible to see the city from the hills around it with the moonlight shining on its domes and towers without the disturbance of any artificial light. It was a truly beautiful thing to see, although the circumstances were not so benign.

A second set of comments that might be worth making, although not as serious, concern a concert that the Israel philharmonic orchestra gave outdoors in a large square in Bethlehem, known as Manger Square. I do not recall the date, but I believe it was following the Yom Kippur war, and it must have been in the following spring or summer. Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem, had apparently induced an American donor to provide a substantial sum of money to hold the concert, the purpose of which was to show the unity between Jerusalem and the Christian Arab town of Bethlehem, a short distance away to the south. As always in this complex occupation situation the effort cut both ways. My wife and I were sitting in the second row of the block of seats in Manger Square facing the Church of the Nativity in front of which the platform had been erected for the Israeli orchestra. The first item of the concert was a Brandenburg concerto, the violin part of which was to be played by a young man who had not too long before arrived as a Jewish immigrant from the Soviet Union. The orchestra had gotten well launched

and the violinist was in full cry when suddenly the Arab minaret, in the Square, located just behind the audience, erupted with the recorded call to prayer that the mosques broadcast at regular intervals during the day. The volume had obviously been turned up quite high by the mosque authorities and the sound tore into the fabric of the Brandenburg concerto, somewhat like an iceberg tearing into the hull of the *Titanic*. The orchestra played gamely on for some seconds, but gradually one instrument after another gave up and before long Zubin Mehta, the conductor, brought it to a halt and all of us waited out the Moslem call to prayer. An Israeli authority told me that they had been well-aware of this possibility, but had thought they had induced the mosque authorities to tone down the sound so as not to create a disturbance, but obviously they had failed. Other cultural and political conflict was evident at the concert as well. We noticed that there was a certain amount of movement to and fro in the row ahead of us where Teddy Kollek sat with the Bethlehem mayor, Elias Freij, and on the following day at a lunch that Kollek gave for the consuls general we learned what had happened. Freij was scheduled to make a brief statement at the concert on the platform which had been erected for the purpose. Over the platform was the emblem of the Israeli orchestra, an unmistakable Jewish symbol, the menorah. It was quite clear to Freij that the TV broadcast of this event would catch him standing in front of the Jewish menorah, a situation which was not at all appealing to him. Kollek told us with some chortling that in order to get Freij's mind off the problem he had gone up along the row in which they had both sat and had brought Mrs. Mehta over to sit next to Freij. Mrs. Mehta was a very attractive woman and Kollek assumed that her beauty would cause Freij to forget about his political sensitivities. In the event, Freij did arise and make the statement, although there was no way of knowing whether Mrs. Mehta's presence had been responsible. As an aside, however, the consuls general were all a little soured by Kollek's obvious glee in how he had manipulated the Arab mayor and it revealed once again one of the less attractive aspects of the Israelis in their dealing with the Arabs -- an attitude of condescension and arrogance at times.

EDWARD G. ABINGTON
Political Officer
Tel Aviv (1972-1975)

Mr. Abington was born in Texas into a US military family and was raised in military posts in the US and abroad. An Arabic language officer and specialist in Near East Affairs, he describes his experience dealing with Israel-Arab hostilities and general regional problems while serving as Political Officer at Embassies Tel Aviv and Damascus. In his postings at the State Department in Washington, he also dealt with Near East matters. Mr. Abington was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: By the time you left then, it would be '72. Where did you go?

ABINGTON: At that point, I was hooked on the Middle East. One cannot imagine a more exciting introduction. In addition, I got a chance as a junior officer to work very closely with Joe Sisco. I would sit in as his staff aide. I became one of his favorite notetakers. He would always say, "Write down what I should have said, not what I said." It became somewhat of a joke at the

reporting tables. Joe Sisco's meetings were frequently edited to reflect what he should have said. I worked closely with Roy Atherton. I did an awful lot of note taking for him. Roy encouraged me to stay interested in the Middle East. He helped me get an assignment to Tel Aviv. I went from the Jordan desk via French language training so I could get off language probation and then I went out to the embassy in Tel Aviv as a junior political officer. My responsibilities were the Golan Heights, what the Israelis were doing, their settlement activity, Gaza, and Israeli Arabs.

Q: Great. We'll pick it up the next time from '72. How long were you there?

ABINGTON: Until '75.

Q: Today is November 2, 2000. Before you went out to Tel Aviv, what were the words of wisdom you were getting first about an assignment to Tel Aviv and then what were you given to expect before you went out?

ABINGTON: At that time, the prevailing opinion in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs in general was that serving in Tel Aviv was not something that would help your career if you wanted to study Arabic and go on and become an Arabist. But during that period you started seeing the development of more and more people who thought it important to serve in both Israel and the Arab world and instead of just an Arabist you had the development of an Arab-Israeli specialist. I replaced Wat Cluverius who was very involved in Arab-Israeli negotiations. I served there with Ned Walker, who is currently NEA Assistant Secretary and also was very involved in Arab-Israeli negotiations. Attitudes were starting to change concerning the old Arabist view of Israel and the problems it caused when I went to Tel Aviv in 1972.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you arrived there?

ABINGTON: For a relatively short period of time it was Walworth Barbour, who had been there for many years. His DCM was Owen Zurhellen. Barbour was an institution. He had been in Tel Aviv for 10-12 years, one of the longest-serving American ambassadors anywhere. Neither he nor Owen Zurhellen really had any background on the Arab side. The personnel policy of the State Department had been not to mix the two. You would have Arabists who had never served in Tel Aviv because of the fear that it would taint them and make them unacceptable for assignment to the Arab world, and you had people who would be assigned to Tel Aviv with no experience in the Middle East, which I always thought was a tremendous shortcoming. It seemed to me that for people in the European Bureau, their hardship tour was going to someplace like Tel Aviv. Quite frankly, in general, they brought a real lack of understanding of the issues to Tel Aviv. They tended to be relatively unbalanced in their appreciation. They tended to embrace the Israeli position on issues without taking into consideration the Arab position and the complexities of the two sides.

Q: You arrived there when?

ABINGTON: Late August/early September of 1972.

Q: What was the political situation in Israel at the time?

ABINGTON: It was a Labor government led by Golda Meir. Shimon Peres was in the cabinet, a young cabinet minister. Yitzhak Rabin was the Israeli ambassador in Washington. I arrived in Tel Aviv right about the time of the Munich massacre, the seizure by PLO elements of Israeli Olympic athletes at the Munich Olympics and a rescue attempt that went disastrously wrong and led to the death of 12 or so Israeli athletes. Any such terrorist incident really grips Israel. In a way, Israel has been through such trauma because of terrorist incidents that it seemed to me like the nation was many times verging on the edge of hysterical breakdown. It just shows the impact that terrorist incidents have within Israel. I recall taking a tour of the Israel-Lebanon border and listening to the radio of the events in Munich and the death of the Israeli athletes there. It was a very traumatic event for Israelis, as one would expect. To have young athletes going to an event such as the Olympics and being caught up in this kind of violence and then to die a very violent death was something that really affected the Israeli psyche tremendously. I think one thing that gets me about Israeli policy – and as I look at this today the fighting between Israelis and Palestinians around Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank – is that the Israelis always adopt a policy of retaliation, of trying to make the Arabs pay a terrible price in loss of life and destruction of property. It seems to me that the Israelis have been doing this for 50 years and it has never worked but they can't seem to come up with a better policy whenever there are these kinds of difficulties. What happened after the Munich killings was that the Israelis went into Beirut and assassinated Palestinian leaders. I can't remember the precise timing but they may have destroyed Lebanese aircraft on the ground. This kind of retaliation that the Israelis have traditionally carried out ever since the founding of the state only fuels the cycle of violence between the Israelis and the Arabs.

Q: When you arrived there, you were in the political section?

ABINGTON: Yes.

Q: How would you characterize the outlook of the political section towards the situation?

ABINGTON: The Munich event certainly cast a pall over things, but one has to recall that when I arrived it was when the War of Attrition was going on between Egypt and Israel along the Suez Canal, the Israelis on their side of the canal behind what was the Bar Lev Line, there being clashes, artillery duels, occasional Israeli bombing raids into Egypt, the introduction of Soviet fighter pilots and so forth. So, there certainly was a degree of tension there, but in many respects for Israelis it seemed kind of far away because it was all taking place on the other side of the Sinai Peninsula. In that sense, the Sinai really did give a buffer to Israel. The casualties were overwhelmingly on the Egyptian side. The Israelis were shooting down aircraft whether they were Egyptian or Soviet piloted without any loss of aircraft on the Israeli side. The soldiers in the Bar Lev Line were pretty well fortified and took very few casualties. So, while there was a lot of tension, it was not as if there were casualties coming back to Israel. Also there was a tremendous feeling of complacency on the Israeli side and on the American side as well. The overwhelming ease of the Israeli victory in the 1967 war made Israelis and American analysts relatively complacent about Israel's military superiority vis-a-vis the Arab states. In a sense it was a little

bit like business as usual in terms of dealing with the Arabs.

There was one event and as I started to get into my job going to Gaza that really struck me. The event was a Libyan airliner that strayed across into the Sinai. It was a Boeing 707 with 90-100 people on it piloted by French pilots. There were several American citizens on the aircraft. The aircraft strayed into the Sinai and Israeli fighters intercepted it. The Israelis had air bases in the Sinai. They tried to get the plane to land. For whatever reason, the pilot did not land. The Israelis strafed the wings, causing the aircraft to crash in the Sinai with the loss of almost all the people on board, including Americans. The thing that struck me about the reaction was that just about every Israeli that I talked to thought it was totally justified shooting down an unarmed civilian airliner. Some people said, "Well, the pilot may have been planning to carry out a suicide mission and ram the aircraft into a populated area in Israel," which I thought was pretty ridiculous.

The second thing was as I started going down to Gaza; As I talked to Israeli military government officials and Palestinians, I was really struck by the extraordinarily paternalistic attitude of the Israeli military in dealing with Palestinians. There were attitudes that 1) the Palestinians were a pretty wild and uncultured group of people, that Israel was sort of providing a civilizing mission by helping with schools and low cost housing and 2) that the only thing that the Palestinians really understood was force and if the Palestinians didn't behave themselves then Israel was totally justified in using very heavy force to bring them under control. It was shortly before I arrived in Gaza that there had been disturbances in refugee camps, and Ariel Sharon had been put in charge of dealing with this. His solution was to take bulldozers and just go through the middle of refugee camps destroying houses, telling Palestinians they had 30 minutes or an hour to pull all of their belongings out and to open up wide swaths of land within the refugee camps that Israeli jeeps could patrol in order to keep the Palestinians under control. This, needless to say, caused tremendous anger and resentment. The way the Israelis dealt with the Palestinians in Gaza and the general Israeli reaction to the shooting down of the Libyan aircraft seemed to me to show almost a racist attitude in dealing with Arabs.

Q: I've heard people who have served in both places say that South Africa during the high times of apartheid was not a bad comparison.

ABINGTON: It's an analogy that many people make. I'm a southerner and I experienced and saw racism in the South, in Louisiana and places like that. There seemed to be a real comparison between the racism I saw in the South, how some whites would treat blacks, and what seemed to be the general Israeli attitude toward Palestinians. I recall, I lived in an Israeli neighborhood, Ramat HaSharon. I was the only non-Israeli within in several blocks. It was a source of amusement to Israelis. Most diplomats lived in an area called Herzoli-Tuch, where the diplomats and the wealthy American or Anglo-Israelis lived. My neighborhood was very much a middle class one. Wonderful people. I made a lot of friends. But I was struck how talking to neighbors, they would never consider hiring an Israeli Arab to even work in such things as food processing plants because they viewed that as a security threat. There was such a total divide between Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews, much less Israeli Jews and Palestinians. It was really striking.

Q: Your job was really to look at the other side of the moon, wasn't it, to look at the Palestinian

side?

ABINGTON: Yes, very much. I was dealing a lot with the foreign ministry. I was in Jerusalem a lot talking to people about general Arab-Israeli issues. It was not just Palestinians I was dealing with, but also reporting on broader Israeli-Arab issues as well. I certainly was not delving into Israeli society or Israeli domestic politics.

Q: What was the impression you got from your fellow political officers about how we viewed dealing with the Golda Meir government?

ABINGTON: In general, there was quite a close relationship. Golda was a very crusty, temperamental person. I go back to what I said earlier. In general, you had people serving in the embassy in Tel Aviv who had no experience at all of dealing with Palestinians or Arabs. At that time, there was a very good Israeli-U.S. bilateral relationship and people in the embassy in general seemed to be very supportive of that relationship. They tended to be quite pro-Israeli and I thought relatively uncritical in the way that they looked at Israeli policies.

Q: How did you go about your job?

ABINGTON: I would drive down to Gaza and stay in the UN beach club for a night or two. I would set up appointments and go around and meet Palestinian businessmen, some of the leading families in Gaza, ones that were politically active, although political activism at that point was not particularly high on the part of Palestinians. I would set up appointments with the Israeli military government in Gaza. I'd go in and talk to them. I would drive around Gaza, observe Israeli settlement activity, talk to Israeli settlers about what they were doing in terms of building settlements. I talked to UN personnel to try to get a general sense of what was going on. Gaza at that time was a wide open area. There were no fences or anything. The only way you knew you were in Gaza was that there were a couple of 50 gallon drums, the green line between Israeli and Gaza. When you went past the 50 gallon drums, you knew you were in Gaza. At that time, a lot of Israelis would take their cars down to Gaza to be repaired. They would go and shop there because produce and other things were a lot cheaper. You would see a fair number of Israelis down in Gaza. But it was very interesting. I remember staying once at the UN beach club. Palestinians were not allowed on the beach at night because the Israelis would run a truck or a jeep along the beach dragging something behind it that would obliterate all of the footprints. If a Palestinian were caught on the beach at night, the presumption was that this was a terrorist. They would be shot. Someone had walked out of the beach club at night down to the beach and walked back and an Israeli patrol saw the footprints. A detachment of Israeli soldiers surrounded the beach club and basically roused everyone out to make sure that Palestinians had not infiltrated and come into the beach club. So, it was a mixed atmosphere there.

Q: When you were talking to the Palestinian leaders and the businesspeople, what were you getting from them as far as how they saw the situation there and how they viewed the United States?

ABINGTON: In general, Palestinians were not that politically energized at that point. The PLO was an illegal organization. The PLO in '72 was under attack in Jordan and was on the point of

being banished from Jordan. The Israelis were pretty ruthless in clamping down on any political activity that could be interpreted as being pro-PLO. It was illegal to post or show colors that were in the Palestinian flag. For example, if you displayed those colors in some fashion, you would be subject to arrest by Israeli security forces. What the Israelis would allow to operate were relatively quiescent Palestinians who didn't cause any problems. In particular, the Shawa family in Gaza had ties to the Jordanians. I can't remember if he was mayor of Gaza or looked upon as the de factor mayor; El Rachid Shawa, had great cache because he could hand out Jordanian passports to Palestinians that he determined would get them. For a Palestinian who had trouble traveling because he or she had no nationality and no passport, only a UN laissez-passer, having a Jordanian passport was a tremendous advantage. That was a way of currying political favor by the Shawa clan. The Israelis let that go on because in general they favored Jordanian and Palestinian links as opposed to the influence of the PLO.

Q: Here you had this situation where it's not a good idea to have a bunch of people with no particular hope or economic ability to get out and do their thing. When you're repressing people who are not stupid, who have real commercial or political abilities, to keep them barefoot and pregnant, it's a problem. Was this a concern of ours?

ABINGTON: Not particularly. Policymakers and senior people in the embassy were looking much more at the broader interstate relationships – Egypt-Israel, Syria-Israel, Jordan-Israel. There was relatively little concern about the Palestinians. To the extent that the Palestinians were really factored into things, it was as Jordanian subjects. The attitude of how you dealt with the solution of the Palestinian problem was as part of Jordan. So, at that point, Palestinian nationalism and the concept of a Palestinian state really wasn't on our radar screen and certainly wasn't on the Israeli's radar screen because Golda Meir scoffingly dismissed the notion that there even was a Palestinian people. She said there was no such thing.

Q: You mentioned Israeli settlements in Gaza. How was this developing?

ABINGTON: Generally what happened with settlements both in Gaza and in Golan and I assume to a degree in the West Bank was that the Israeli army would go in and set up an outpost. They had a unit called the Nocho unit, which was an extension of the Zionist movement. They would be young Israelis who would go in and basically build up the infrastructure of the settlement. It would be a military outpost but over time they would build it up and turn it over to one of the Zionist kibbutzim movements. This was taking place in Gaza where there would be an army unit confiscating land, putting up fences, putting up housing, putting up guard posts and so forth, and then developing the infrastructure. Then they would turn it over to some kind of a settlement movement. Civilians would move in and the army would move out. Needless to say, this caused very deep resentment by Palestinians. The Gaza Strip at the time and to this day is certainly one of the two or three most densely populated areas in the world. What the Palestinians saw then was Israelis coming in as soldiers or civilians, fencing off arable land, and dominating the use of water supplies, limiting the Palestinian ability to use the water, and taking away arable land in an area where agriculture was the only thing going.

Then there would be other Israeli measures that were in place as well. Palestinians could not build a house without an Israeli building permit even if they owned the land. Palestinians could

not add an extra story onto their house unless the Israelis agreed to it. This wasn't always strictly enforced, but there certainly were occasions where if someone built an extra story, the Israelis would go in and knock it down. In general, the policy was one of suppression and real domination of the Palestinians. There was no doubt that it created a growing resentment on the part of the Palestinian population towards the Israelis.

Q: How about your reporting? Was there any market for reports on what was happening?

ABINGTON: Not too much. Frankly, at that point I don't think people really cared about the Palestinians or what was going on. But certainly in terms of the embassy, and this continued throughout the years when I was there, there was a general unwillingness to accept that the Israelis were less than perfect in terms of dealing with Palestinians. I can recall later on tremendous controversies between the American Consulate in Jerusalem and the Embassy in Tel Aviv over the question of whether the Israelis tortured Palestinians. The embassy just flat denied it. Of course, the Israelis denied they were torturing people even though the consulate in Tel Aviv did some fairly credible reporting. Once the U.S. in the '80s started doing human rights reports, it was very clear that there was pretty wide-scale torture and mistreatment of Palestinians by the Israelis to the extent that it was even enshrined in law. There were Israeli policies on how they would torture people, how they would torture Palestinians. But in general, the embassy in Tel Aviv was very closely identified with Israel and with Israeli policies and tended to be pretty uncritical in the way that they reported such policies.

Q: Did you find yourself doing the normal work but not getting too disturbed about what you were seeing or were you the odd man out?

ABINGTON: I was sort of odd man out in dealing with the Palestinians. Most of my colleagues were dealing just with Israelis and they tended to dismiss the mistreatment of Palestinians as either they didn't believe it or they accepted the Israeli line of why it was necessary to do this. In general, there was an uncritical embrace of Israeli positions and not much willingness to look at the other side. One has to keep in mind that Israel then and even now is an incredibly intense place. The Israelis have a circle the wagon mentality. You're either with us or against us. There was a lot of psychological pressure on people to stand with the Israelis. That certainly was the case with the staff and personnel of the American embassy.

Q: Did you get involved with the Israelis arresting American Palestinians?

ABINGTON: No, not at all. I can't recall that that was even a particular issue. I did work in the consular section for a short period of time. I knew people in the consular section. But I can't recall that in the '70s or at least as long as I was there until 1975 the issue of Palestinian-Americans being arrested was a particular issue as far as Embassy Tel Aviv was concerned.

Q: Were you seeing a difference or a change? How was the Likud element viewed at that time?

ABINGTON: Likud was looked upon as a pretty marginal party. I recall meeting Begin, the Likud leader in the Knesset. Prior to the '73 war, Likud was not looked upon as a serious contender to take over the Israeli government. That changed later in the '70s after the '73 war.

Up until that point, the Israeli government had been dominated since its founding as a state by the Labor Party in coalition governments with some of the religious parties like the National Religious Party. No one at that point really took very seriously the possibility that Likud might win an election and form a government running Israel.

Q: How about the religious parties? Did we have much contact with them?

ABINGTON: There was a person in the political section who spoke Hebrew who followed domestic politics. Israeli politicians were always quite accessible to people from the American embassy. I recall Ned Walker did the job for a while. He used to see people in the NRP. The focus was on parties in the government and not so much on the parties out of the government. I don't think that there was a lot of attention paid to Likud. There was not much attention paid to the Sephardic element of the Israeli population, which today is extremely important. Back then, the Sephardi were relatively poor. The society politics were totally dominated by Ashkenazis. Although this was a developing issue and problem, it had not assumed very much prominence. I don't think that the political section paid much attention to the Israeli Sephardi.

Q: Did you find yourself feeling the affects of the political realities in the U.S. of particularly the pro-Israeli elements? Or was this an undercurrent that everybody understood?

ABINGTON: It seemed to me that it was not so much an issue. The bigger issue was the Cold War and U.S.-Soviet rivalry. Kissinger was Secretary of State. We were allied with the Israelis while the Soviets were allied with Egypt and Syria. We tended to look at matters much more in a Cold War framework than in terms of a pro-Israeli U.S. policy. That was the intellectual framework that Henry Kissinger laid out while Secretary of State. Of course, this whole dynamic changed with the 1973 war.

Q: Our consulate general in Jerusalem took care of the West Bank and all that?

ABINGTON: Yes.

Q: So that wasn't in your purview?

ABINGTON: No. I would go and occasionally meet with people in the consulate and we would compare notes with each other on the Palestinian issues. But Gaza was a backwater at that point. Politically, socially and culturally the West Bank and East Jerusalem was much more important. But even so, the Palestinian issue was not a very high profile issue at the time.

Q: Were you at all looking at the Israeli Arabs?

ABINGTON: I was. The Israeli Arabs were... I would go into Nazareth from time to time and meet with community leaders and Israeli Arab Knesset members, all of whom supported the Labor Party. In general, the Palestinians looked upon Israeli-Arab politicians as people that were going along with the Israeli policies because they had been bought off. There was a lot of discrimination against Israeli-Arabs. They were subject to discriminatory economic policies, discriminatory social and security policies. But they were not politically active or strident and

they didn't have that much importance because they were not a critical factor in terms of the Israeli Labor government's being in power. The Labor government through its alliance with religious parties could take or leave Israeli-Arab political support.

Q: Talk about your personal experiences and then what happened when the October War came.

ABINGTON: I enjoyed tremendously serving there. It was a fascinating and very dynamic society. There were issues that were very interesting and Israelis were quite accessible. They were much more politically active on the Palestinian side. Frankly, people in the embassy or in Washington were simply not concentrating on the Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza at the time. They were politically disorganized and so much under Israeli domination that they weren't an issue. To the extent that Palestinian nationalism was looked at, it was in the context of Arafat, the PLO, what was taking place in Jordan...

Q: This was the Black September.

ABINGTON: Right. And then moving on to the Palestinians, moving on to Lebanon, and Arafat setting up his base of operations there. Of course, during that period Palestinian terrorism was starting to develop. I recall having been out at Ben Gurion Airport three or four times when aircraft had been high-jacked there by PLO members. I recall a raft of Palestinian terrorists landed a block from the embassy in Tel Aviv. I had been at the embassy watching a movie and I was driving back towards Jaffa and ran into gunfire between the Fedayeen and Israeli police. These Fedayeen seized a hotel, which as it turned out was a brothel, just a block and a half from the embassy. But Palestinian terrorism was becoming very much a fact of life in Israel during that period.

Q: Were you in Israel during the '73 war?

ABINGTON: I was.

Q: What was your experience when it broke out?

ABINGTON: In the week before the war, the Israelis were very concerned by military moves that they were seeing on the ground in Egypt and in Syria, particularly in Egypt, and they didn't know what to make of these moves. They asked us for our assessment whether these were just routine fall military exercises that happen when it's much cooler and before the rains start, or whether this really signaled that the Arabs were up to something. On both the Israeli side and the American side both on the political level, the State Department level, the CIA level, we had become complacent about how we looked at the Arabs. We felt that they had been so decisively defeated in 1967 that they would be very foolish to contemplate military action against Israel because Israel could defeat them just as quickly with as few casualties as in '67. And that certainly- (end of tape)

The day before the war started, it was the day before Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur the embassy closed down and everyone stayed at home. No one drove or anything. We did one last round of checking. The assessment continued to be that there were some questionable military moves

going on but it really didn't signal a move towards hostilities. But there was a lot of uncertainty on the part of our military attaches, on the part of the CIA station at the embassy, on the part of the ambassador and the DCM. The ambassador was Kenneth Keating, the former senator from NY who had been ambassador in India and who had been defeated by Bobby Kennedy in NY. Nick Veliotes was the DCM. So, we all went home on Yom Kippur Eve. Everybody was pretty much housebound for the next 24 hours. Very early in the morning on Yom Kippur, October 6, at about 6:30 or 7:00, this jet flew over my neighborhood at a very low level. It sent shockwaves it was flying so low and slow. I just felt that there was going to be a war starting that day because I knew that the Israelis would not have done that if there had not been something very serious. As I got dressed and went outside, I could see that the reservists were being called up and neighbors whom I knew were coming out of their houses in their uniforms, getting ready to go. I called up the DCM and told him this and he said the same thing was happening in his neighborhood.

Q: We'll pick it up next time.

Today is December 14, 2000. What do you do when you see the reservists coming up?

ABINGTON: The first thing was that the word went out to all of the people in the embassy that it appeared that hostilities were eminent between Israel and its neighbors. I know that late in the morning Veliotes and Ambassador Keating were called to see Golda Meir at the defense ministry in Tel Aviv. This was during Yom Kippur in which there is no traffic on the roads and cars that were on the roads during that day would be stoned. But this was a very different Yom Kippur for Israelis. Veliotes and Keating went to the defense ministry. Golda Meir informed Keating that Israel had information that it considered to be irrefutable that Egypt and Syria were about to launch military attacks against Israeli forces. Israel had decided that it would not preempt but that it would see what Egypt and Syria would do. Part of the decision not to preempt was that Israel simply wasn't prepared to do so because it had been so confused by deceptive Egyptian and Syrian military moves that it was not in a position militarily to preempt. What was happening on that day was a massive call-up of Israeli reservists. Veliotes called people into the embassy and we went through the process of organizing how we would handle this in terms of reporting. The office of the defense attaché was extremely important in terms of liaising with the Israeli military. But then the political and economic sections were also doing their reporting. The administrative and consular sections had responsibilities for getting the word out to people within the embassy community that hostilities were expected and more broadly to Americans in Israel, for which the consular section was responsible.

Hostilities started at about 2:00 PM on Yom Kippur.

Q: Was the feeling that the Israelis would take care of this as they always had?

ABINGTON: I think that opinions were mixed on this. The Israelis were very overconfident. Defense Minister Moshe Dyan that day or shortly thereafter made a very threatening statement that Israel would break the bones of the Egyptians and the Syrians and would really teach them a

lesson. There was a great deal of overconfidence on the part of the Israelis in general but also the defense establishment and the intelligence establishment because they did not fully appreciate how the shipment of Soviet arms, particularly surface to air missiles that had much greater capabilities than in 1967 and especially the use of tow missiles by Egyptian soldiers, would change the battlefield. It's an optically guided missile with a shake charge on it that was used against Israeli armor. Israel depended very much for its victory in 1967 first on this air force and then secondly on its armor. The Egyptian and Syrian tactics were to deny Israel air superiority through the use of Soviet surface to air missiles, particularly the SA3 and the SA6, which were effective against low to medium flying aircraft, the Israelis did not lose a single aircraft in the '73 war to air to air combat. But they lost an awful lot of aircraft as a result of these surface to air missiles. They did not have the tactics that were developed later in terms of radar jamming and stuff like that. This was a real shock to them. Unable to have air superiority, it meant that the Egyptian and Syrian militaries were able to advance their armor and it lessened the effectiveness of Israeli armor. Without the combination of air superiority and superiority on the ground with armor, the Israeli advantage was much diluted. In the Sinai, what surprised the Israelis there was not only the use of surface to air missiles but the discipline of the Egyptian soldiers who did not break and run as they did in '67, although if you're being attacked from the air with absolutely no defense, any army would break and run. Their previous experience had set up an attitude on the part of the Israeli military that led them to grossly underestimate the military capabilities of the Egyptians and the Syrians.

Q: Had that attitude spilled over to the embassy?

ABINGTON: I think it did. In general, embassy people were without area experience or Israeli experience. Many of the people at the embassy generally tended to reflect Israeli perceptions. There was not enough critical questioning of attitudes and so forth. This was not entirely the case. Nick Veliotos was a brilliant person who was much more questioning in terms of Israel and Israeli assumptions. Ambassador Kenneth Keating was in relatively fragile health.

Q: He was elderly.

ABINGTON: Yes. He had been ambassador in India. His appointment to Israel had been delayed because he had suffered a heart attack. Then he recovered from the heart attack and was nominated and came out to Israel. But he wasn't in the office more than two to three hours a day. His intellectual abilities were much impaired. He was not really into the substance of the issues. He was very pro-Israeli to the point of lacking credibility. Frankly, there was a widespread assumption that he was exactly the kind of ambassador that Henry Kissinger wanted at that time. Kissinger had become Secretary of State. Kissinger really worked the U.S.-Israeli relationship from Washington. The ambassador was Yitzhak Rabin and he was the conduit for information, consultation, request for U.S. military assistance, etc. And the embassy to a large extent was out of it. Certainly Keating was not relied upon in Washington and was not taken seriously in Washington as an astute observer or representative of American interests. In fact, Veliotos told me the story of how Keating, who had been a brigadier general or a major general in World War II, got carried away with this and said he was going to resign as ambassador and offer his services to Golda Meir to fight for Israel. Veliotos had to calm him down. That's an indication of how Keating really was not a serious individual.

Q: Then what did you do? How did you operate?

ABINGTON: The first couple of days of the war were a tremendous shock for Israelis. Israel really went into a war footing. There was a blackout at night. You had to put blackout curtains or blankets on your windows and they had wardens who walked around and if there was any light visible, they would knock on your door and tell you either to seal that off or to turn your lights off. The headlights of cars were painted with blue paint which gave out just a very dim light at night. It led to numerous accidents and a lot of casualties. Israeli ammunition trucks were running into each other and blowing up. They turned out the traffic lights, for example. Anyone who drove in Israel during that time knew how hazardous Israeli drivers were. You can imagine what it was like with young soldiers driving at night with no vehicle lights and no traffic lights. There was a tremendous shock to the Israeli body politic within the first week of the war. The Israelis did not crush the Egyptians and Syrians as had been the case in '67. The Israelis were suffering high casualties. They were losing lots of armor. The Egyptians had crossed the Suez Canal. They had seized the Bar Lev Line. They had advanced in the Sinai. They had brought armor and artillery and surface to air missiles over. The Egyptian anti-tank units which would be two to three individuals armed with tow missiles, Sagger missiles, were knocking out lots of Israeli armor. The Israelis came to realize fairly quickly that they were facing a very different situation than in 1967 and a very grave one.

Q: What did you do?

ABINGTON: What we tried to do was through conversations and through the press and other things to give a daily sense of what Israeli leaders were saying publicly, what the mood was. There was reporting that was being done in various channels. In 1973 the communications revolution had not taken place. Embassy reporting was much more important in terms of giving a daily feel for what was taking place. You did not have CNN. You did not have instantaneous reporting on the battlefield as you have today. You did not have the kind of communications hookups so that either television or radio was picking up on an almost instantaneous basis what Israeli leaders were saying. So, the military attaches were working 20-24 hours a day around the clock in close contact with their Israeli counterparts. The CIA station which basically had a liaison relationship with the Israelis was in close touch with Mossad for their assessment. The political section was talking to the foreign ministry and reporting on what the politicians were saying, what the mood was, etc. The embassy pretty clearly charted how difficult the situation became for the Israelis within the first few days. The Israelis started running out of certain types of ammunition. They really started panicking because their whole force structure had not been developed to meet this new Egyptian-Syrian threat either to deal with the surface to air missiles, to deal with the Sagger anti-tank missiles, or to deal with the artillery barrages that particularly the Egyptians were putting down. The Israelis were deficient in artillery, particularly 155 millimeter artillery. They were deficient in certain kinds of armor piercing ammunition. Their stockpiles started running out because their planners had planned for a much shorter and less intensive battle. There is a saying that all armies prepare for the last war. That was the case with the Israelis. They prepared for the '67 war, not the '73 war, and the '73 war was of much different magnitude than was the case in '67. The Israelis really started panicking and turned to the United States. The request went both through our military attaches but primarily through

Ambassador Rabin in Washington to the White House to Kissinger, to the Defense Department, that they needed help. It was at that point that the United States started planning an airlift of essential military supplies to the Israelis using the C5As which had just come on line.

Q: These are very large cargo planes.

ABINGTON: Yes, jet cargo planes, at that time with the largest lift capacity of any aircraft in the world. The airlift was both symbolic in terms of a sign of U.S. commitment and also important in bringing certain parts that the Israelis desperately needed. Even an aircraft that big could not bring the kind of assistance that you need to fight a war simply because there is too much heavy equipment that's needed that you can't airlift. The only way to get that kind of material is by sea. In fact, the United States started shipping stuff by sea, but the turnaround time from when you gathered up the material, sent it to the ports, put it on the ship, and sailed across was probably three weeks. At the rate the fighting was going on, there was no way that the United States could send tanks and other equipment – APCs, ammunition – from the U.S. to Israel and arrive in time to affect the outcome of the battle. What the United State did symbolically – and I can remember sitting at the embassy in Tel Aviv – when the first C5As started arriving, it was in the afternoon. These aircraft approached Israel flying into Ben Gurion Airport over Tel Aviv, these huge aircraft. It was a tremendous morale booster for Israelis. They were really demoralized at the time. For them, it was a very solid sign of American support. To see the aircraft come in on a daily basis really lifted the morale of the State of Israel in a way that can't be calculated. What the planes brought in were specialized parts for aircraft. Israel had many American aircraft – F4s and Skyhawk aircraft which were A7s.

Q: Those are attack planes.

ABINGTON: Yes, although the Phantom jet was used both for air superiority and ground support. The Israelis desperately needed certain spare parts that could be flown in with these aircraft. They needed certain kinds of ammunition, particularly armor piercing tank ammunition which came in. The U.S. flew in a few APCs and tanks but that was more of a symbolic gesture. It received a lot of publicity both in Israel and internationally. Of course, there was the international dimension to the support of the United States. Kissinger and Nixon framed this issue in a Cold War-U.S.-Soviet framework. They felt that it was essential that the U.S. stand behind its ally in the region, Israel, while the Soviet Union was supporting Syria and Egypt. So, the symbolism of the U.S. sending APCs and tanks to Israel by air was important as a sign of U.S. commitment, but the impact upon the Israeli military was non-existent. It was during this period... I have to emphasize that the show was really run out of Washington by Kissinger, who worked hard during this period to bring about a cease-fire, a very delicate task because the Egyptians and the Syrians initially resisted a cease-fire because they were advancing. The Israelis wanted one. The tide started to turn first in the Sinai. General Ariel Sharon played a key role in the tank battles that took place down in the Sinai. There was one particular tank battle at a place called the Chinese Farm, so called because there is a Chinese agricultural project there, which was one of the largest tank battles in history. It was a decisive battle from the Israeli point of view. They blunted the Egyptian attack in the Sinai. They moved to secure a foothold on the other side of the Suez Canal. They gradually expanded that foothold and surrounded and put at risk the Egyptian Third Army, a very sizeable force. Having gained control of the battlefield in

the Sinai, the Israelis turned their attention to the Golan. In the Golan, the fiercest tank battles took place. It was over a very small territorial unit, which made it even fiercer. The Syrians came very, very close to breaking the Israeli lines and to bringing their tanks down from the Golan Heights into northern Israel and very close to seizing a key bridge across a river down in the Hula Valley, which would have been very devastating for the Israelis if that had taken place. But the ability to control the battlefield in the Sinai allowed the Israelis to shift armor up to the Golan. Israelis also gradually gained air superiority in both the Sinai and the Golan. It allowed the Israelis to hold on to the Golan Heights. But it was a close call for the Israelis in the Golan.

Q: An embassy's priority is protection of American interests, which in this case would mean Americans. There were a lot of Israelis who also had American passports. Getting them out of harm's way... What was happening?

ABINGTON: Because it was a war, commercial airliners stopped flying into Israel. All the American carriers stopped and so did most of the others. Maybe the only airliner flying in and out of Israel was El-al. A lot of Israelis who had been abroad came back to Israel to fight, to join reserve units. There were volunteers that came to Israel at the time. Dennis Ross, the current Middle East envoy, came to Israel and was there during the '73 war. So was Martin Indyk, our current ambassador to Israel, although at the time he was an Australian, not an American citizen. They were there during the '73 war. Indyk worked in some kind of a food processing plant in '73 because the Israeli males had been called into the reserves. You did not have that many people leaving. Because of the war, we couldn't evacuate any American dependents. So there was no real evacuation of people from Israel. There was just no way to get them out and there was no time to get them out either. I can recall that one Sunday the air raid sirens started sounding in Tel Aviv and we were all instructed to go down to the basement of the building. The Egyptians had been flying some TU16 bombers off the coast of Israel in the Mediterranean and they had launched missiles at Tel Aviv and these missiles were really in essence unmanned MIG15 aircraft which carried a big explosive charge. The Israelis shot them down but the fact of air attacks on Tel Aviv shook people up a lot. From the point of view of protecting American citizens, there was not a lot to do other than try to reassure people, to tell them to obey Israeli blackout instructions and so forth, and to be prepared to leave quickly, to have their possessions, their papers in order, if it was possible to get people out. But there basically was no evacuation during this war.

I want to point out that the role of the defense attaché office at that time was really critical. In terms of giving assessments, daily briefings, hourly briefings by the Israeli military to our defense attaches, who in turn did their cables and reports... You didn't have the kind of real time satellite intelligence that you have today. Satellite reconnaissance at that time was pretty bulky and was much more difficult to download the stuff. It was through parachuted film canisters.

Q: They would orbit over and then parachute down.

ABINGTON: So you didn't have real time digital intelligence the way we have today. The defense attaches played a critical role. Fortunately, we had a staff of highly professional officers who did an absolutely superb job during this period.

Q: Were they reflecting at all the disquiet that was coming from our military, from the Pentagon, that we were giving supplies that should be used in case the Soviets attacked across the Fulda Gap and all that?

ABINGTON: No, not at all. They were looking at it from the other perspective. What you mention is a broader perspective that they simply didn't have. They were looking at it very much from the perspective of what the Israelis were telling them and the desperation that the Israelis were feeling. They didn't have a broader picture.

Q: Was Nick Veliotos very much in charge?

ABINGTON: Nick was really in charge. Keating was the nominal ambassador, but it was Veliotos who was running the whole show. He was working tremendously hard. He was in touch with the foreign minister, the prime minister, the defense minister. He was forwarding proposals and suggestions to Washington, giving assessments. He was pulling it all together and coordinating the whole thing. He was doing this while trying to keep Keating happy and not have Keating go off the deep end either.

Q: Were you able to go out and meet your various contacts during this time?

ABINGTON: There was massive mobilization. You'd just see it walking down the street: the absence of men. The people on the street by and large were either elderly men or schoolboys or women. You did not see men. It was difficult in the sense of contacts were gone – if they were journalists, they were at the front. Your normal contacts just weren't there.

Q: Coming back to the Americans, as an old consular hand myself, I would have thought that you would have had a bunch of people saying, "You've got to do something" no matter how unrealistic it was to get them out. If they're frightened or annoyed, there is no place better than the embassy to go and shout at officials.

ABINGTON: Of course, I wasn't in the consular section. I was in the political section. But my recollection is that there really was not during the conflict a lot of public pressure from people to try to get out. People were listening to radio on an hourly basis. They generally understood what the situation was. They knew that airplanes were not flying in, that getting out was almost impossible. I don't think you had the kind of pressure in 1973 that you had during the 1990-1991 Gulf War.

Q: There you had a not very impressive reaction on the part of many people who were Jewish-Americans.

ABINGTON: The difference in '90-'91 was that you had SCUD missiles hitting Tel Aviv and civilian casualties. In the '73 war, I don't think that there were any civilian casualties as a result of Syrian or Egyptian military strikes. You also had the threat of chemical warheads in '90-'91 and that created a tremendous amount of panic and concern on the part of the population.

Q: After a cease-fire came into existence, what were we seeing in Israel?

ABINGTON: One has to recall that the cease-fire came about as a result of Kissinger's negotiations with the Soviets. Kissinger went to Moscow and worked out the details of a cease-fire acceptable to both sides and a Security Council resolution, 338, which called for a cease-fire and for a political settlement. The Israelis' feeling was mixed. On the one hand, they had really been bloodied very badly with very serious casualties, the worst since 1948 when Israel became independent, the worst casualties of any conflict, and they had been badly damaged by the Egyptians and the Syrians both in terms of people killed and wounded as well as equipment destroyed. On the other hand, I think that the Israelis at this point had really put the Egyptians under tremendous pressure. Some elements of the IDF and the political establishment thought that Israel should continue fighting against Egypt to destroy the Egyptian Third Army and to push the Egyptians out of the Bar Lev Line and out of the Sinai. But then this became wrapped up in power politics and in Cold War politics. The Soviet Union made it clear that an Israeli military move against Egyptian forces along the lines I just described would meet some unspecified Soviet response. This led to a tremendous amount of international tension. It caused President Nixon to increase the overall readiness of U.S. military forces around the world to a much higher stage. And it raised concern that the conflict, particularly the Egyptian-Israeli conflict, could lead to U.S.-Soviet military involvement. As a result, the stakes increased tremendously. Because of that, Kissinger and Nixon made it quite clear to the Israeli leadership that there had to be a cease-fire. There were assurances from Kissinger that the U.S. would be very mindful of Israeli security requirements and concerns. I think that that had been clearly demonstrated by the support both political and military that the U.S. had given Israel with the outbreak of the conflict. There was a clear commitment that there would be additional U.S. military assistance to Israel and there would be an expedited resupply of military equipment to make up for the losses that the Israelis had suffered. So, Israel accepted the cease-fire somewhat but not too reluctantly. Kissinger flew from Moscow to Tel Aviv and it was a six to eight-hour stop to brief the Israelis. Then he went on to Cairo to meet with President Sadat and to brief him as well. That was the 22nd or 23rd of October. The fighting stopped, although there were sporadic outbreaks, particularly in the Sinai or in Egypt proper across the canal, where there continued to be periodic low level fighting. The Egyptian Third Army, which at that point had been totally surrounded... The Israelis kept up their military pressure and this continued to be a real flashpoint. The United States had to work out resupply arrangements and put some serious pressure on the Israelis to allow food and fuel and so forth to go to the Egyptian Third Army. Sadat was absolutely concerned that the Israelis would try to destroy the Third Army. He was appealing for Soviet and American help to keep that from happening. Kissinger and others realized the seriousness of that situation and pressed Israel very hard not to take further action against the Third Army.

Q: During the war, were you monitoring the Arabs within Israel and those in the West Bank? Was there concern on the part of the Israelis that they would rise up to support their fellow Arabs?

ABINGTON: Not really. We didn't spend any time at all... Of course, the consulate in Jerusalem had responsibility for reporting on what Palestinians in the West Bank were doing. But we essentially did nothing with regard to the Israeli Arabs or for that matter Palestinians in Gaza. I think that the main reason was that unlike in the Gulf War and unlike today, Palestinians

were not politically mobilized and were not politically active in 1973. They were quiescent and the Israelis had the situation under control militarily with regard to the West Bank and Gaza. I don't recall that there were any particular incidents caused by Palestinians nor were there Israeli measures like 24-hour curfews as they did during the Gulf War. The Palestinians were not a factor in the '73 war.

Q: The war was over. What were you getting from your contacts? Was there a change in the American-Israeli equation?

ABINGTON: Yes. There was a feeling on the part of Israelis that the United States had played a critical role in standing by Israel during its most difficult hour since independence. There was a sense of real gratitude on a popular level and among the political leadership. On the other hand, Golda Meir was still the prime minister. You had people in the cabinet who were determined that they were going to do it their way. Kissinger was finding the Israelis difficult to deal with, as they usually are because they are very fierce in terms of protecting their own interests. There was a cease-fire but then there was a very intensive period of negotiation to stabilize the situation. Those were the negotiations in November and December which led to the two agreements. The first was the Kilometer 101 Agreement. Then there was the First Disengagement Agreement. Kissinger started and the phrase was coined "shuttle diplomacy" between Israel and Egypt in November and December to try to stabilize the situation to remove this flashpoint of the Israeli siege of the Egyptian Third Army. That led to the Kilometer 101 Agreement.

Q: What were you doing in November and December?

ABINGTON: Fairly intensive discussions were going on between Kissinger and Rabin here in Washington. The embassy was receiving instructions from Washington to talk to the foreign ministry or to the prime minister. Keating and Veliotos would do that. For example, there were warnings about military action against the Third Army. There was consultation primarily led by Veliotos to talk to senior Israeli leaders to get their sense of their mood, of their plans, etc. In that sense, it was still a crisis atmosphere. The embassy was doing its best to assess Israeli plans and intentions regarding the aftermath of the war and how to deal with it. There was also a congressional visit, a large one led by Congressman Mel Pryce and 40-45 members of Congress who came out shortly after the cease-fire. Congressman Pryce was chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. There were also representatives from the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The Israelis then as now realized the importance of congressional support for Israel. They worked really hard to take care of this delegation. I was the control officer along with one of the military attaches. It was quite dramatic because this probably would have been early November and the Israelis flew us by helicopter out to the Sinai along the Suez Canal. We saw the area of the Chinese Farm where this huge battle had taken place and you literally could see hundreds of destroyed and damaged tanks and APCs in this area. We flew over the Suez Canal and went to Egypt to the Israeli forward positions where they had surrounded the Egyptian Third Army. We received a briefing from the IDF on the Egyptian side of the canal. I'll never forget, there were Egyptian soldiers' bodies still unburied. It was very much a war zone. It made a tremendous impact on the members of the congressional delegation and on me. We were the first visitors of a non-military nature to that area. The Israelis really played up what had happened, the threat, etc. It had the desired impact. The delegation went back to Washington and were very

strongly behind a significant U.S. military assistance package to Israel. That was a very important event. It cemented congressional support for the Israelis. The Israelis received them at the highest level. They had briefings by the prime minister, the foreign minister, the IDF chief of staff and general command, and they saw for themselves the battlefield which made a very deep impression on these congressmen.

Q: During this early cease-fire period, were you picking up a certain disquiet on the part of elements within Israel of the leadership of Golda Meir?

ABINGTON: Very much so, yes. The Israeli press traditionally has been vociferous in its criticism. There was a feeling that the Israeli political and military leadership had failed the country by not anticipating the attacks and by misreading the intelligence and by a mis-assessment of Egyptian and Syrian political and military intentions. There was a committee formed, the Argonaut Committee, headed by the chief justice of Israel, which did a very thorough review of the situation and essentially blamed the leadership for its failure. That led in early 1974 to Golda Meir's resignation. Yitzhak Rabin then became the prime minister. During that period-- November, December, January--ongoing negotiations continued, which had to be done by Kissinger and his Middle East team that included Joe Sisco, who at the time had become US for Political Affairs, Roy Atherton, who was the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Hal Saunders, who was the deputy; he had moved over from the NSC to assist Roy Atherton with responsibility for the Arab-Israeli issue, and Bill Klunt had replaced him at the NSC. So, you had some real heavy hitters. Kissinger had a superb team of diplomats and negotiators with him, although he really ran the show. But it was personal hands-on diplomacy by Kissinger negotiating between the Egyptians and the Israelis to bring about the Kilometer 101 Agreement, which stabilized the situation and led to the Israeli evacuation of positions across the canal, and then later the First Disengagement Agreement which led to a zone of separation between Israel and Egypt. During that period, the embassy was totally involved in supporting Kissinger. Essentially the embassy moved up to Jerusalem to the King David Hotel and we were there in a staff and administrative support capacity, although Veliotos was involved, Keating was really no more than the symbolic presence. It was really a negotiation totally run by Henry Kissinger and by his staff in Washington. The embassy played very little substantive role in this process. It essentially was there to support Kissinger's efforts.

Q: When did you leave Israel?

ABINGTON: I left Israel in June of 1975. During that period, the negotiation by Kissinger was intensive. To my way of thinking, the '73 war and Kissinger's diplomacy afterwards laid the foundation for American diplomacy to try to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute. I look upon the peace process and building blocks. Every agreement is based upon prior agreements. Kissinger really set that in motion. During the time that I was there in Tel Aviv, there was the Kilometer 101 Agreement, there was the First Disengagement Agreement, there was the 1974 Israeli-Syrian Disengagement Agreement, where Kissinger spent something like 33 days at the King David Hotel shuttling back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem to negotiate that agreement. Then there was the attempt to reach a second disengagement agreement which failed in March of 1975. I remember being at the airport and Kissinger saying that he was going back for a reassessment of American policy which was widely perceived in Israel and in Washington as a

threat to bring pressure against Israel, feeling that Israel was being recalcitrant in terms of a further pullback in the Sinai. Of course, the Israelis mounted a very effective congressional campaign which culminated in a letter to the President by something like 90-92 of the 100 senators saying that the United States should not put pressure on Israel. That whole reassessment threat pretty much went out the window. But it was a period of very creative diplomacy by Kissinger and deep personal involvement on the Arab-Israeli issue and really laid the groundwork for future U.S. efforts to mediate the Arab-Israeli dispute.

Q: One of the attributes of Israeli action that I've picked up is that they would sign an agreement and then keep challenging it. In other words, an agreement is sort of a preliminary thing and they keep pushing ahead a little. Were we noticing that, trying to get everything they could out of it?

ABINGTON: I've always felt that a style of Israeli negotiators is to stake out an absolutely unreasonable and maximalist position and to negotiate back from there. In general, Israelis are reasonably successful in that because they end up getting more than might otherwise be the case. This tends to be a tactic whether it's negotiating with Arab neighbors or with the Palestinians or whether it's negotiating with the United States issues in the bilateral relationship like strategic cooperation, etc. It's a characteristic of negotiations, to overreach, to put really maximalist positions on the table, and they end up getting instead of 70% maybe 90-95%. I helped do the staff work for Kissinger when he was negotiating these agreements, working with the Executive Secretariat. I saw the negotiating papers and so forth. I saw the agreements as they went through drafts. Then when I came back to Washington in the summer of '75, I was a staff aide to Roy Atherton. I did a lot of the staff work in preparation for negotiations that Kissinger carried out. He kept it to a very small circle of people and someone needed to do the staff work and it fell to me as Roy's staff aide. To go back to your question, once an agreement was reached between Israel and Syria, between Israel and Egypt, and once the military movements took place, Israel was pretty good about living up to the agreements. Once the Israelis pulled back to new lines in Sinai, they basically respected those. In the Golan Heights, when Israel withdrew from Kuneitra, quite clearly the Israelis destroyed Kuneitra before they withdrew. It was widely seen as an act of bad faith. Then the Israelis charged that the Syrians were not interested in peace because otherwise they would have rebuilt Kuneitra even though it was surrounded by the Israelis. It's still surrounded by the Israelis 26 years after the disengagement agreement. It angered the Syrians very much. The Israelis charged that the buildings had been damaged or destroyed during fighting. In fact, we went up and examined the area, and it was clear that the Israelis had put charges in the buildings and collapsed them, blown out the walls so that the roofs caved in. That was not caused by fighting during the war but caused by an act of Israeli retaliation.

Q: You can tell. I was in Bosnia after the civil war and you can tell when houses are destroyed by military action.

ABINGTON: Yes. It was quite clear that Israel had destroyed much of the city of Kuneitra. This has been a hallmark of the way Israel negotiates agreements with its neighbors. They are niggardly in the negotiations. There is no good grace on the part of the Israelis when they carry out these agreements. That was the case with the disengagement agreement. There was no good grace in terms of Kuneitra. They destroyed the city and poisoned the atmosphere, which was bad

to begin with. It certainly didn't set a proper framework for a future developing relationship.

It was the same thing when they carried out the peace agreement with Egypt. Rather than just withdraw from Israeli settlements in the Sinai, which clearly were illegal, the Israelis evacuated the settlements with difficulty, but then they flattened and destroyed the settlements. It was widely seen in the Arab world as a general attitude of Israel towards Arabs. Of course, they held on to the Taba area for years when clearly there was no legal basis for their having it. It's these kind of gestures on the part of Israel that goes a long way to poisoning the atmosphere between Israel and its neighbors. It's always an irony that when Israel talks about a cold peace, it always fails to acknowledge actions that it has taken that have contributed to the cold peace.

Q: Did you sense any change in the attitude towards Syria or Egypt or towards Arabs in general?

ABINGTON: Certainly not up to the point that I left in 1975. There was a visceral hatred or dislike of, particularly, the Syrians. There was a feeling that the Syrians were the most brutal of all the Arabs. I suppose that one reason was that the Syrians and the Israelis geographically were cheek by jowl unlike the Egyptians and the Israelis where you had the Sinai as a buffer. In that sense, having that kind of buffer meant that the hatred or the mistrust on the part of Israelis was much less. I think that in general among Israelis that I talked to, average Israelis, there was a general contempt and mistrust with regard to Arabs in general, a visceral dislike of the Syrians, almost bordering on hatred, a deep distrust of Palestinians. This was reinforced by terrorist incidents, for example, the Ma'alot incident in '74.

Q: What was that?

ABINGTON: Some Palestinians came across the Israeli-Lebanese border. They seized a school in the town of Ma'alot in northern Israel. Israelis stormed the school and in the resulting fighting something like 20 Israeli schoolchildren were killed. Of course, that made a tremendous impact on Israelis. It happened when Kissinger was in Jerusalem and it totally disrupted the negotiations. There was an intense Israeli focus on this from the political leadership on down.

Q: Did you sense a change in our embassy towards the leadership of Sadat? Was he a different person than had been felt before? We were thinking of Sadat as being not a very impressive replacement for Nasser.

ABINGTON: It changed as a result of the '73 war. It started to gradually change as Kissinger became convinced that Sadat was a genuinely different kind of Arab leader and that Sadat genuinely wanted to make peace. I can recall that Israelis were traumatized by the '73 war. To a degree they had blinders on because of their stereotypical attitudes towards Arabs that exist today. Of course, one fallout from the '73 war and the Israeli intelligence failure, military failure, and political failure was that it changed the psychology of the way that the military, the intelligence communities assessed Arab attitudes. They went very much from an arrogant feeling of Israel being so much stronger than the Arabs to really worst case assessments of Arab intentions. This worst case assessment led them to question and discount signs of a different Arab attitude towards peace with Israel. Certainly that was the case with Syria and Egypt. They

listened to what Kissinger was saying, that this was a new ballgame and new opportunities were there. They had been burned so badly by the '73 war that they were very skeptical about what they were told by the Americans and they had a real difficulty in coming up with honest and accurate intelligence assessments of particularly Egyptian intentions. There was no Israeli interests section or embassy in Cairo. They had a very hard time gathering information. I've always felt that Israel suffers and continues to suffer in terms of its understanding of Arabs and its assessment of Arab intentions. That's been the case in the 30 years that I dealt with Israel and Arabs.

Q: You keep using the term "Arab." Was there the feeling that the Egyptians aren't really Arabs?

ABINGTON: Oh, yes. I'm using "Arab" in a broad sense without distinguishing between Jordanians, Syrians, Iraqis, Egyptians. There was certainly the growing perception in the embassy that the Egyptians were quite different. We could see signs of falling out between the Egyptians and the Syrians over how Sadat was pursuing his policy. The Syrians were angry that the unity of the war after the conflict ended, that the Egyptians began pursuing their own interests in terms of negotiations with Israel using the United States. You could see developing Syrian-Egyptian strains. King Hussein at the time had stayed out of the '73 war. There were continuing secret Israeli-Jordanian contacts and dialogue going on with Hussein and the Israeli prime minister at the intelligence level. In '73 and '74, the PLO had been kicked out of Jordan.

Q: That was Black September.

ABINGTON: Yes. They had relocated in Lebanon, which was becoming increasingly unstable in the mid-'70s. In late '75/'76, Lebanon became a real hotspot. I think that there was a perception in the embassy that Egypt was playing a different role and the U.S. leadership - Kissinger, Nixon, and then Ford - were looking at Egypt in a much different light.

Q: Here is the embassy. You've been through a very dramatic war. Did you find that all of you coming out of that were much more pro-Israeli? I'm talking about real localitis coming out.

ABINGTON: No. I think there were different opinions. To be perfectly honest, I felt from the time I arrived in Israel in 1972 that Israel was essentially racist in the way that it treated Palestinians. I was new to the Foreign Service, but just from the point of view of seeing how Israel dealt with its Arab neighbors, I felt that Israeli policies were misguided, not very well thought out, that the Israeli prejudices against the Arabs were so deep and so strong that Israeli actions were fueling the crisis. Certainly one can fault what the Palestinians were doing, can fault what the Syrians were doing, a lack of recognition or understanding of what the Egyptians were up to, but Israeli actions created a lot of the difficulties in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is a conflict between two parties. When you're part of that and when you're emotionally bound up in it, it's very difficult to distance yourself and take an honest look. I think that it's the role of outside mediators like the U.S. to rise above the positions of one side or the other and try to bring them together. We've done not so good and fairly good jobs of that at different times. We can talk about when we didn't do a very good job.

BETTY JANE JONES
Deputy Consul General
Jerusalem (1973-1976)

Betty Jane Jones was born and raised in Wisconsin. She majored in government at Beloit College and entered the Foreign Service in 1954. Her career included positions in Italy, Germany, India, Israel, the United Kingdom (England), and assignments related to the United Nations in Washington, DC and New York. This interview was conducted on March 8, 1993.

Q: You left Calcutta, and that war just in time to go to Jerusalem. People must have been thinking of you as Typhoid Mary?

JONES: Even funnier than that was the Ambassador in India was Ambassador Keating and he moved from there to Israel. In fact, he said to me one day, "Everywhere we go, they seem to have a war." Yes, I went on a direct transfer to Jerusalem.

Q: When did you arrive?

JONES: In July? I think it was July '73.

Q: And stayed there until '76?

JONES: That's right.

Q: How did you see the situation in the summer of '73?

JONES: As I alluded to earlier, things were very stalemated. Nothing was happening in terms of resolving the problem, the Arab-Israeli problem. There didn't seem to be any chance of movement. Then the war came and that all changed, and again as in '67 there was hope that this would lead to something that could help resolve the problem.

Q: How did the war hit Jerusalem where you were?

JONES: Well the war itself didn't really affect us very much except that, you know, they call up so many people. A couple of our local employees got called up. One was let go fairly soon after. He was in his fifties. Both of these were drivers and the younger man did stay in for the course of the war. It's a very funny situation where people there go into the army. They go off to war. They come home. They can one day be off somewhere fighting, and the next day be home on a pass, and then two days later be back fighting again. It's a very odd feeling. It's so different from what we're used to where people go miles away and it's a totally separate situation. There was a lot of tension of course, concern. But Jerusalem itself, I don't think ever felt, the city per se, was in danger. Similarly in Calcutta, we never felt any danger during the war, even though we had a blackout for two days but it was pointless, because there was nothing happening in that area.

Following the war, we got terribly busy because of the shuttle diplomacy, and because they came to Jerusalem, and were at the King David Hotel, which is not very far from the Consulate, and used our facilities, our communications. So that we had to have a twenty-four hour operation, and we ran messages back and forth between the Consulate and the King David Hotel.

Q: What were you doing in Jerusalem?

JONES: That's what I was saying earlier. I was the Deputy there, and I was Deputy in Calcutta too, but I was pretty much in the Economic Section, whereas in Jerusalem I was supervisor over the political and economic officers and the consular and administrative sections.

Q: Who was the Consul General?

JONES: It was Pete Day. Arthur R. Day, during the first two years, and Michael Newlin the third year that I was there.

Q: You know, there's always been the problem of Jerusalem which has been in a way the thorn in the side of the Israelis because of the reporting on Palestinian affairs, particularly on the West Bank. How did that work during your period and what were the pressures on you?

JONES: Well, the Israelis of course resent the fact that we have not recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Jerusalem is an independent post; it's not a constituent post of Tel Aviv, in order to maintain this policy. Its consular district includes the West Bank and the city of Jerusalem, both west and east. That gave us an opportunity to have contact with both sides which is an unusual situation in that area. We were able to report on events in the West Bank and to travel freely, and observe things. And also report on events in Jerusalem and have contacts with city officials. We didn't have any official contact with the Israeli government. That's the province of the Embassy. But we did cover the city and we did have contacts with the mayor and other officials there. It's a very sticky situation because little events would happen. When a congressman came to visit, the Israeli government wanted to, or the mayor's office wanted to, give him a tour of East Jerusalem, whereas we felt he should go with us not with West Jerusalem officials. Little things like that. Mostly our relations with them were good, but as I say, they were unhappy. There was a feeling on their part which I don't think is correct, that the consulate in Jerusalem was full of people who were anti-Israeli. That was not fair I think, and I think it was not a feeling that those who had contacts with the Consul General held, because they knew that he was not biased in that way, and in fact had many good Israeli friends, and was very sympathetic to their problems.

Q: Were you ever given any, if not instructions, heavy breathing from our Embassy in Tel Aviv, and even from the Department saying: "Cut out talking about Israeli procedures in the West Bank" or anything like that?

JONES: No, I don't think so. There were occasional problems of jurisdiction between the Embassy and us, but nothing that I can recall that was ever significant. We would talk to them on the phone frequently, and usually work things out.

Q: There weren't any incidents? In that time where a consul would go out and find that an Israeli had been beating up on some villagers. You'd report it and then it would get into the New York or the Washington Post and cause heartburn?

JONES: I don't recall anything of that nature. You know, you're required to do these annual human rights reports and the Embassy sent in a combined one covering Israel and the occupied territories because Gaza is under its jurisdiction. But we drafted the one on the West Bank and we sent it to them to include, and there might have been a few minor editing changes, but basically, they sent what we had prepared. I don't recall...There may be things I don't remember, but at the moment I don't recall any major difficulty we had.

NICHOLAS A. VELIOTES
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tel Aviv (1973-1975)

Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1977-1978)

Ambassador Nicholas A. Veliotos was born in California in 1928. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of California in 1952 and a master's degree in 1954. He joined the State Department in 1955. Ambassador Veliotos' career included positions in Italy, India, Laos, Israel, Washington, DC, and ambassadorships to Jordan, and Egypt. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: You served as deputy chief of mission in Tel Aviv from '73 until '75. I wonder if you could talk a bit about how you got the job and what the situation was when you arrived there.

VELIOTES: Well, I guess I got the job because of, first, my ties into NEA, which were based on my service in India in the mid-sixties.

Q: I might say that NEA covered...

VELIOTES: South Asia as well as the Middle East and North Africa.

Q: And South Asia would include the...

VELIOTES: India-Pakistan area. When I was with the deputy secretary, we handled NEA issues that way. We handled all military and economic assistance for the Department. That was Jack Irwin, who was the top of that interagency pyramid that went heavily to the Middle East. Our office was responsible for coordinating the relief efforts into Jordan after the war with the Palestinians, Black September of 1970.

We were deeply involved in these issues. And I was considered a part of the NEA cadre. Joe

Sisco was the assistant secretary. Roy Atherton was his deputy. When the time came for an assignment after I'd been in that particular job for three years, somewhere in NEA seemed natural. Actually, as it turned out, I was offered two different jobs: I was offered ambassador to Bangladesh or DCM in Israel. And my wife and I decided that Israel would be more interesting, and, for some reason, we thought it would be more restful.

Q: Good God! We're talking about early '73.

VELIOTES: Early '73. We were in the sixth year of the post-1967 euphoria in Israel, where there was a widespread belief the millennium had arrived, et cetera. And there was a tremendous amount of belief that Israel was a great vacation spot.

Q: You're talking about within the Foreign Service?

VELIOTES: Well, generally. And as far as I was concerned, it was attractive because I had two teenaged sons; they had a good school in Tel Aviv. It was essentially an English-language post; you could get by without knowing Arabic or Hebrew. And there was a challenge there. I was going to be the senior career officer, with an admirable elderly ambassador, a former senator, called Kenneth Keating, who had asked me to come.

Q: Barbour had left by this time?

VELIOTES: Barbour was gone. So I left in the summer of '73 and actually arrived as chargé for a month. Owen Zurhellen, who had been chargé for six months, was off to his next assignment, and I came in as chargé. And almost immediately, even at that time...

Q: This was...

VELIOTES: This was July of '73, I believe. I realized that, even though Israel was at peace, Israel was never at peace. The energy level in the society was extremely high. There was a feeling there of security, of having fought all the wars that had to be fought. There was a not-unattractive sense of optimism, and some arrogance. And there was a sun, sand, and surf philosophy, which, of course, my sons enjoyed immensely in those few months that it lasted.

But even at that time, I realized it was going to be a seven-day-a-week job, exacerbated by the difference in time change, which meant Washington awakened when we closed. And there was always a high interest in what was going on in the Middle East at this time, as the war of attrition had ended, and the Soviets had rebuilt the Syrian and Egyptian armed services, and Nasser had died, and Sadat had come in. And who is Sadat? He'd just thrown out the Russians. What were the Israelis doing? Where were the settlements going? Did it make sense to rely on the Bar-Lev line along the Canal, which was stationary? All these things. And, you know, there are times when you go into a situation fresh, where, because your mind is open, you can actually see some things.

In the month before the ambassador arrived, I went around on my introductory meetings, and it was fascinating. I went down to see the Bar-Lev line, along the Sinai, and it seemed rather

strange to stand there and wave to the Egyptian soldiers on the other side, and to see these enormous, what looked like sand ramparts, enormous things up in the sky, and to get a briefing from the Israeli generals. They were impatient with any questions you would ask, like "What are those gigantic sand things?"

"Oh, forget about those. If the Egyptians attack, they may cross over at night, but in the morning they will die. In the morning they will die."

No conception that perhaps the Egyptians might have the capability to cross and stay, and that there might be a combination of factors that would make it impossible for the Israelis to do in the future what they did in the past with their tanks and their airplanes.

When I called on Moshe Dayan and asked his views, at that time he was minister of defense, he described the Arab armies as akin to rusting freighters at anchor, slowly sinking into the water. That was his description of the Arab army -- rusting and slowly sinking into the sand.

It was only a few months before the war.

We had continuing mini-crises. A Libyan plane was hijacked and brought in.

And to round this out, Israel closed down from Friday night to Saturday night.

Q: This was because of the holy day.

VELIOTES: Shabbat, the religious holy day. In Washington, of course, any busy State Department office works at least Saturday morning, which means they're in the office from five to ten p.m. Israel time. In any busy embassy, the senior officers go in in the morning on Saturdays. And the Israeli cabinet always met on Sunday, which meant you were getting ready for the cabinet meeting. And it wasn't unusual to meet people on Sunday mornings and try to influence the cabinet meeting, or to go up to Jerusalem on Sunday and get a read-out on the cabinet.

Q: You know, you're saying something that I find very interesting, because here are two sovereign nations, and you're saying that the cabinet meeting is going to take place. In other words, we sound like a participatory body in the cabinet meeting, not because of a particular crisis, but sort of as a standard way. Was it this sort of relationship?

VELIOTES: Well, there were always issues that had an impact, as we saw it, on us. There were always U.N. votes. Will there be new settlements? Always something. How about most-favored-nation treatment for Romania? Would they let the Jews out? Later on, that became the problem with the Russians. The American-Israeli relationship is unique, so that unless you participated in it on the ground in Israel, it's very difficult to comprehend. There is a very symbiotic relationship there. The Israeli society is so open that it's a miracle they were or are ever able to keep any military secrets. And they can, or at least they used to. There are so many pressure points in the political system. Two or three correspondents, writing in different newspapers, can actually focus public and political interest in such a way that you'll have a discussion in a cabinet

meeting, or possibly a decision.

Q: Including correspondents from, say, the New York Times or the Washington Post?

VELIOTES: No. You have to understand that there are three things that interest the Israelis. One, Israel and their own security. Two, beyond that, the state of world Jewry -- in Russia and wherever. But anything outside of that, let's call it the Israeli-centric or Jewish-centric issues, the only other issue is the United States. What are they thinking in the United States? What are they saying in the United States? The Kol Israel, English-language morning program is full of the United States. So are their newspapers, front page stories from the columnists. The best assignment, the most important assignment you can get is as an Israeli journalist here. You've got to understand that. And then, of course, the interrelationships amongst American Jews and the Israeli Jewish population. The political relationships here. And the Israelis are always trying to influence our body politic. I mean, it's rather silly to talk about the fact that you don't intervene -- you always intervene. We try to do it there; they try to do it here.

As a matter of fact, Joyce Starr, who used to be in the White House and is currently an independent consultant, has written a book, that is supposed to be coming out in the next few months, on the American-Israeli relationship. And a number of us have talked to her about it.

So, against that backdrop, it's not unusual. Also, as deputy chief of mission, one of my jobs was briefing Americans who were in Israel, organized groups that wanted to come in -- thirty, forty -- we had a big conference room; they'd come in and we'd talk. Always meeting with American Jewish leaders, not to mention the congressional delegations who would go to Israel, as Mecca, before elections, to get support.

I've seen it from both sides, from the Washington side and the Israeli side, and you can't really appreciate it until you live it on the Israeli side. That's why it's good to get Sam Lewis and Peter Jessup talking about these things.

Q: So you arrived and you found you were completely immersed.

VELIOTES: Immediately.

Q: Let me ask one question before we move on to developments. I have heard, from others who have served in Israel, that the Israelis, particularly at the very beginning, are looking at you very closely: Are you a hundred percent with us? If you're not a hundred percent with us, therefore you're against us.

VELIOTES: Have you ever spoken to Walter Smith? You should. Walter was political counselor when I arrived, and Walter was convinced there was a big black book up in Jerusalem, an enormous ledger, and the Israelis made up their minds whether you were a good guy or a bad guy, and you were entered into that ledger. If you were a bad guy, you'd never get off. If you were a good guy, they gave you a lot of leeway. You could move, but even then, it was difficult. Yes, they look at you, they talk to you.

Q: Were you sort of ready for this, and did you feel you were being judged all the time? And was this an inhibition? After all, there are American interests and Israeli interests.

VELIOTES: Yes, of course there are. Sure, it's an inhibition. Well, the Jews have developed, over the centuries, ways of dealing with their security and the non-Jewish community. I don't want to generalize this, but clearly my conclusion in Israel was they looked at you and they were trying to judge, you know, could you be seduced? Not in a sexual sense, but could you be intimidated? Could you be bought? I understood that, when I got there, when I felt it, when I saw it. Some of the things, I thought, were a little crude, the kinds of pressure that were put on. But there's no doubt that the Israelis seek to take an American official and turn him or her into an advocate for Israel.

I'll give you an anecdote. I was chargé, and it was after the failure of the second Sinai agreement, which failed in March of 1975. My ambassador had died, I was chargé for six months or so. There was very bad blood between the American government and the Israelis at that time, because after this failure, President Ford announced his reassessment of American policy. The Israeli press was vying with itself on who could describe Kissinger as the greater villain. You heard and read things, openly stated, that he was the greatest traitor to the Jewish race since Josephus, which takes you back to the Zealots' revolt.

Q: Titus and all that sort of thing.

VELIOTES: Josephus was a great guerilla commander who finally gave in to the Romans, became a Roman citizen, went to Rome, and wrote the history of the Jewish wars. He's known as a great traitor, this kind of stuff. Well, one day I was called by the Foreign Ministry to come to Jerusalem -- a very serious problem. So I went up there, and met with my friend, Eppie Evron, who was then, I think, running the Foreign Ministry. He had the title of director, or deputy director, but in any event, he was the number-one guy for the Americans, working with Foreign Minister Allon. And he said the foreign minister had asked that he call me in to discuss this very important problem. It was all about criticism of Israel in high places in the United States, that somehow was stimulated by the reporting from the embassy, and how the secretary of state always calls the Israeli ambassador and complains. We were going around and around, and finally I said, "Wait a minute. You say this happens often."

He said, "Yes, sometimes daily."

And I said, "Well, we submit a daily press summary, and it's one of the basic reporting tools for the embassy and for Washington. We have a brilliant young girl who comes in, about five in the morning, she assembles it all, and we tell her the five or six subjects that we're interested in. And, of course, American-Israeli relations are very high on the list. So we send in that summary every day, by telegram, and I have no doubt that it goes right to the secretary of state."

And he said, "Well, I guess that's it." And he hemmed and hawed.

And I said, "Hey, you're not telling me I'm to censor the *Israeli Times*? I'm to censor *your* press so my secretary of state...?"

So he said, "Well, Nick, it's not that."

But then this man made very clear to me, he said, "But, you know, your job here is to explain us to Washington. You've got to explain why we do the things we do."

And what he was saying was: You've got to explain why we should not be held to the same standards as others.

And I said to him, "Look, I think I'm as sympathetic as anyone can be, but I really can't accept that my job here is to explain you to Washington. That's part of my job. The other part of my job is to try to convince you to support American policies. I'm sorry..."

But that's the kind of feeling that you get there.

Q: Well, examining this, because I think this is extremely important, particularly in Tel Aviv, as our embassy, more than anywhere else that I can think of...

VELIOTES: Doesn't exist anywhere else.

Q: When you arrived, you came out of NEA, but you had not been an Arab specialist.

VELIOTES: Yes, in those days, that was very important.

Q: How did you find the embassy? Did you find it broken down? Were you kind of on watch-out, to find whether you had zealots or anti-zealots?

VELIOTES: No, I could find out simply by talking to them. I had a terrific staff.

Walter Smith was political counselor, a man who could not have been more sympathetic to the Israelis. But he knew them well; he was an extremely shrewd judge and was always a step ahead of them. He really understood. But Walter, as political counselor, was a first class officer; he knew what his job was.

The top man in internal reporting was an American Jew called John Hirsch, who was a Hebrew speaker, probably the best political reporter, internal, I've run into. Now John was not unsympathetic to Israel, my God. But, again, he really understood. He knew what our objectives were, and we had no problems.

You did have a few problems on the periphery, but nothing that was what I would consider in the guts of the operation.

My military attachés were top-flight people. Sure, they were sympathetic to the Israeli army, but they knew what we were doing as a government.

Peter Jessup was the station chief. Who could have been better than he on these things?

So I never had that feeling.

Q: You came in and you felt here was a united embassy.

VELIOTES: Oh, yes, but the embassy was suffering from what always happens when an ambassador is gone for a long time. The chargé, no matter how good he is, simply is not the ambassador. And everyone knows that. And when I came, they realized that I wasn't the ambassador, but they also realized that I was going to be the top career guy.

Q: Had Keating been named when you...?

VELIOTES: Yes, sure.

Q: When did he arrive?

VELIOTES: Sometime in August, as I recall.

Q: Could you describe Kenneth Keating and his method of operation.

VELIOTES: Kenneth Keating should not be remembered as a practiced diplomatist, but as an American who spent over forty years in public life, at every level, including the judiciary, and never had a blemish on his name.

Q: Speaking in 1990, this is almost a unique eulogy.

VELIOTES: This man was a man that I really respected. Now he had his quirks; he was in his mid-seventies; he had a weak heart; he got married again. He suffered from what I call the congressional disease of sometimes confusing policy with the press release. But as a career officer in a position like that, I couldn't have asked for a better political ambassador.

Q: How well was he plugged-in to the Israelis? Was he used, or did he use them?

VELIOTES: They remembered him as an extremely sympathetic senator from New York who had been to Israel a half a dozen times, at least, before he got there. You've got to understand, he was a pretty shrewd guy. You don't live as long as Ken Keating did and spend all that time in public life without understanding that there are people who are going to try to use you. He understood that. I thought he had remarkable balance on this. I used to draft most of his telegrams, including his first-person telegrams. I tried to understand his style, and I did it.

Q: For the record, what's the difference between a regular telegram and a first-person telegram?

VELIOTES: Well, every telegram that comes from an embassy is signed with the ambassador's name. A first-person telegram is one in which the ambassador speaks in the first-person singular: "I believe this..." "When I said to the prime minister..."

He would always sign the cables, but he was a very cautious man, and even though he and I had a terrific relationship, the name on the bottom of that cable was "Keating," not "Veliotos." So I would go over them. I must admit, this was rather onerous after a while. After working all goddamn day, I'd go over at night and sit there as he went over the cables till midnight or whenever.

But, no, he knew what he was doing.

Q: Well, I wonder, then, if we could move to the developments, because this was an extremely important period. You arrived; a new ambassador was on the job; you had not been there too long, and you're now moving into the fall of 1973. Were you getting any intimations of disquiet from either Syria or Egypt, or from Washington?

VELIOTES: Yes, Washington. But you always had disquiet out there. Something was always happening, as I mentioned to you. And the Israelis, even though they were in euphoria, there was a certain nervousness -- terrorism going on. The Israelis were zapping suspected terrorists overseas. They made a horrible mistake and murdered an innocent man in Norway. These things were always happening there.

I should say this about the Israelis, too. They'd love to have you agree with them, but if you don't agree with them, they want you to speak up. The Israelis' national pastime is debating and arguing. And it's not a sign of disrespect to have a good, solid argument with them. As a matter of fact, they respect you for it if they know where you stand. But they want to make sure you're not anti-Semitic, that you're not uncomfortable around Jews. They pick this up. Blacks pick it up. People pick it up.

There was an election that was due later that year, so we were focusing-in on the party platforms and arguing why the Labor Party should not support settlement in their platform. You had the first signs of disaffected Oriental Jews, the creation of something called the Black Panther Party, and, for the first time, the Sephardics were going to be part of this political process.

Q: These are the ones mainly from the Arab world.

VELIOTES: The Arab countries. At that time, a book came out, *Who Rules Israel?*, and 99.9 percent of the people were of European origin.

Q: Ashkenazi.

VELIOTES: Seventy-three was the twenty-fifth anniversary of Israel. *Life* put out a special edition. On the front cover was an attractive, young Israeli tanker, later killed in the '73 War. But, you know, it was all reinforcement of: things aren't perfect, but things are a hell of a lot better than we ever thought. No hurry. Sadat offers a partial deal in the Sinai; Golda Meir turns it down. The Rogers Plan has come and gone, but how to get a comprehensive peace?

Well, people are wondering. They start to hear it from Washington. We're moving towards

October. What's going on? We're picking up signs that the Egyptians, in particular, are engaging in warlike actions -- mobilizations and things. The Israeli answer is: "It's all routine. You Americans, don't tell us what's happening. We know. We live next to them. Don't worry about it. We've got it taped. Everything under control."

Well, the questions from Washington become more insistent, in the last two weeks of September, as I recall. And as we get near the end of September and into early October, there are virtually open lines between the attachés and Peter Jessup and his people. And the Israelis are going on.

A few days before October 6, the day the Egyptians and Syrians launched their attack, one of our guys went in to see military intelligence. And instead of getting the usual, the Israelis said, "What do you think of this?" All the alarm bells went off. Contrary to popular belief, our guys saw something coming, but we were so mesmerized by the myth of Israeli intelligence invincibility that we never...

Q: I think everyone, anywhere, who followed this, thought that the Israelis were into everything. Also, did you find, say, from our reporting from Cairo and from Damascus, too, they were kind of asking what does Israeli intelligence think about what's happening?

VELIOTES: Well, that's implied. After all, in '67, the Israeli intelligence was so terrific, it allowed the Israeli army to win a terrific victory over the Arabs.

But the Israelis got complacent. You know, it's your mindset, it's how you interpret the intelligence that you have that is important. Look at *Pearl Harbor '41*, the famous book on that subject. So I think that was a large part of it -- the Israeli overconfidence.

So much so, that even a few days before the outbreak of war, Moshe Dayan refused to mobilize the Israeli army. By the time they realized what was going to happen, you really couldn't launch preemptive strikes. It was too late to stop it.

Q: Can you describe how you and the embassy responded at the time of the attack, and what you were doing. Because what we're trying to do in this is to get a feel for not only what happened and the chronological record, but also how we react. How does an embassy under fire work?

VELIOTES: On the day of October 6, which was Yom Kippur, I received an early-morning phone call that the ambassador and I were requested to come see the prime minister, in Tel Aviv. Now even though it was Yom Kippur, we had our special car window plaques which would allow us to move.

Q: This is because, normally, on a religious holiday...

VELIOTES: On that holiday you're not supposed to be in a car. Tel Aviv was the tipoff, because that was the center of the Israeli armed services. And that's when we learned that the Israelis knew that the attack was coming. They asked us to get to the Russians, get to the Arabs and tell them the Israelis know, don't do it, it'll be a war that'll go badly.

There was a funny element as we were doing our telegram on this subject. I called the Israeli desk officer, Heywood Stackhouse, who was at home, and I said, "Hey, wake up, there's going to be war."

He said, "Don't talk any more, this is an open line!"

I said, "Hey, it doesn't make any difference. Wake up Sisco, wake up Atherton, someone better wake up the secretary. You'll have a telegram by the time you get back. Mrs. Meir says the Egyptians and Syrians are going to attack this afternoon. She wants us to stop them, work with the Russians."

As I'm telling him this, he's worrying about security, and I'm shouting over, "It doesn't make any goddamn difference."

Q: Anybody who knows, knows anyway.

VELIOTES: "They know. Get in. Hey, get in!"

I'm not quite sure what happened on the Washington side after that, but then the war started. For several days we were in the dark. It's all well documented. There was an aborted air raid. And people didn't really know how close it had come up in the north.

Q: This was an air raid on Jerusalem.

VELIOTES: No, no, on Tel Aviv. Apparently some Egyptian plane got within a hundred miles or something. But there was a very serious concern as to what was happening, and we didn't really know. The Israeli news coverage was distorted, to some extent deliberately so, by the military. There were three very hairy days.

On the morning of the 9th of October, the ambassador and I went to see the foreign minister, who was also deputy prime minister, again in Tel Aviv, early in the morning. And he said, "We stopped them in the north."

And that's when the Israelis gave us their shopping list for resupply. Then, of course, the Russians resupplied, and then we started our airlift. As often happens, the best laid plans, none of the equipment that the Air Force flew in worked. So Bill Foresman, our air attaché, was running that damned airlift with phones and walkie talkies for days.

Q: This is the usual thing, that the communications equipment doesn't...

VELIOTES: Things go wrong. And our attachés did a fantastic job. Then clearly the focus was on the south. We did not go down. It was killing the ambassador not to go down. You know, I mean, after all... [tape ended] ...attachés went down, took a look and then saw what the Israelis were up to. Then we were able to go down freely, you know. I didn't go, my job wasn't there, but our air attachés went, once the Israelis cracked across the Canal the other way. Then you worked continuously. You had people calling you from everywhere. In a fast-moving situation, the

telegrams only tell part of the story.

Q: With telephone calls, the lines are open.

VELIOTES: And you can't record telephones; you can't keep it. That's why if people say, Well, what are you hiding?, well, you're not hiding anything, it's just that you frankly are more concerned about doing your job and doing it right than the historical record. If you know anything about Henry Kissinger's operating style, it was utterly maddening to be at an overseas' post in the middle of important issues at that time, and particularly in Israel, where you began to believe that he trusted the Israelis, but he didn't trust the Americans.

Q: I've gotten this thing where you could substitute the names of the Soviets, particularly Dobrynin, the ambassador, as dealing with the Russians, as compared to the American representatives.

VELIOTES: We knew we weren't getting information. And this was difficult, very difficult. It became more so as the time went on. I mean, in the middle of the war and everything, well, who cared? We were trying to get a little bit of sleep and to reassure a hell of a lot of Americans who were stuck. You know, the kinds of things you do which don't get headlines.

Q: One of the things I would like to ask, as a former consular officer (I was in Athens at the time), your embassy must have been absolutely deluged with inquiries about the welfare and whereabouts of Americans and also of Israelis with relatives in America.

VELIOTES: The system bogged down, and all we could say to them was, "Look, we don't have the time. We'll let you know if anyone's hurt. But, apart from that, we can't reassure you that those 300,000 Americans are safe."

There were some very funny stories. The embassy is right down in the red-light district. There were some restaurants around there and bars on Hayarkon Street that were owned by Greek Jews, and you'd always hear bouzouki music as you walked down in the sun at lunch. Well, at night, you had a blackout, and everything was pitch black. And, boy, really black; the Israelis, you know, this was serious stuff. If you had to move your car, you would have just a little circle of light with your car, and flashlights, but you had them painted dark blue or black, with little pinpoints of light. Well, in Israel at night, one of the ways that the prostitutes advertise is by flashing the flashlights on the side of the roads. Billy Foresman and I had to get out to the ambassador this one night. It was about the third day of the war. And we finally typed up this massive list of things the Israelis wanted. And I'd had the full reporting cable. You know, it takes you all day to do that stuff. You get the quick report in and say, "Details follow." And you do a lot on the phone. It was about midnight, and Billy and I went out. Here's this former fighter pilot and me. Well, I've got a form of night blindness; I don't see well at night. It's a problem when I drive on the highway; I really have to concentrate. And you can imagine how that was exacerbated, walking out into this pitch black place. Well, I learned at that moment that that was why Billy Foresman was no longer a fighter pilot. We walked out and we were both blind. And we had to get to one of our cars to drive out to the ambassador's house. Just as we were standing there, adjusting to the dark and stumbling around, a couple of little pinpoints of flashlights went

off. It was the local prostitutes; this is the way they work. So we hailed them, and they escorted us over to our cars.

Q: So this was the first step in getting American aid to Israel.

VELIOTES: Getting to the car so we could go out. It was really funny.

Q: Let me ask a question about this American aid, because later on, talking to people, particularly in the American military, there was tremendous resentment, on purely professional grounds, that our NATO stocks were badly depleted in order to help Israel. And, professionally, this is a sore that still rankles with some people. How did you and our military attachés feel about these requests?

VELIOTES: Well, I think that, yes, they were onerous, but that showed you the parlous state of the reserves in NATO because of the drain of Vietnam. I mean, that really was the issue. They got mad at the Israelis; the real problem for the Central European front was Vietnam, where everything was. Our attachés, you're talking about colonels here, I'm not sure that they were focusing in on the great big picture. They may have. Anyway, their job was to accurately present the case.

As it turned out, although you had a lot of panic in the short run -- a lot of EL AL airplanes converting and bringing... -- I think the Israelis needed heavy equipment less than we initially thought, because of their own reserves. They lost a hell of a lot. More than the equipment itself, what they needed and what we wanted to convey was the commitment.

You have to understand this against the backdrop of what the Soviets were doing in Syria, in particular. The Soviets were resupplying the Syrians at an incredible rate. And that was when I learned how many new tanks the Soviets had sitting around the Soviet Union. It was remarkable! We scraped to get 50 or so; I think the Russians resupplied the 2,000 Syrian tanks in several months -- ships coming in and all of this.

And we had another reason for wanting to do it, because the Israelis were so concerned, that they were threatening to shoot-up the Russian planes as they came in.

Now the only one thing that I begrudged at that time frame, the lack of communication from Washington, was when my attachés came in to see me with one of these interminable military messages, 60 paragraphs, and it was down in paragraph 45 that we learned the 82nd Airborne had been put on war alert for the Middle East, and that there was a nuclear alert. Now I had to learn this...

Q: Sort of an ordinary procurement...

VELIOTES: That's right. Why the hell couldn't Kissinger have passed the word to us to go tell the Israelis? But for me to reassure our people, I picked up the phone and I called Roy Atherton and said, "What the hell's wrong with you guys in Washington?"

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Well, goddamn it, I gather we're on a nuclear alert and you've got the 82nd Airborne on alert to come here. I assume you've told the Israelis. What about the Americans? We are responsible for the welfare of Americans in this place. What are we supposed to do?" I mean, you can't just duck it, because this is an important part of our responsibility.

Q: This, of course, is one of the problems that comes across when you try to deal at the very top. There are an awful lot of policy considerations that have to be carried out by the people on the ground.

VELIOTES: Well, if the Israeli foreign minister had called me and said, What's this about the 82nd Airborne?, I would have felt like an absolute fool. I'm not sure he ever would have talked to me again.

Q: Speaking about nuclear alert, what was our perception of the nuclear capabilities of the Israelis at that time? And was there a possibility, when things were really looking dark, that sort of an Armageddon complex or a Masada complex might have taken place?

VELIOTES: I think we felt that the Israelis had a nuclear device at that time, but it was a rather crude one; it would probably have to be dropped out of a C-130. That was possible to do. But, you know, the distances in the Middle East are such...how do you control fallout from a dirty bomb? I mean, would they kill themselves? And they were far from that.

They say, though, that Golda Meir...this is still in controversy, and when I was in Israel, I never heard it, but, later, people say that the military did get from her the beginning of a nuclear alert. But I've never really seen that confirmed. And while I was there, the only nuclear alert was the one we went through. And, of course, we claim we responded to the Soviets putting their airborne on alert.

So, from then on out, from October 6, 1973, literally until the time I left, which was in the fall of '75, we were working our way through, I'd say, three things.

One, the aftermath of the war, on the ground. And that meant several negotiating attempts by Henry Kissinger. Three of the four were successful. The last major successful negotiation was in November of '75, with the so-called Second Sinai Agreement, which set the stage for Carter and Camp David a couple of years later.

The second was working out this new relationship with Israel, bilaterally. At that time, starting with a 2.2-billion-dollar aid package right after the war, we became, literally, Israel's sole support -- military and economic aid. And people forget that when people like Ariel Sharon posture and rail against us as not caring about Israel's security, we did it. The Israeli army, we paid for, we equipped. And we're still paying for it, and we're still paying for the economic impact of the '73 War, and never have we ever suggested that the Israeli army should stack arms.

Well, this was new, this relationship of one-sided dependence upon us. And it was in that time

frame that the Israelis began to get quite nervous with their perception in the United States of Israel as a country to be supported, first, because of Jewish pressure, but on moral grounds, what it represented. They began to worry about how will that, after all, keep this relationship going? And it was at that time that the Israelis started to talk about a strategic agreement, a NATO-type agreement between Israel and the United States, which led us up to the Reagan years.

The third factor, as an embassy, was coping with the enormously increased desire of Israelis to emigrate to the United States.

Q: Could we talk about this, because I think this is something that sort of gets swept under the rug or something. Emigration is something that's sort of out there, but it's...

VELIOTES: It was overwhelming. We had to redesign our consular section to accommodate it. We had to enhance the staff. And I think they're still doing this; they're still under great pressure.

It also was the first time I'm aware of, of a major demonstration against the Americans by Israelis, led by Rabbi Kahane. You began to get the real emergence of the right wing.

Q: This is the Jewish Defense League, isn't it?

VELIOTES: Yes, transported to Israel. We almost had a major disaster when these people came screaming and yelling up against our plate glass windows. The disaster would have been if the windows had broken, they would have lacerated dozens of young people. And you'll go to the embassy today and it looks like the same fortress that all other embassies in the Middle East look like, which is too bad.

Q: What were they demonstrating about?

VELIOTES: What they saw as American pressure to force them to give back some land to the Arabs and to make peace. These were the zealots; these were the people who wanted to keep every inch. These were the people who waited at the entry to Jerusalem and, when Kissinger came by, all stood and in unison gave him the finger. Many of them were Americans.

Those forces that were unleashed at that time led to the victory of Menachem Begin in 1977, which has given you thirteen years in Israel of right-wing or center-right-wing government.

Q: During the war, obviously you were up to your neck in just staying afloat, but were you getting any impression, at the level you were dealing with, that there was panic on the part of the Israelis? How professional were they?

VELIOTES: No, I'll tell you, there wasn't panic on the part of the general Israeli public, because, fortunately, the general Israeli public didn't know how bad things were in the north.

Q: Yes, the Syrians were very close to a breakthrough there.

VELIOTES: And there was real heroism up there, of an incredible kind, that stopped them. Now

by the time the Israelis began to understand (we're only talking about 72 hours), that deadly threat had passed. And the focus went back to the Sinai.

Q: Where there was some room for maneuver, too.

VELIOTES: Room for maneuver. I remember, one day, Israel's leading gossip columnist (she'd die if I used that phrase) was in the embassy, and I was going down the elevator with her. And as she got off the elevator, she looked at me and said, "Look south." And she left. Three or four days later, the Israelis broke across the Canal. Which means a lot of people knew that was happening.

No, I think what happened in Israel was not in the first few days; what happened in Israel was in the weeks and months that followed.

One American Jewish friend of mine, who was a social psychologist, was on a sabbatical. And he came to see me, and as he was talking, he started to cry, because he had come to Israel with such high hopes. It was that period of euphoria that I described to you. And he said he couldn't take it, because the society had suffered a collective nervous breakdown, and he had to leave.

And it had. The casualty figures, for a little country, were just tremendous. I forget, 3,000 killed? At that time, Israel was three million people. Seventy times three, that would have been the equivalent of 210,000 Americans killed in two and a half weeks. The country went into mourning. There were no parties. There was no nothing. Every Israeli family was touched with tragedy.

Q: So, despite the fact that, militarily...

VELIOTES: It was a great victory. It was a great victory over incredible odds.

Q: But this...

VELIOTES: It destroyed Golda Meir, number one. It put Moshe Dayan's career into an eclipse. You had a reshuffle. You had a new government. The major military figures of the time went off to pasture. I think the head of military intelligence died of a heart attack shortly thereafter. And this was a new Israel that was bewildered, felt betrayed by its own people, had lost its sense of invulnerability. It was a vulnerable Israel again. And you had the rise of the right wing. And the only good thing that's happened since that time was Camp David and Jimmy Carter.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, I wonder if you could comment about how you at the embassy felt, and reflections from the Israelis, about the growing dependence of Israel on the United States. Was this of concern to those of you who were dealing with the problem right there? And how about with the Israelis?

VELIOTES: In the aftermath of the October War?

Q: Yes.

VELIOTES: Of course it was a major concern of the Israelis. Dependence doesn't happen in a vacuum, and when we think of dependence we often think of military security, but if you take a look at the Israel that emerged after the October War, the one thing that will strike you is the rapid escalation of the inflation rate. Israel's feet of clay, economically, were exposed by this war -- they really had no reserves -- and their dependence on foreign aid, primarily American. But in the period before the October War, this foreign aid was, I think, primarily through Israeli bonds and things like that, with some direct government-to-government aid. After the October War, the Israeli economy was in a shambles, emigration rates were zooming. We had to redesign our consulate at least twice in order to accommodate the pressures.

Q: People going to the United States.

VELIOTES: Trying to get out. Then, in that context, there was the total dependence of Israel for its well being, and, frankly, economic survival, on American aid grants. That's what happened, and this was of great concern to the Israelis, who are a very independent people. And I think there is a direct relationship between what happened in that time frame, during the seventies, and the increasing realization of the Israelis of their dependence upon the United States, and the Israeli policy of seeking to change the terms of the relationship from one of partners in peace, American moral commitment to Israel, things like this, to Israel's strategic importance to the United States. The Israelis believed that they had to have something much more tangible to offer the American Congress, and, through them, the American people, of Israel's importance to the United States, in exchange for these enormous military and economic aid programs each year. So all of these are linked.

Q: This is a personal note, but I've always felt our relationship to Israel has been one like the definition of a wife: "Someone who will stand by you in the time of trouble that you never would have experienced if you hadn't been married." Trying to go back to that time, how did the embassy and you yourself view the strategic importance of Israel?

VELIOTES: Well, at the time when we were in Israel, there was no question of Israel being America's major strategic partner in the Middle East for the purposes of fighting the Russians. The aim was to make sure that Israel was strong enough to protect itself, and so strong that the Arabs would realize the folly of seeking to deal with Israel militarily. And this, Israel's preponderant military strength, was a major component of American peace policy in the area. It was not only to make sure Israel could protect itself and have confidence in itself and have confidence in us, but the reverse of this was the Arabs would see the folly of refusing to negotiate peace with Israel. That was it. Well, that's very much, that's important.

Israel as a strategic asset, you began to hear more and more during the Carter administration. But, of course, those were the years of Camp David and the elimination of a major threat to Israeli security -- the peace with Egypt.

I was in Washington during the end of the Ford administration and the beginning of the Carter administration, in senior positions. I came back from Israel, and, after a stint in the Personnel Office, I became deputy director of the Policy Planning staff, with responsibility for the Middle

East, and then I became deputy assistant secretary for Arab-Israeli Affairs.

Now you saw the progression here, but the Carter administration wasn't about to change the basic terms of our relationship with Israel -- we were partners in peace, and those things that I said earlier. But the Israelis kept seeking to get a recognized public strategic relationship, again for the reasons I said earlier. It wasn't until the Reagan administration that they succeeded in this.

Q: Are we talking about a perception or, you might say, a justification?

VELIOTES: A justification. You're asking for my personal view, and I would say this was the view, unanimously, of the professional civilian and uniformed military people who worked in this area. There were some political appointees who disagreed on this; nevertheless, this became the policy of the Reagan administration.

It had no relevance to the threats facing the United States. Indeed, the biggest problem we had was trying to figure out how to explain the policy. The Israelis wanted us to be their partner against Syria, perhaps against Iraq. We figured, well, hell, Syria and Iraq are not strategic threats, they're regional problems. The only one strategic problem we had was the Russians, so where could the Israelis be helpful with the Russians? And we spent a lot of time, a disproportionate amount of time, trying to come up with a justification where Israel could really be an American strategic ally.

The irony of that situation is that when we finally did have a major crisis in the Gulf area, Israel was irrelevant to it.

Q: We're now talking about November, 1990, with Iraq having taken over Kuwait.

VELIOTES: Right. It was a domestic policy in this country, and very important in Israel -- Begin used it to improve his political position. And, by the way, it was deliberately designed by the Israeli Likud and by those political appointees in our government, under Reagan, to subsume the Palestinian problem and Arab-Israel problem under this strategic alliance. It was very simple, that if Israel is such a strong, important strategic ally in the area, well, then, you're not going to waste your time with secondary and tertiary issues such as the problems of the occupied territories. However, even when you came up with justifications and everything, none of it really made any sense.

And you had to come up with exercises. I mean, you can't have policy and a strategic relationship without exercises, so they came up with some marginal things they could do. In order to sort of balance the exercises, we had been carrying out real live military exercises with the Jordanians and the Egyptians, looking to a move to the Gulf, and then, if you remember, the famous Saudi AWACs fight during 1981 -- these were looking at the real world.

Q: We were then thinking more in terms of Iran, but in many ways Iran, Iraq, Russia...

VELIOTES: Anyone who threatened the Gulf, which is a strategic interest of the United States. But, even then, we were thinking of that, and we were playing this charade with the Israelis over

here, for domestic political purposes and for Israeli political purposes, as we were preparing, on the other hand, for such emergencies as were there in August of 1990.

Q: Well, in the seventies, when you were in Tel Aviv, as this moved, was there a feeling within the embassy that, well, this is all very nice, but this is in many ways peripheral to American interests? Or was it one of these things where it was best to keep your mouth shut?

VELIOTES: Well, in the seventies, in the embassy in Israel, our policy was very clear. It was the one I enunciated earlier: the basis of our relationship with Israel was partnership for peace in the area. And Israel was also a beacon of representative government and intellectual freedom. Our support for Israel, militarily, was designed to protect Israel and also to encourage the Arabs to go for peace. There were no contradictions. In '73, while I was there in the embassy, and like, I think, everyone else in the U.S. government, we wanted the Israelis not to be overrun. So there were no problems at that point. The problems came in the eighties.

Q: At that time, was there a concern about the religious fundamentalists in Israel and a possible change in the texture as more sort of native-born or area-born Israelis became more dominant?

VELIOTES: In the early seventies, the, until that time politically quiescent, Sephardic community (Jews of non-European origin, called Oriental Jews, Sephardim) first began to manifest itself politically. The elections of 1973 had to be postponed because of the war, and you had a radical Sephardic Party come up then. Sephardic nationalism, or Sephardic political awareness, later, in the coming years, turned into support for the Likud, which was the hardest line, particularly in the anti, post-73 area. Sure, you could see that coming.

Q: How about contacts with the Likud?

VELIOTES: Well, you had contacts with them, but not very many. Begin was sort of a joke in Israeli political life; he was considered rather a fringe type. There was a shock when he was elected in '77. Everyone assumed it was because of the self-destruction of the Labor Party, and that obviously had a role to play. But the success of the Likud in the last twelve years suggests a major realignment of forces, with the Oriental Jews being very supportive of the right wing. You've always had religious problems in Israel -- we're talking now about Jewish religious problems -- you've always had extremists, you've always had a split in the two communities. When we were in Israel, a major intermarriage event was an Ashkenazi and a Sephardic Jew. So that exists.

Q: How about the issue, as you all saw it in Tel Aviv, of you going to Jerusalem as a capital?

VELIOTES: It wasn't a problem in a policy sense, because we and the Israelis were very careful about American sensitivities, so we always had our meetings in West Jerusalem. There has never been an American position that the capital of Israel should not be West Jerusalem. Our reservations have always been on the claim of Jerusalem as an undivided city, with Israel representing all of it as its capital. So this did not give us any real problems.

Q: Kissinger was certainly at his height at that time. How did you all see Kissinger's operation,

and also how did he, you might say, treat the embassy?

VELIOTES: Well, of course, you know, Henry Kissinger in those days was larger than life. And we were all supportive of what he was trying to do, which was to make a virtue out of necessity and make something good happen out of tragedy. And, indeed, he did set the groundwork for Jimmy Carter's later successes. And on the Syrian-Israeli border, up on the Golan, I don't believe there have been violations, or, if there have been, very damn few, since 1974. That's sixteen years now, so I'd say he did a pretty good job. And he started the process whereby Israel and Egypt made peace.

He was a very complicated person, obsessed with secrecy. Working in the Middle East, you learn to be obsessed with secrecy, because so much can leak. Looking at it, though, from the point of view of the embassy as a contributor, Henry did not use us. His obsession with secrecy with respect to Israel was to exclude the embassy. And while he was conducting active oral and other types of negotiations with the Israelis, through the ambassador here, Simcha Dinitz, he did not understand that he was losing a resource.

Let me give you an example. I was the senior career officer there, and the Israelis sort of looked to me as the guy who was running things in the embassy, although I had this marvelous ambassador, Ken Keating; still, realities of the situation there. During his frequent visits, Kissinger had this very unattractive habit of cutting you down in public in front of foreigners. And, frankly, in order to retain credibility with the Israelis, I had to react in some way to indicate I wasn't irrelevant and I wasn't being pushed around, or the Israelis would figure: Why deal with this guy? And he should have thought of things like this. As a matter of fact, I sometimes felt I was being smuggled into the meetings with the Israelis. Henry would have ten people in his entourage.

When everything's going fine, there are no problems. But when it breaks down is when things get tough. I'll give you an example. In 1974, in March, Henry Kissinger never once talked to us, never once asked for any suggestions. Had he asked for suggestions, we would have argued the next step would have been with Jordan, because we thought the Israeli government would have been prepared to make a gesture, and, even though the Jordanians were saying no, no, no, no, we had reason to believe the Jordanians would in the final analysis accept this gesture. But he'd already made his own agreements with the Egyptians, I learned later, to move ahead on a second Sinai Agreement. In March of '75, you'd had Kilometer 101, Sinai One, the Golan. He ignored this front, the Jordanian front, and went back to Egypt. It was March. He never once asked our view as to whether it was doable with the Israelis, what were the factors that were working on the Israelis. He cut us off every substantive telegram. All the exchanges took place in Washington, so the Israeli government knew things that the embassy did not; a small group of people in U.S. government knew things.

Q: Well, where was he getting his sensitivity to what the Israelis wanted?

VELIOTES: I don't know.

Q: Was this purely on his...

VELIOTES: You've got to understand the enormous arrogance and conceit of this man, and his paranoia, which I think clouded his judgment.

So we learned, almost by mistake, that Henry Kissinger was going to come back to the Middle East to make a try for a second Sinai Agreement. March of '75, Vietnam is collapsing; obviously, he wanted a success.

One day, I asked this remarkable chief of the political section, John Hirsch, to bring the translations of all the Friday Hebrew papers, which are like Sunday papers, and he and I sat down and analyzed them. We could see clear signs of the Israeli position hardening, so we said, okay, let's have a few discussions with people, then let's get together later today and write a telegram. We wrote a telegram (as I recall, I was chargé at the time), and I remember starting it out: "We have been told nothing. We don't know really whether the secretary is coming or, if he's coming, what he really hopes to accomplish. But if the aim is to come soon and accomplish a second agreement that would require the Israelis to make certain concessions, our analysis is the Israeli position has hardened in the past week or so, and unless you know something we don't know," (I think I used those words) "it's highly unlikely that there will be success in this mission." We sent this in.

Henry came out. He failed.

Larry Eagleburger, or someone, gave a backgrounder, I think it was Larry, in which he blamed the embassy for failing to keep the Department informed of significant developments in Israel. And by the time the press got back to the United States and filed, to follow up that initial story, Kissinger was spreading blame all over the embassy.

So much so that the head of the CIA sent the station chief a special message sort of saying, "Don't tell the chargé or the ambassador, but you start reporting politically on this."

My station chief, a remarkable guy called Peter Jessup, came to me and showed me his reply, in which he said, "There is no disconnect here. My views were fully reflected in the embassy. Here, we work in a coordinated manner. Let me refer you to such and such, and such and such, and such and such. Review these before you come to the conclusion the embassy wasn't doing its job." It was that kind of thing.

Q: Often, when somebody is playing this secrecy game, and I know it all, and all this, the system usually works around it. In other words, didn't you have moles, or something, in Kissinger's staff?

VELIOTES: It was very hard. Don't forget, you did not have secure phones that really worked. Even today, most secure phones overseas sound like Donald Duck with laryngitis. In those days, you had to place the call hours in advance. And you certainly couldn't do this on the open phone, with everyone listening to you -- the Russians. We didn't care if the Israelis heard it, because they already knew.

Q: They were better informed than you.

VELIOTES: (I think Jim Akins would be a good man to talk to.) I recall a telegram from Jim, who was ambassador in Saudi Arabia at the time, bitterly complaining about the wheel and spoke kind of relationship, that the Department would only tell embassies in the area a very small piece of even what involved their own countries, and yet somehow expected us to be able to do our jobs.

Q: Did you, often as chargé but other times as the chief professional person, have a problem with the rest of the staff, not only, obviously, with yourself, but keeping up, you might say, the professional edge and all when you were being undercut?

VELIOTES: Not at all. We had a remarkable group of people, and they all used their information. You know where we learned what was going on in Washington? From the newspapers, from the newsmen who represented, in those days, identifiable cabinet officers, and from Israeli officials. I'd go up to Jerusalem and say, okay, now what the hell, is this. And they'd tell me. They wanted to use me, of course.

Q: Did you more or less have to level? I mean, did they know that you were cut out?

VELIOTES: Hell, yes. I never played games. I said, "I don't know what the hell's going on, but we better talk. I can't get it from Henry."

About the only thing I used to get from Henry in this time was the continuing complaints from the Department that the Israeli press was mad at him.

Q: Why would he care?

VELIOTES: Well, you know.

Q: I mean, as a practical measure..

VELIOTES: And the poor Israelis would call me in and say, "What are you reporting?"

And I'd say, "Why do you care? What business is it of yours?" These were people that I knew quite well.

(This is the way you talk to the Israelis, by the way, and they talk that way to you.)

And they said, "Because Henry Kissinger is complaining every day to our ambassador."

And so I said, "Well, I thought that was it. Here, I brought you several copies. Here's our week's unclassified review of the Israeli press that we send in every day."

The upshot was, the guy said, "Could you send us one of these every day, too?"

It was a very trying time. A delegation of forty members of Congress, led by Tip O'Neill, came out to Israel. I was chargé at the time, and while I was riding in the car with Tip and Silvio Conte, a leading Republican, the first thing Tip said was, "Is it true what Henry says, that you guys really screwed up and let him down?"

And I said, "Of course not."

Tip said, "That's what I thought." And he turned to Silvio Conte, "See, I told you." And then he said to me, "Would you mind telling our whole delegation what the real story is?"

And I did, I was so goddamned mad.

Q: Of course, for every action there is a counter action. But this must have been, for you, a very difficult time.

VELIOTES: Oh, it was. This is the kind of problem you don't need. When you're in that kind of a war-peace situation -- high stakes, very fast-moving -- what you don't need is lack of contact, meaningfully, with the U.S. government, and, frankly, suspicion.

At the time this was all going on, when Henry was blaming the embassy, I was in Israel defending him against charges by Israelis wherever I went -- vacation in a kibbutz -- that, amongst other things, he was the greatest traitor to the Jewish race since Josephus, and things like this.

No, I didn't like it, but I did my job. Our morale was terrific. Our staffing was great. We did just a great job, particularly under the limitations that we had to suffer.

Q: It's remarkable really.

VELIOTES: Now I'm not the only one who had to go through this, if you talk to other people who were in positions of responsibility.

Q: Well, I talked to George Vest, for example, who found when he was negotiating this treaty, which was just signed yesterday, for the...

VELIOTES: Conventional arms reduction.

Q: Conventional arms reduction, but basically for European peace, that Kissinger was cutting him down with the Russians when he was working as one of the negotiators on this, because he was working on something else and it wasn't his treaty.

VELIOTES: He did this all the time. He did this all the time. The story of the Rogers Plan, when Henry was still in... I'm sure he has good reasons for what he did, but he did undercut you. I don't know if you know the story about George Vest.

Q: No, I don't.

VELIOTES: George Vest was the press spokesman for Henry -- a terrific press spokesman, because everyone respected him; he knew the substance. But Henry Kissinger, as I told you, used to have this habit of humiliating his staff in public. And George Vest went in to him and said, "Henry, if this ever happens again, you find a new press spokesman." I guess Henry didn't believe him -- it happened; George resigned. A man of great, great integrity.

Q: Before we leave Israel on this, how about the nuclear issue, when you were dealing with this?

VELIOTES: The nuclear issue, when I was in Israel, was subsumed. But the nuclear issue has been a part of our relationship with Israel since at least, I'd say, the mid-sixties. And I found a remarkable file in the embassy, detailing the history of American-Israeli relations on the nuclear issue, where the Israelis first claimed it was a textile plant or something else or something else or something else. Interestingly, Jack Kennedy got very, very interested in this and was starting to focus in on the Israeli nuclear issue about the time he got shot. He was beginning to worry about the Middle East and different facets of the Middle East, including Israel.

Q: At the time you were there (again, obviously, this is an unclassified interview), was it more or less accepted at that point that the Israelis had nuclear capability?

VELIOTES: Yes, in '73, '75, I don't remember the analyses now, but it was accepted that they had a nuclear capability. Whether at that time we thought they had a serviceable bomb that could be delivered, I don't know. People used to talk about a bomb on a great big primitive device that would roll out of the back of the C-130, or something like that. But there was no question that Dimona was a nuclear facility, and the purpose of that nuclear facility was to produce atomic weapons, and that they had everything in place to produce those weapons. And you could only assume that some of them had been produced.

Q: At any time, particularly in the very early days of the October War, were you thinking it might go nuclear?

VELIOTES: Not really, because we were being lied to, everyone was being lied to, by the Israelis. You had three very tense days, between the 7th of October and the 9th of October, when the tide shifted up in the Golan. The Israelis were saying, "We're winning," and all of a sudden you found they weren't winning, but they weren't losing. Now there is journalistic interest today, there is someone writing a book on whether or not the Israelis threatened a nuclear option in their negotiations with the United States over resupply, and whether or not Golda Meir ordered the planes to be fitted. I just don't remember. If this was a factor, it wasn't an important factor. And, anyway, this went by so fast. But there is a journalist who believes that this indeed was an option the Israelis were prepared to use. I have no...

Q: It was not something that came up at this time.

VELIOTES: Things were moving too fast. The attack started about sundown, as I recall, on October 6. By the morning of October 9, the Syrians had been stopped in the Golan. So whatever might have gone on, I just don't know. This person claims something did come up; I have no way

of corroborating that, or denying it. It wasn't a factor. No one said to me, "If we don't get that early resupply, we're going to nuke 'em." Now whether there were private conversations of any kind, I don't know

Q: Backtracking just a little bit before we continue to discuss the invasion of Lebanon [1982], could you talk a little about the Israeli absorption or whatever you want to call it -- the protectorate which it established in Lebanon? From your experience, how did we react to that?

VELIOTES: Well, the first time I became aware of the Israeli intention to stay on the ground across the Israeli border in southern Lebanon was in 1977, when the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yigal Allon, came to Washington to talk about something called a "good fence." This was described as a sort of Israeli hospitality suite for "good" Lebanese. That presaged the creation -- I believe it had not been done before then -- of the South Lebanese Army, under a renegade Christian in the thinly populated parts of South Lebanon, in which there were Christian pockets. I think that his name was Major Haddad.

Before that time, as I recall, the Israelis would periodically cross the border. But clearly, at this point, they were going to stay there, for security purposes. We made clear that we were opposed to it and that we would not recognize any Israeli extraterritorial rights. But as is often the case with Israel, when it comes to the question of defense against countries still officially at war with Israel, you don't really follow this up. However, in 1978, when the Israelis invaded southern Lebanon, President Carter acted very quickly and was very tough in forcing them out.

Q: Were you at all involved in that period, in 1978?

VELIOTES: Yes, I was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, with responsibility for Arab-Israeli affairs.

Q: Well, just to get a feel for the situation, when the word came of the Israeli incursion [in 1978], what were we getting from Israel and how quickly did this move up to the White House?

VELIOTES: I would say that it wasn't a major White House issue until the Israelis invaded southern Lebanon. Jimmy Carter wanted them out. At that point people were talking about the Israelis -- and this involved former Prime Minister Begin. [The incursion into southern Lebanon was] one of the first Likud initiatives which they took on the ground, after the elections in 1977. It seemed to be one of the never-ending "final sweeps" to protect the northern border of Israel. Richard Viets, I remember, was Chargé d'Affaires at that time in Tel Aviv. Ezer Weizman, at the time, was Israeli Defense Minister. Viets had some very strong words with him, in part because the Israelis had lied to us. That was when Jimmy Carter stepped in and threatened to cut off aid to Israel unless they left Lebanon. And they left, but only in part. They stayed in what later became the Israeli security zone in southern Lebanon.

Q: So this was the "good neighbor," the "good fence" zone?

VELIOTES: Yes.

Q: In our last interview we covered the beginning of the invasion of Lebanon -- was it in 1981?

VELIOTES: 1982 -- June, 1982.

Q: Haig was still Secretary of State. As I recall it, there was a series of statements from the Israelis like, "We're only going to go so far..." But they kept moving, and it was obvious that the whole idea was to go into Beirut and clean out the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. Were we aware of what they were doing or were we always a little bit behind the curve?

VELIOTES: Well, there was no secret as to what Arik Sharon [then Israeli Defense Minister] wanted to do. We had had information on that for a long time. However, that isn't what the Israelis said that they were going to do. Sharon planned to create a Southern Lebanon, from Mt. Lebanon to the South. That would be sort of a condominium between the Christians -- that is, the Maronites -- and the Israelis. This was a wildly impractical scheme because between the so-called "Southern Lebanese Army," which was basically Christian, and Mt. Lebanon, which was the home of the Maronite Christians, there were at least one million Muslims, at least half of whom were Shi'a. We knew that Sharon wanted to solve the Palestinian problem in Beirut. But it was a loony idea that you could kill Palestinian nationalism by force of arms in Beirut, with three million other Palestinians living around them in the Middle East. Even if you could eliminate the leadership, that would just have led to temporary openings in the structure, and the leadership would have been reconstituted elsewhere.

Although we may have had suspicions, the Israelis consistently told us that that wasn't what they wanted to do. They said that they were planning to have a security sweep, like the one that they had had in 1978. And, indeed, they did discover a tremendous amount of weapons in the area. It was to be a 40 kilometer sweep into Lebanon. That, I guess, was the range of the PLO weapon with the longest range, the 130 mm, Russian-made artillery. But that turned out to be a pretext. We saw that when Ambassador Phil Habib, on the President's instructions, brokered a cease-fire between the Syrians and the Israelis. As we saw it, this would be a first step toward a broader cease-fire. Then the Israelis claimed that the Syrians had shot at them, and so they then flanked the Syrians and inflicted a very heavy defeat on them. It turned out that it was true that the Syrians shot at them [the Israelis] because the Israelis continued to move. Later, we were told, with a straight face, by the Prime Minister of Israel, "Aha. We said we'd stop shooting but we didn't say that we'd stay in place."

Q: Oh, my God!

VELIOTES: And this passed for being a precise or even clever comment. It was sheer dishonesty. And they lied their way up to Beirut.

Q: Well, tell me, what was this all about? After all, this involved one of our strategic allies and all of that. What did this do? In diplomacy, we are told, and with reason, no matter what you do, don't lie. Because once you've lied, your usefulness is gone. When the [Israeli] Prime Minister lied to a number of people, what did this do to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and your...

VELIOTES: First, of course, we were terribly upset, but I can't tell you that I was surprised. In

the past the Israelis had lied to us. They just expected us to understand that, well, the situation was different. And because their security was at stake, we were to understand this.

Q: While this was going on, was the Israeli lobby, in any of its manifestations, pressuring us not to do anything, to let them go ahead? Was it orchestrated or not?

VELIOTES: No. Don't forget that there was a shooting war going on, and no one had time, in the early days, really to establish positions for lobbying, apart from just being supportive of Israel. I don't recall that the Israeli lobby did much. When it became clear that the Israelis intended to destroy the PLO in Beirut physically and the television pictures started coming back, with all of their horror, then the Jewish community in this country, by and large, supported the position of President Ronald Reagan -- that that kind of activity must stop. After that, I think that the Jewish community in the U. S. was very supportive of our efforts to negotiate the so-called "May 17 Agreement." Then, in the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila massacres [Palestinian refugee camps in southern Beirut], the failures in Lebanon, and the great controversy in Israel -- because when I said that the Israeli Government had lied to us, they also had lied to their own people. And there was a great controversy there, indeed. Prime Minister Begin was finished 18 months after the invasion of Lebanon began, both morally, politically, and internally in Israel. So I think that situation was reflected here in the U. S., as well.

But there was strong support for the aid program [for Israel] in Congress and the supplemental aid program of \$500 million in December, 1992, as well. There was great unhappiness in the Jewish community in the United States that we continued to retain certain restrictions on our military supply relationship with the Israelis. For example, the Israeli Defense Forces had been using "cluster bombs" against civilian targets, and things like that.

Q: I have interviewed Ambassador Bob Dillon, who was our Ambassador to Lebanon at the time. He was reporting Israeli Army units right next to him but he was being told by Washington that this couldn't be true because we had been assured that they were not doing that sort of thing, and so forth.

VELIOTES: Well, we were also assured that the Israelis weren't bombing targets or using artillery. We had Prime Minister Begin on one telephone line one night and Ambassador Phil Habib on another line. We were listening to it. The Prime Minister was telling us that he had been assured that nothing [of the kind] was going on. Well, the Israelis lied their way up to Beirut.

Q: What was your view of Secretary of State Alexander Haig? He had been a strong supporter of Israel. He had just been appointed Secretary of State and was rather new to the game. Here was a situation which was really falling apart and getting out of control. This was about as bad as it could be. The Israelis were not on the defensive -- brave little Israel.

VELIOTES: He resolved every dilemma in favor of the Likud Government, whatever problems there were. At that time I think that his basic, psychological state was one of constant turmoil. Here was a man who, a year and a half before, or before the November, 1980 election, was considered a viable presidential candidate himself. Now, a year and a half later, he was on the

verge of being fired by President [Reagan]. Indeed, he was fired, in effect, although they let him resign. He threatened his resignation one time too often. They encouraged it, and the President accepted it. I just think that the last several months with Alexander Haig as Secretary of State were not a happy time for me as Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, because he [Haig] was in such turmoil at the time.

Q: Well, it was the Near East that did him in, wasn't it?

VELIOTES: Well, in part. But basically he had virtually declared war on the White House. That's what did him in. And then he refused to seek allies. He got into big fights with Bill Clark, Jim Baker, Casper Weinberger, Bill Casey, and Jeane Kirkpatrick.

I'll tell you two anecdotes. In one case, he'd been having some trouble with policies [advocated by] Jeane Kirkpatrick.

Q: She was Ambassador to the United Nations.

VELIOTES: The policies had to do with the Middle East. So I called her up one day and said, "Jeane, look. I think that we ought to talk. I've told the Secretary that I ought to go up and see you. If it's all right with you, I'll tell the Secretary that I'm going to go up and see you." She said, "Fine. Come on up. That's great. I'll see you at such and such a time." So I said to Al Haig, "I'm going up to see Jeane Kirkpatrick." His reaction was, "What? What are you going to do up there?" I said, "Well, I'm going to talk to her. You've expressed some concerns. I want to air them with her." His immediate reaction was that, somehow, I was consorting with the enemy. I'll never forget his admonitions to me to beware of the Baker-Bush gang.

Q: James Baker and George Bush.

VELIOTES: The chief of staff to the President and the Vice President. And just before Haig was fired in July, 1982, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin visited the U. S. The President spent a couple of hours, lecturing Begin on the bombing and killing in Beirut. He really wanted it stopped. The day Begin was leaving I was called up to Secretary Haig's office. Charles Hill, Jerry Bremer and Larry Eagleburger were already there. Larry was pacing with his...

Q: Asthma.

VELIOTES: Asthma. He was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Charley Hill was sort of on detached duty but part of NEA [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs], technically, working on Lebanon. Jerry was Executive Secretary [of the Department of State]. Haig was fulminating that the President wasn't treating Begin right. He went on and on and said, "By God, [I'm] going to tell Begin to go into Beirut and finish the job."

Q: You mean that Haig was saying that?

VELIOTES: Yes. And I said, "Wait a minute, the President has just spent two days telling him [Begin] not to [do that]." I said, "What are you saying?" And as we were walking to the door [of

Haig's office], I remember him saying to me, "Don't be taken in by that Baker-Bush gang." Then came a lot of silly philosophy about the price of victory is blood and all that kind of thing. I figured that I was talking to a man who was disturbed at that time. I say this with regret, because I had a lot of respect for Al Haig. He's a friend. Although we had a lot of policy disagreements, I can't complain about [not] having had my say.

I remember that we had a preliminary meeting with a couple of Prime Minister Begin's people. We were sitting there, and Al Haig said, "Well, we have a problem with President Reagan." I wondered, "Who is 'we'?" He said, "Nick, tell them." Well, I had no problem at this point. I held a presidential commission. My problem was with Israeli policies. So, as I say, it wasn't a happy time, most particularly for Al Haig.

Q: You were in Egypt from when to when?

VELIOTES: From November, 1983, to April, 1986.

Q: What about the other side? Your point of view is somewhat different from when you were Assistant Secretary. You're sitting in Egypt, looking at Israel. We were doing all these things because, very obviously, they were defensive. We really were looking to Egypt, as you say, to be a real factor in Middle Eastern affairs, because of our concerns about Iran, Iraq, and the Soviets. This must have caused a lot of heartburn in Israel as they saw all this, suggesting essentially that they'd been supplanted.

VELIOTES: The Egyptians worked hard, not to supplant Israel in the affections of the United States, but to get to a level of equality. They wanted us to look at them in the same context of partnership as we did with the Israelis. And they succeeded. The Israelis, while I'm sure that they were not happy about everything that the Egyptians did, recognized that it was to their interest to maintain the treaty, whether or not it fulfilled all of Israel's expectations. It was a guarantee of no violence, no war, on the southern [Israeli] front. And there was an Israeli flag flying in a major Arab capital. So the Israelis, on the one hand, were delighted that Egypt was out of the strategic equation and that they could talk to them. On the other hand, they were a little nervous that the Egyptians might become too effective as advocates for other Arabs. But the other side of that was that the Israelis understood that, just by example, the Egyptians were also very important advocates for peace with Israel on behalf of other Arabs.

Q: Were there any other, serious problems between Egypt and Israel while you were there and did you get involved in any of them?

VELIOTES: There were two issues. One was a serious, "silly" problem. Like [the old saying that] "the situation is desperate but not serious." This was like the standard message from the Embassy in Vientiane, Laos. A manufactured dispute raised by Arik Sharon.

Q: Was he still [Israeli] Minister of Defense?

VELIOTES: Yes. This came up at the time of the [Israeli] withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and was designed to stick a pin in the Egyptians and to keep us occupied. Finally, after five or

six years and truly enormous expenditure of money, effort, manpower, and ill will -- how could anything have earned Israel such ill will from the Egyptians as their insistence on keeping Taba.

Q: This is a little, coastal...

VELIOTES: A little, coastal place [adjoining Elat on the Gulf of Aqaba]. It had a hotel, the Sonesta Hotel. Israelis used to giggle and tell me that it was the last place where they could take their mistresses, now that the Sinai Peninsula was no longer so easy to get to. And the Israelis moved border markers. Well, the Israelis were at fault in connection with a lot of this stuff that had happened earlier during the Arab-Israel dispute -- moving markers and so forth. The Taba dispute was finally solved, but it really poisoned the atmosphere for the leadership groups of the two countries. And it was used by the opposition in Egypt to beat the government over the head. It was used by everyone to beat us over the head.

A more serious incident occurred during this terrible summer of 1985. It was very tragic. An Egyptian policeman in the Sinai Desert must have run amok. He machine gunned seven or eight Israelis, including women and children. Then, totally losing his head, he kept people away from those who had been shot until -- I don't know how many died. If the Israelis could have come in with hospital personnel...This was a very serious issue. The summer of 1985 -- I said it was "the terrible summer," because it was. There was this incident.

Q: Did you get involved in this incident?

VELIOTES: Well, I was talking to the Egyptians almost every day about it. They prosecuted the man, they did it in a military court, and they put him in jail, where he reportedly committed suicide. Atrocities like that happen in Israel, too. A young Jewish soldier went nuts on the Temple Mount [in Jerusalem] and cut down 20 or 30 people. The fact that the perpetrator is out of his mind doesn't make the incident any less tragic. These incidents raised all of those concerns again such as, "Can you trust the Arabs?" The Egyptians were terribly embarrassed by the incident involving the Egyptian policeman and by the fact that they couldn't help the wounded. As I recall, the Israelis wanted a more public trial, though I don't think that a public trial was needed. Neither did the Egyptians. What if someone started demonstrating in favor of these people? Which could happen.

Then there was the hijacking of that TWA airplane that shuttled between Algiers and Beirut. An American Seabee was killed and thrown off the plane. Then the people got out -- the terrorists escaped. The Israelis bought them off with about 100 or so people they let out of prison. Although no one alludes to that, it was definitely the Israelis buying the lives of American passengers with their prisoners. Then there was the killing in Cyprus of two or three Israelis on a yacht, including one woman, by Arab murderers. The Arabs claimed that they were a Mossad "hit team." Of course, we spoke out. We said that we condemn terrorism. We condemn that violence. Then there was an Israeli retaliation raid against PLO headquarters...

Q: In Tunisia.

VELIOTES: ...which killed over 120 people and wounded many others, many of whom had

nothing to do with the PLO, beyond the circumstance of being clerks or coffee servers.

At this point President Reagan made a statement which was interpreted widely as endorsing the Israeli action. Tensions were starting to grow at this point. When the Israelis attacked PLO headquarters, just before the Egyptian schools and universities were reopening, there was a great deal of animosity, and much anti-American and anti-Israeli feeling. And President Reagan stepped right into that.

Q: Did this statement come out of the White House?

VELIOTES: Yes. It was really stupid. Whether it was approved in the State Department, I don't know. It was really stupid because of the way in which it was interpreted. Two or three Israelis were killed and the Americans were outraged. More than 120 Arabs were killed, and the Americans, in effect, said to the Israelis, "Go get 'em." In the ensuing riots -- and don't forget that the rioters were kids. No government likes to shoot its own kids -- people must understand that Egyptian college kids were involved in these riots. The Egyptian government told the students that they needed to have a permit to demonstrate and that they may only demonstrate on university grounds. They could not come out of university premises. The Israeli Embassy wasn't very far from the university. It's an urban university, like Columbia University [in New York] or George Washington University [in Washington, D. C.]. Before the schools actually reopened, the ACHILLE LAURO hijacking took place and the sequence of events that led to the American capture of the Egyptian aircraft...

Q: We'll come back to that.

VELIOTES: This was really an extremely long period of high tension.

Q: How did the demonstration...

VELIOTES: They didn't hold it. I'm trying to describe an atmosphere to you, because if you want to understand the ACHILLE LAURO incident and the decisions made by the Egyptian government at that time, you must understand the broader atmosphere. It was already very poisonous and had the whole damned Egyptian establishment on edge. Then the ACHILLE LAURO incident occurred.

Q: Well, as a matter of timing, had the bombing of Libya taken place?

VELIOTES: No. The bombing of Libya took place a few days after I retired.

Q: OK, so things were not very good at this time, politically. We have mentioned the fact that we had not been very tough on the Israelis...

VELIOTES: We were sharply criticized for applauding the loss of what they saw as "innocent" Arab lives, whereas we showed righteous outrage when Israelis were killed. On this we said, in effect, "Go get 'em." It wasn't a happy time.

DEAN RUST
Staff Assistant to Director Fred Ikle, ACDA
Washington, DC (1974-1976)

Mr. Rust was born and raised in Ohio, and was educated at Bowling Green University and Ohio State University. In 1970 he joined the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in Washington, D.C. and worked with that Agency until his retirement in 2005. An expert in nuclear and conventional disarmament issues, Mr. Rust was a major participant in the US government's international treaty negotiations during five Presidential Administrations. Mr. Rust was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: So then in '74 what happened?

RUST: The Office of the Director, Fred Iklé at that time, had a vacancy in a staff assistant's job. A staff assistant job is an entry-level job in State Department front offices where they put junior foreign service officers and people like that.

Q: You learn the trade and carry brief cases.

RUST: That's right. Carry brief cases and shuffle papers. They needed somebody quickly because the person in that position suddenly got transferred with no warning. I had gotten to know one of the senior assistants to Iklé in the front office. He asked me if I would be interested in taking the job at least on an acting basis. I said, "Sure." I had been four years in this other job, so I became the acting staff assistant in the office of the director in sometime early '74.

Q: You did that for how long?

RUST: About 2 ½ years, until late '76.

Q: How did you deal, let's stick to this early period, Israel?

RUST: Well, a lot of countries didn't join the treaty at this early stage. The Israelis were not particularly unusual in that regard. There were a lot of states in the Middle East, Arab states included, that were not in the treaty.

Q: When did we realize the Israelis had a nuclear bomb?

RUST: The Israelis had acquired the Dimona reactor from the French in the 1950's, I believe. It was not under international safeguards and by some time in the 1970's it was pretty clear that it had operated long enough to produce sufficient plutonium for nuclear weapons. I don't recall the dates, but there was a leak out of the U.S. intelligence community in the late 1970's that Israel likely possessed X number of weapons, and of course the famous case of the Israeli nuclear

technician Mordecai Vanunu who spilled his guts for the London Sunday Times in the 1980s. I don't know when the U.S. knew for sure. I didn't have the clearances to know that information and I couldn't reveal it even if I did. My own guess is it was sometime in the 70s they probably had some, but of course they have never admitted to having nuclear weapons and have said only that they won't be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East.

Q: Well I was just wondering. We have been preaching and yet we have taken one significant country and put it to one side, which is not only awkward, but hypocritical.

RUST: Well again, in the 60s and 70s we didn't put them aside. The double standard criticism of setting the Israelis to one side is more pertinent to the 80s, 90s and today. But the bottom line is that since around 1980 we have essentially just "gone through the motions" in encouraging NPT adherence for not only Israel, but also for India and Pakistan. They have always been the three hardest cases; they said from the beginning that they weren't going to give up the right to acquire their own weapons, and thus they weren't going to join the treaty. In principle, we continue to maintain U.S. support for universal NPT adherence, i.e. all states joining the Treaty -- while recognizing there is little near-term prospect of action by Israel, India and Pakistan. They are the only three that have never joined the treaty. Today, there are 188 parties to the NPT. North Korea had joined it but has withdrawn. As far as hypocrisy is concerned, U.S. nonproliferation diplomacy has labored under that charge from the beginning since we are encouraging others to forego something we believe remains essential to our own security. There's also a little truth to the charge in regards to Israel, but it's a fact of life under the regime generally for the U.S. Thankfully, there are many non-nuclear weapon state NPT parties who agree generally with the U.S. on the importance of the NPT and whose diplomacy is not hypocritical on these matters.

Q: While you were doing this staff assistant work, I take it you found it from your perspective a harmonious relationship between George Vest at PM and Fred Iklé at ACDA.

RUST: Yeah, pretty much. While ACDA was an independent agency, it was small and not Cabinet level. ACDA Directors could be influential only if they worked collegially with senior levels at State and NSC. They would exercise their independence only when the stakes appeared to be worth it. So there were times when Fred took different positions than George on some key issues, but by and large, particularly at the assistant secretary and assistant director levels, good working relationships were the norm.

Iklé did take a pretty strong stand on the importance of preventing the spread of enrichment and reprocessing technology. The 1974 Indian test awakened people to this technology issue; enrichment and reprocessing are parts of the civil nuclear fuel cycle, but are also critical to producing fissile material for weapons. So there is that old dichotomy of nuclear energy. It can have peaceful applications but it can also have horrific military applications. Some of these far-reaching policies that Iklé was pushing occasionally ran into some problems with our European allies and with Japan. But PM hung in there with ACDA and Congress was also pushing for strong action. So the "clientitis" that generally pervades the regional bureaus of State was generally overcome. In general, the mid-1970s saw the beginning of the broadening of the nuclear nonproliferation regime beyond the NPT and IAEA. The latter was formed in 1957, but its responsibilities significantly expanded once the NPT entered into force as all non-nuclear

parties were required by the NPT to negotiation safeguards agreements with the IAEA.

A couple other things happened during Iklé's tenure that were quite significant from a nonproliferation perspective. In July or August 1974, we negotiated agreements with Israel and Egypt to provide them nuclear power reactors. This happened just before Nixon resigned. These agreements contained strong nonproliferation controls, some of which are still discussed today, for example in the case of Russia's sale of a power reactor to Iran. That said, the sales never came to fruition, because the continued aftermath of the May 1974 Indian test caused U.S. policy to tighten beyond those conditions that were to apply to the sales to Egypt and Israel. The other major development was the creation of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, known at that time as the London Club. Initially, there were 7 states; today there are 45 and it continues serving as an effective nonproliferation tool. The first 18 months of meetings were held in general secrecy, due to concern about criticism from developing countries about a suppliers cartel. The purpose of the group was to establish common rules so that recipients couldn't play one supplier off another, which had the effect of commercial considerations trumping nonproliferation when it comes to selling nuclear material and equipment.

MALCOLM TOON
Ambassador
Israel (1975-1976)

Ambassador Malcolm Toon was born in New York in 1916. He received a bachelor's degree from Tufts College and a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1942-1946. His career in the Foreign Service included ambassadorships to Israel, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. Ambassador Toon was interviewed by Dr. Henry E Mattox on June 9, 1989.

Q: Part of your fairly long career included a senior assignment as counselor for political affairs in Moscow in the '60s and then shortly thereafter, four ambassadorships to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Israel, and the Soviet Union. It seems fairly obvious that the training for appointment as ambassador to the Soviet Union -- your training suited you and aimed you in that direction, it was only logical that you became, eventually, ambassador to the Soviet Union. How is it, however, that you became ambassador in Tel Aviv? How did that come about?

TOON: Well, that's an interesting story. Primarily because of Henry Kissinger, who was Secretary of State, of course, when I went to Israel as ambassador. Henry had become very upset with the Israelis, because he claimed that they had sabotaged and ruined his diplomatic shuttle exercise. So he wanted to send, as he put it, I think, rather crudely, "a tough-minded S.O.B." to Israel as ambassador in order to put the Israelis in their place.

I had gained a reputation, whether justified or not -- it depends on your own point of view -- of being rather blunt, outspoken, tough, in dealing, primarily, with eastern Europeans and the Soviets. So Henry decided it would be a good idea to send me there.

Let me finish the story, because it is very interesting. Shortly after I arrived in Israel, Henry wanted to resume his meetings with Rabin, who was then the prime minister. Rabin was going to Germany on a state visit. Henry was coming over for talks with the Germans. It was arranged that he would meet with Rabin in Germany to resume, he hoped, the shuttle diplomacy exercise. I was summoned to Germany, of course, as the new ambassador to Israel.

When I was there, Kissinger said, "Now, I want to have a private word with you." And so we did. We had a long conversation before a formal dinner with the Germans. He said, "Now, what I want you to do, as the American ambassador to Israel, is get yourself out on the streets, meet the people, hold press conferences, get yourself on television, meet all the members of the Knesset, if necessary go behind the backs of the government to get the message across that we have a new policy." That policy, he said, was "to establish a good relationship with the moderate Arab states, if necessary, by supplying them with arms."

I said, "You want me, as the American ambassador, to behave this way in Israel?" I pointed out, "No American ambassador has ever said, 'Boo,' has never uttered a statement of substance. He has always been, more or less, in the Israeli pocket."

He said, "Yes, that's what I want you to do."

I've known Dr. Kissinger for many years. I knew him at Harvard and later in the White House. We had always called each other Henry and Mac. But now he was Secretary of State, and I addressed him as Mr. Secretary. I said, "Mr. Secretary, I am going to ask you something that will probably make you really mad, but I've got to know the answer. Does the President approve of this?"

He got mad. He said, "Are you questioning my integrity? Are you questioning my authority?"

I said, "No. I just want to know if the President is behind this or not, because, you know, this is a very tricky business that you are mandating."

He said, "Yes, he's behind it."

I said, "Okay."

So I went to Israel, and Kissinger's prescription was basically the pattern of behavior that I had to assume as ambassador. And it produced, frankly, a rather abrasive relationship with the Israelis. They were not used to that sort of behavior by the American ambassador. But I think, ultimately, what they decided was that what I was telling them was for their own good. Because if, in fact, we had a differently nuanced policy toward the Middle East that had developed, we had to back our relations with the emerging moderate Arab states with heavy equipment.

Q: Were they convinced that the changed policy was going to remain changed?

TOON: I think they, ultimately, were convinced of that, not only on the basis of what I was

saying publicly in Israel, but also on the basis of their own understanding as to what was going on inside Washington. And, ultimately, of course, we did resume the diplomatic shuttle exercise with the end result of winding up with the Sinai agreement -- Sinai II, as it was called.

Q: You were there in September '75, then, when Kissinger made his last shuttle run, and the Sinai withdrawal began.

TOON: That's right.

Q: You then, I guess, personified this new policy. You were hand-picked to go and be abrasive.

TOON: Well, that's the way it turned out. I think, initially, Dr. Kissinger simply wanted to punish the Israelis by having a relatively unfriendly ambassador in Tel Aviv.

Q: Was there no consideration, as far as you knew, about U.S. domestic voting questions and problems in this new, revised Israeli policy?

TOON: Well, yes, consideration was given to that. Of course, there was a good deal of consternation -- more than that, disagreement -- on the part of the American Jewish community with what we were doing. Of course, they expressed their point of view in no uncertain terms when they would come to see me in Israel. They didn't like what I was saying. They felt that I was being unduly abrasive. I tried to explain to them what I was telling the Israelis in my television appearances and my talks with members of the Knesset was something that they had to know.

And, secondly, I said, "They've got to understand that you will help me, you as members of the American Jewish community, in getting the message across that I am not talking off the top of my head. I'm talking under instructions. And they've got to understand that this change is going on back home. And I think, frankly, it is a change for the better." And I think, ultimately, the American Jewish community came around to that point of view. Initially, it was not easy.

Q: There was an imbroglio in April '76 over the aid program. It had to do, especially, with the transitional quarter, and how much was going to be appropriated for the Israeli aid program in that unique transitional quarter. You were heavily criticized at that time by the Israeli press. Do you recall what that was all about?

TOON: Well, let me give you the background. I recall it very well. I had for a long time after I arrived in Tel Aviv, resisted pressure, primarily by the foreign correspondents, to hold press conferences. They knew that I had done this sort of thing in my previous posts. They thought it would be a marvelous opportunity to tap the most productive source of information in Israel, the American ambassador. Well, finally, I agreed to meet with not only the foreign press, but also the Israeli press on a background basis.

Now the Israelis simply don't understand background rules. As you know, one is not supposed to name the source, and one is not supposed to quote directly. But one of the first questions that came up in this first backgrounder I had was what did I think of the Israeli insistence on dealing

directly with the Congress on increasing the aid package, which the President had already reduced, because he was facing very stringent fiscal problems at home.

And I said, "Well, I think that is what I would call dirty pool. I think it is wrong for the Israeli Embassy to go behind the back of the administration in order to thwart the President's desire to give a reasonable, but a reduced, aid package to the Israelis." Well, that night on television, I was quoted directly, and I was named as accusing the Israeli Government of violating the law by going behind the back of the administration and seeking the agreement of the Congress to an increased aid package. This made the Israeli Government furious, and it made me furious, too. I never again had another background press conference in Israel.

Now, the Israelis who were there at the press conference claimed that they abided by the rules. But they had briefed some of their colleagues, particularly on television news programs, on the meeting with me, and it was they who had violated the rules. And that's when the fat really hit the fire. For a long time afterwards -- I'd say about two or three months at least -- my relations with the Israeli public were very seriously strained. Not with the government necessarily. The government was pressured, primarily by Begin, who was head of the opposition, to demand an apology from me. Allon, who was the foreign minister, said, "No, we are not going to do that."

But, in any case, the Israeli press reacted in a very angry way. Basically, their line was, "Who is this Gentile to be preaching to us? We have been preached to by Gentiles for centuries. We took care of them; we'll take care of him." That, basically, was the line carried by the press. So I had a very difficult time in Israel for the first six months.

Q: It's not a great deal of fun to be unpopular in a position like that where you live in a goldfish bowl. And this is triply so, of course, in Israel, which is such a small country. The Israelis ended up getting not much more than about 10% of what the original proposals were for that transitional quarter, so your word must have had some effect. Can you give me a word portrait of Rabin, Begin? Who was it that you dealt with primarily?

TOON: Well, I dealt primarily with Rabin, the prime minister; Allon, the foreign minister; and Peres, who was the defense minister. These were the three top officials in the Labor government. But I also had a good relationship with Menachem Begin, who was head of the opposition. And this came about through purely personal reasons. I played a lot of tennis when I was in Israel. And most of my tennis playing partners were members of Begin's party, the Likud. They brought me together with Begin for lunches and dinners and so forth. I got to know him very well. He didn't agree with anything I said, but he did admire my spirit -- and he said this publicly. He felt that I was honest. I felt basically the same way about him.

Now let me just wind up the story of my relationship with Begin, because it puts me in the position of really not being much of an expert on the Middle East. When I was appointed to Moscow in late 1976, and the Soviets finally accepted me, Begin -- still head of the opposition -- asked to have a private lunch with me down at the Knesset -- the Israeli Parliament. I accepted and we had a very pleasant lunch. In the course of the luncheon conversation, he said, "Now, I would like to have a private word with you. I know you are going back to Washington before you go on to Moscow. You will be seeing the Secretary of State, of course, and the President."

So he took me over to the window of the Knesset, which broadly overlooks the West Bank, and he said, "I want you to tell the President when you get back that those lands out there, which you call the West Bank -- I will never call them the West Bank, I call them Judea and Samaria -- those lands have always been Jewish. They are Jewish today. And they always will be Jewish."

I said, "Well, I'll carry this message back, but I'm sure it is not going to be embraced warmly by President Ford." But I said, "You know, we are being very frank with each other. Consistent with our relationship, which you very accurately described -- open and straight forward -- let me give you some advice. Why don't you get out of politics, because you don't really have a chance." Three months later, he became the prime minister.

Then I went off to Moscow. And regularly, at least once a month, there would be some emissary, usually a foreign diplomat, coming through Moscow with a message for Ambassador Toon from Prime Minister Begin. That message, in effect, was, "Tell the ambassador that I am the prime minister of Israel today, and I am going to be the prime minister for many years to come." That was my relationship with Begin.

Q: An unexpected sense of humor on the part of Begin.

TOON: Well, he was a rather complex and interesting guy. I think in his later years, he became a little bit too serious about events and a little bit too insistent that his point of view was absolutely right, and nobody else had anything to say.

Q: I have a friend in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, I don't remember which, who called his house trying to get his wife before she died -- and this is an indication of what kind of country it is. It is really quite remarkable to me. He answered the phone. The friend had to get through him to get to the wife. There were no layers of bureaucracy.

TOON: Very informal.

Q: Peres? If something came in of a fair degree of importance, and you were instructed to go to the foreign ministry -- let's assume it was something that you would handle yourself -- who would you call up to go see?

TOON: I usually called up Eppie Evron, who was then a deputy foreign minister. He would immediately arrange an appointment. I could see these people any time I wanted to. They recognized that the American ambassador is a person of some authority. And they also knew that when I wanted to see them, it was not to have a chatty exchange of views, but to convey to them a message from Washington. So I had no problem at all in seeing any of these people.

Now they were three totally different guys. Rabin was deadly serious. He was a military man primarily. He headed up the armed forces during the wars of liberation. He had not much of a sense of humor. I got to know him very well, primarily because we were both tennis players. He and his wife and I and my wife used to play doubles on his court. I got to know him well, primarily because I dealt one-on-one with him. He never had anyone with him, no note-takers. Nor did I. But he was a serious guy and tough. Very tough, indeed. But I always felt that he was

completely honest. If he told me something, then I could rely upon it.

Allon was a much gentler guy, in the sense that he was much more personable and friendly and outgoing and so forth. He was also a man of complete integrity, but much more emotional than Rabin was. For example, he would react in a much more emotional way to some of the things I would say than Rabin would.

Peres was much more outgoing than either Rabin or Allon. When I would meet with him, it would usually be late in the afternoon. He would always produce a bottle of Scotch. And we had a little drink or two; a completely informal discussion. But I always had the impression -- and this may not sit very well today -- that he was a little bit slippery. I wasn't entirely sure that the point of view he was conveying was going to be the point of view that he would convey to me tomorrow. I may be wrong in my judgment of the guy, but that was my gut reaction during the time.

But, in any case, my relationship with all three was very good and close.

Q: Allon. You said something about his reaction would be -- did you use the word, emotional?

TOON: Emotional, yes. Well, let me give you an example of that. I met with Allon, together with a group of Congressmen, the day after we had taken a vote in the United Nations which the Israelis didn't like. I think we had abstained on a resolution condemning the Israelis for, as I recall, their settlement policy in the West Bank. And when I met Allon the next day down in Jerusalem with the congressional group, I said, "Good morning, Mr. Minister."

He said: "It may be a good morning to you, but it's not to me after what happened yesterday in the United Nations."

I said, "Let's talk about that later." This was on television. The press were there and so forth. And that's what I mean by acting in an emotional way. He got over it before the day was out, but he and his colleagues were pretty mad about the stance we had taken in the United Nations the day before.

But, you know, Rabin would never show that sort of emotion. And Peres would just sort of laugh it off under similar conditions. But Allon would always act in an emotional way.

Q: As an example of how an ambassador copes with a problem in a country that he is assigned to, how did you cope with the remarks of Chief of Staff General Brown about Israel being a burden rather than a defensive asset? You were still in the country then, were you not?

TOON: You are talking about the head of the armed forces Brown? Which Brown are you talking about?

Q: General Brown, the chief of the --

TOON: You don't mean Harold Brown, who was later on Secretary of Defense. You are not

talking about him. You are talking about General Brown?

Q: Yes. Mid-October 1976.

TOON: Yes, I remember that remark. I tend to agree that Brown's assessment is correct. We tend to overdo the idea that the Israelis are a great strategic bastion for us in the Middle East. I think, frankly, they are a very serious burden for us. Now don't misunderstand me. I believe in our policy vis à vis Israel. I think that we should be committed to Israel's survival. It is not only a moral commitment on our part, but it is one that seems to be totally understandable after what happened to the Jews in World War II. Therefore, I think that we should do everything in our power to make sure that Israel survives. But to call the Israelis, as members of the American Jewish community do frequently, a strong strategic asset in the Middle East, I think simply overstates the case.

Q: In my experience, much more limited than yours, of course, the Israelis react immediately to any hint of criticism. And they react very strongly. They must have reacted to this particular criticism. You had to go deal with it in some fashion.

TOON: Well, in the first place, they don't like to be told what to do. They don't like somebody looking over their shoulder on their internal policies and activities -- for example, the settlement policy in the West Bank. And they don't like to be told that they are not terribly important strategically. So this was a problem that I had to smooth over. But at the same time, I think I did it in such a way as not to negate what General Brown had said, because, as I said before, I agree with that sort of assessment.

Q: I can guess what you did to smooth it over, but let me ask you to make it explicit. What did you do? Did you go to see Rabin? Did Rabin call you in?

TOON: No, I think this was a question that I discussed with Peres, the minister of defense. And as I recall, I did not ask to see him specifically. I was down there in his office. His office was in Tel Aviv. It was much easier for me to see him than it was to see Allon or Rabin, whose offices were in Jerusalem, which was quite a long way off. And I think I was down there on some other issue, probably it was with regard to what was going on in Lebanon. That statement by General Brown came up, and I tried to put the proper gloss on it without, as I say, negating what he said.

Q: Did you ever discuss U.S.-Israeli affairs with President Ford?

TOON: Yes, a number of times, as a matter of fact. I came back on consultation, I would say, about five or six times while I was ambassador in Israel usually with other ambassadors from the Middle East, who were summoned back to meet with Kissinger. When we met with Kissinger, we would also meet with President Ford.

Now because of the relationship at that time between the Arab states and Israel, which was nonexistent, of course, I, at the insistence of some of the Middle East ambassadors, would meet separately with President Ford rather than together with them. This, I think, gave me a leg up on all the other ambassadors, because I got to know the President quite well. I think not only was he

a very fine guy, but a guy that showed very good understanding of the problems in the Middle East.

Q: Ambassadors other than Ambassador Eilts insisted that you meet separately with the President?

TOON: It was primarily Eilts that took this position, but I think he was aided and abetted by other Arabists, and certainly nobody else took the opposite side.

Q: You had, then, an unusual role for an American ambassador. The stock question might be what were the policy questions facing you when you arrived at your post in Tel Aviv. In your case, it would be far different. It would not be run-of-the-mill policy questions at all. You were instructed specifically by the Secretary of State that 180-degree or 90-degree turn in American policy was about to take place or was taking place.

TOON: I wouldn't say it was a 180 degree shift. It was a slightly different emphasis in our policy in the Middle East. There was no attempt by anybody to diminish our commitment to Israel's survival. No question about that. What we were doing was trying to work out an arrangement so that Israel's survival could be assured, not militarily, but politically, by a different set of relationships in the Middle East.

Now that was a nuanced policy which was not easy to get across to the hard-headed Israelis who had participated in the struggle for survival. First of all, they felt they had become independent and had survived exclusively through military means. It was also not easy to convince them that supplying arms to the moderate Arab states would advance the Israeli interests. That was a very difficult point to get across. They could understand, and they admitted this to me several times, why we felt it was necessary to establish a good relationship with the moderate Arab states. What they could not understand was why we had to support this policy with a supply of arms. They did not believe me or Henry Kissinger when we said, "Look, under no conditions will this supply of arms be extensive. And, certainly, we will not supply them with any arms that you would regard as being offensive and dangerous to your survival." But they simply didn't believe that.

They said, "Once you start down this road -- in the first place, what is the difference between an offensive and a defensive weapon? But once you start down this road, their appetite will increase, and you will find yourselves supplying them with all kinds of arms, which in the long run will represent a threat to us." That was their position. Because it was strongly held, it was not easy for us to get the point across.

Q: Well, it was after you left, two or three or four years later, but one might be able to say they were right, because we developed a military relationship with Egypt that was, and is, quite extensive.

TOON: Well, there the problem, it seems to me, was that if in fact we wanted to completely wean Egypt away from Soviet influence, we had to agree to substitute for the Soviets in their arms supply role. Egyptians felt strongly that they could not be left naked. If they were to break

relations with the Soviets, as happened, of course, and, therefore, cut off their arms supply, they had to protect themselves. They had to be able to defend themselves. Therefore, they insisted that we take the Soviets' place in this respect. But we did it not on the Soviet scale. We did it, I think, in a very restrained way.

But I think, frankly, the policy has worked out, not only to our advantage, but ultimately to the Israeli advantage. You now have a situation -- and this came about shortly after I left Israel -- in which really no substantial war is possible, because Egypt was pulled out of the picture completely. And I think that has been a great plus, not only from our position, but also from the standpoint of Israel. Now it is not easy for them to swallow.

Q: I saw some of that from the other end.

Your staff there, your political officers and your DCMs and your economic officers, were they all, in your opinion, then first-rate? Did you have really almost the pick of the Foreign Service?

TOON: I would say that certainly my DCM, whom I personally selected, was very good. Some of the other senior officers were not that good, in my opinion. I had one junior officer who was fluent in Hebrew, and he was very helpful to me. But the others were, I would say, no more than average.

Q: Well, an average FSO was an accomplished kind of person. How is it that they fell down? The lack of writing ability, or lack of ability to develop information out on the streets, or what?

TOON: Well, I think primarily because they had operated under entirely different leadership prior to my arrival. Their two previous bosses had been Ken Keating, a political appointee who spent most of his time attending socials and that sort of thing and did not really participate in the formulation of policy vis à vis Israel. And, of course, his predecessor was Wally Barbour, who had been there altogether too long. He had been there almost, I think it was, thirteen years as ambassador. No ambassador should remain in any country for more than three years, in my view, and certainly not something like thirteen in a country like Israel. It is difficult to avoid localitis in dealing with the Israelis.

The result was that these younger officers of the staff had felt that they were not participating in the process under my predecessors. They felt cut out completely, because the embassy was cut out. And Kissinger was wheeling and dealing on his own. In many cases, Keating wouldn't even be told what was going on. Now that changed completely when I came, primarily because Kissinger knew that I wouldn't tolerate that sort of treatment. I would resign rather than be handled the way my predecessors were. So they found themselves working in a totally different milieu -- and they weren't used to it.

Now, the other problem was that a good many of the things I did, I had to do alone, primarily because Dr. Kissinger was the sort of guy that wanted to keep things very close to his chest. I think he would have been pretty mad if I had briefed my staff completely on what was going on. I did tell the senior officers basically what we were doing, but not in complete detail about my conversations with the Israeli leadership. I think that came about primarily because I didn't have

the sort of confidence in them that I had, for example, in my staff in Moscow later on. Now there you had really good professionals, most of whom were in the Soviet Union on a second tour of duty, most of whom knew the language thoroughly. This was not the case in Tel Aviv. Most of them were there for, you know, a first-and-only tour of duty. None of them, except for one officer that I mentioned, knew the language.

Q: Who was this first-rate DCM that you had?

TOON: Dunnigan. Tom Dunnigan.

Q: Thomas Dunnigan, yes. I've heard, somewhere along the line, of an officer or two who took language specialization in Hebrew and Arabic, trying to get themselves totally qualified for the area. That must be mind-boggling to try to deal with those two languages.

TOON: Nobody in my experience did that sort of thing.

THOMAS J. DUNNIGAN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tel Aviv (1975-1977)

Thomas Dunnigan was born and raised in Ohio. He attended John Carroll University, and after graduation served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He joined the Foreign Service in 1946. Mr. Dunnigan served in London, Manila, the Executive Secretariat, the National War College, Bonn, the Hague, Copenhagen, Tel Aviv, and with the Organization of American States. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: What did you do as DCM? Here you were, you had a professional well-skilled ambassador, and you were his DCM. What did you do?

DUNNIGAN: I had two ambassadors. I had [Mac] Toon for seventeen months, and then he got transferred to Moscow. I was alone for five months there, and then Sam Lewis came the last three or four months.

Oh, there was plenty to do. Of course, you're on the road to Jerusalem a good part of the time, which is where the Foreign Ministry sits. And that's fifty miles up and fifty miles back, up that mountain and down the mountain. So that takes a good deal of your time.

I had good relations there, we all did, with the Foreign Ministry. They were very eager to work well with us. Spent a good deal of time with the Defense Ministry, too, because we have a lot of defense problems with them. And I got to see and know the ministers of both as well.

There was no end of problems -- economic frequently. Because even then we were worried, and it seems such small potatoes today, with the amount of the Israeli debt, which was minuscule to

what it is, but we were worried about it in those days and we'd keep reminding them of this.

I was there for the last of the Kissinger shuttle missions. And that was a big and exciting time because he was trying at that time to settle the disputes between Syria and Israel. He'd settled the Egyptian-Israeli one; now this was the tough nut. And the Golan Heights was involved, and everything else. And back and forth he would go. Back and forth. But he finally did it. He finally pulled it off. It didn't mean peace, but it meant no shooting. And the armistice lines were observed. And they've been observed to this day in that area. So that was quite a tour de force by Henry.

But I well remember the night he arrived; we were in his motorcade, driving up to the Knesset in Jerusalem and being pelted with rocks. He was very unpopular because the Israelis thought that he was going to give away the store. And they resented it even more because they said, "You're Jewish, you can't do this to us." But Henry said he was the American secretary of state and he had to do what our policy required.

But they had to sneak us in the back door. And, even then, there were people out there pelting our car with rocks. You could hear them; I was afraid one of them was going to break the window, but they never did, they kept bouncing off. That was exciting.

And then I was there first two Vance visits.

Q: This was with the Carter administration.

DUNNIGAN: With the Carter administration. The first visit Vance made overseas was in February of '77. So I was with the Secretary a good part of the time. He had the whole first team along: Hodding Carter, of course, and Phil Habib, and Hal Saunders, and many other well-known names including some of the new Carter team.

I think they left disappointed after the talks. Rabin was prime minister at the time. Allon was the foreign minister. They expected the Israelis to offer them something, on the feeling that we are now the new Democratic administration; we've always been friendly to Israel; what are you going to do for us in the way of peace? And the answer was: Nothing. Because we, of course, wanted them to give land, that land-for-peace slogan that had been talked about back in the fifties but didn't seem to mean much. And Rabin was not about to do it.

He was also facing a national election coming up in a couple of months and he had that very much in mind. Because Begin was watching him closely, and if he had been seen to weaken, or to knuckle-under to American pressure, he would have been defeated. As it was, he was defeated -- to everybody's amazement. I mean, the embassy hadn't predicted it. Not a commentator in Israel had predicted it. None of the embassies that we knew there had predicted it. Nobody saw it coming, but it happened.

Q: Looking at the Kissinger operation and this Vance operation, were they quite different in how they operated?

DUNNIGAN: Well, the Kissinger operation was much more Henry-centered, you know, everything went out from there. Joe Sisco and Roy Atherton were along for that one. Everything went out from there, and people trembled around him. That wasn't true with Vance. There was more of a collegial approach, although you always knew who was in charge. But they weren't afraid to speak up. I don't say they were afraid under Kissinger, but they were cautious, because they could get their heads bitten off. But that didn't happen under Vance. You had the feeling that the underlings had a little more leeway in what they did.

Q: Was the embassy in either of these playing much of a role other than expediter? I mean, as far as saying, well, we think this will fly and that won't fly?

DUNNIGAN: No, the only one who got close to Kissinger when he was there was Toon, and he stuck with him all the time. Toon has a way of talking to anybody like a Dutch uncle. And he even did it to Henry, although as a careful Dutch uncle. He did get a few points across, I think.

But Toon was not particularly well liked by the Israelis because he told them what he thought of them, and, he wasn't buttering them up all the time. His first speech there was a shocker, because he stood up before the Chamber of Commerce in Tel Aviv and said, "Now you Israelis have got to begin to pay your way. You've leaned on us too much, and we've got too many expenses. We can't be taking care of you all." Well, this had never been said before in public. But that set the tone for his time there.

Q: I've heard from others that any new boy who comes to the American Embassy in Israel, particularly at the upper level as the DCM, is being sized up by the Israelis to find out what his attitude is, whether he's anti-Semitic, and whether he's for them or against them. Was this apparent?

DUNNIGAN: Every day of your life you're there it's apparent. There, a cocktail party is a non-stop dialogue for an American official. He walks in and they'll thrust a glass in his hand, and, from then on, he's in a corner, with fingers poking at him, answering questions: "Why don't you do this? Why did you give this to the Egyptians and not to us? Why doesn't your president...? Why did the secretary say this yesterday?" Small talk does not exist; you get right down to the nitty gritty. And, you know, you hear jokes about "Are you anti-Semitic?" And then you say, "Yes, aren't you?" Well, that throws them back, you know. But, underneath it all, they're watching. You know, for some years, we never had Jewish people on our staff there. Now during my time we did. And in some cases it was difficult for them because I think they felt under great pressure.

Q: I was wondering, because this is true in other countries where you have people who are coming back because of relationships or religion or something like that. Much more is expected of them rather than being just an American representative.

DUNNIGAN: Exactly. The Israelis expected that these people would be sympathetic with everything they did. And they weren't. They weren't. Some of the finest officers we had were Jewish, who saw the Israeli problem as it was, you know.

Q: How, at that time, did you see the situation in Israel, and American interest in Israel?

DUNNIGAN: I felt we had, and we have today, an interest in helping the Israelis defend themselves. I think we have perhaps overloaded them with hardware at the moment. They are tremendously capable and they have a wonderful military machine. I think we also have been underwriting too much of their economic development that we should never be doing.

I well remember, back in the fall of '76, we reported to Washington that the Israelis were putting two new settlements in the West Bank, where we had told them we didn't want any more settlements, and where they had more or less let us indicate they weren't going to put any more. We said there must be a statement out of Washington that would stop these before they go beyond, because if we let them get away with this, there'll be more. Dead silence for about six weeks. We couldn't get an answer out of Washington. Finally, in mid-December, Bill Scranton, our representative to the U.N., made a statement saying that we do not approve of new settlements. But that was all. It wasn't given much publicity. It wasn't as though the president had said something in a news conference, or the secretary had said something, or there had been a wire, or a letter. Not at all. A rather bland statement to that effect. And, as a result, the Israelis said: "Green light." And you see what's happened today.

Q: Did you and maybe other professional Foreign Service officers feel that the Israeli lobby in the United States was jerking us around a lot? I mean, was there resentment of this feeling?

DUNNIGAN: Well, I think we had those symptoms plus an admiration for their skill and ability for doing it. I never met so many senators and congressmen in my life as I did in those years in Israel. They kept coming through week after week. And not only senators and congressmen, but labor delegations, governors, important mayors. The Israelis knew how to handle people and what to show them and so forth. And they got a lot of sympathy and a lot of support from it. There are no holds barred in taking care of influential visitors.

Q: Well, what about reporting of things like, say, what's happening on the West Bank and all? This was before it came really to the top of the agenda. But was there a problem, a feeling about what you could report and what you couldn't report because of what would happen back in Washington?

DUNNIGAN: We at the embassy, you see, didn't do that. That was done by our consul general in Jerusalem. Now the consul general in Jerusalem was never recognized by the Israeli government. In fact, I was called up once by the director general of political affairs, later ambassador here, who complained about our consulate general there, saying, "We don't like that, we think you shouldn't have it here."

So we agreed to disagree on that, but he made it quite plain to me that he didn't accept our view. I told the consul general. Later, he met this fellow. They are both decent people, but they, again, couldn't agree. We had to make sure that the consul general was uninhibited in making his contacts. And he was. In those days, he pretty much could get around, and people could come in to the consulate general to see him. And many did, from around the West Bank, with various stories -- none of them, of course, nearly as bad as they are now -- but stories of injustice and

discrimination and things of that nature, and Americans of Palestinian descent who were ill treated.

Q: Would you get these reports from our consul general and then go make a complaint to the Foreign Ministry or something like that from time to time?

DUNNIGAN: Generally, in that case, we'd wait until Washington wanted us to do it. Because it wasn't good for us to say "Our consul general has told us..." Because, technically, you see, the ambassador wasn't to have any say over the consul general. Practically, he did, but in international law, he didn't. And the Israelis were well aware of that, because we kept insisting this was a separate entity that was credited through Jerusalem.

Q: And so you would receive a directive from Washington.

DUNNIGAN: Washington would say, "Now, look, this is going too far. Go in and tell the Foreign Ministry some of their thugs have beat up an American citizen." Then, of course, you could do it.

Q: Was there an inhibition on reporting on affairs in Israel because of the concern about leaks to Congress or to the newspapers once it got back to Washington?

DUNNIGAN: Not that I ever felt or noticed in the embassy. No, I think our people were pretty good that way. We were all aware of the situation, but I don't think that ever inhibited us from doing anything. I don't think of any circumstance where it would have.

Some of the congressional visits get a little dicey at times, you know.

Q: How would they get dicey?

DUNNIGAN: Some of them indicate to the Israelis that our policy is much more in their favor than it really is, you see. And then one had to gently correct the congressman, or get the impression to the Israelis. Then the Israelis would say, "Hah! You people at the embassy, we know what Congress really thinks now, because Senator So and So told us that." And Senator So and So may want this for his newsletter at home, for his purposes, but that isn't U.S. government policy, you know. And little things like that.

I had a very interesting case once. A distinguished American labor delegation came over, and came to the embassy for a briefing. I was chargé at the time, and we trotted out all our political, economic, public affairs counselors, our military attaché, and whoever, and briefed them. I sort of kicked it off and summed it up at the end. One of the labor leaders, a distinguished black gentleman who was well known in American labor circles, since dead, then got up and accused me of being anti-Israel. He said, "All of you, and you particularly, you sound like you're anti-Israel! You're not in favor of these people!"

And I said, "Well, Mr. So and So, we try to call the shots as we see them in the interests of the U.S. government. I don't think any of us are anti-Israel. In fact, I think we're quite friendly to this

country. But that doesn't mean we have to agree with everything they do."

He said, "It's plain to me that none of you people like Israel. You don't understand what they've done and what they're doing."

There are some people you're not going to convince. Now he was not Jewish, he was black, but he had been co-opted and felt very strongly that all of us were opposed to the Israelis.

Q: Well, did you find that in a subtle way the Israeli government -- the Foreign Ministry but others -- would sort of foster this thing about co-opting people but also making them feel that the embassy was the problem, when obviously it was policy and it was not the embassy? Was this being used?

DUNNIGAN: I don't have any direct evidence of that, Stu. I'd be surprised if some of it didn't happen. I'd be surprised if some of it didn't, because the ties are so close between many people in this country and Israel, you know. And communications daily, telephonic, everything, back and forth, visits. I'd be surprised if it didn't.

Q: Often the messenger is the person who gets shot.

DUNNIGAN: Exactly.

Q: Tom, what about the difference that you saw of the operating style between Toon, which you've talked about, and Sam Lewis? Did you have much time with Sam Lewis?

DUNNIGAN: I had about three months with him. Sam had already picked his DCM.

Q: Who was that?

DUNNIGAN: Dick Viets. Sam was very much smoother than Toon. Sam was much more attuned to the desires of the Carter administration, how they saw policy. He had come from being assistant secretary for international organization, and so he was very well wired-in, and he knew what would play in Washington and what wouldn't. But he had a nicer way, a smoother way, of approaching the Israeli leaders, so they liked him instinctively. Whereas there's a certain rectitude and Scottish bristliness about Toon that often sets people off on the wrong tangent. But Sam was totally different, and, as a result, they welcomed him warmly, they opened up to him.

He got there, you see, just at the beginning of the Begin administration, so he was moving in, he wasn't with the old team. In fact, he'd wanted to come about a week before the election, but we asked him not to because, we said, "Our posture is so high here (the American) that if you come before, they'll say the U.S. government tried to favor Rabin. You know, they're bringing this man over at the last moment to help him out." And he saw the wisdom of that, and so he came the day after. But, as a result, he was not committed to anything the Rabin government ever did; he worked with Begin all the time.

Then, in the few days I was there with Sam, was the second Vance visit. And I don't think that

went much better than the first, although I don't know.

But then Sam's greatest moments, I think, came in the following year during the Camp David bit, when he played quite a key role in getting them together. I had been gone by that time, but I looked back with great interest to what was going on, because that was a tremendous breakthrough.

Q: You were there when Begin was elected, and you say this was a surprise. What was the general judgment of our embassy when Begin came in? What did this mean?

DUNNIGAN: Well, I was the first senior American diplomat to ever have Begin in my house, and this happened months before the election. When we heard he was nominated, I said, "None of us seem to know him, I'm going to ask him out for dinner." He had not gone out to a diplomatic dinner in years, but he accepted. I was then the chargé. And, in fact, I had planned this dinner to say farewell to my German colleague, the DCM of the German Embassy, who was leaving. And when Begin said he'd come, I called him and said to his secretary, "Look, I want Mr. Begin to know that I'm having a German there, Mr. Helmut Brukweil. I want you to tell him that just in case it means anything." The answer came back: "Mr. Begin would be pleased to come." And I learned it was the first he had talked to a German since 1944.

Q: Good God!

DUNNIGAN: But he came and he was very much a gentleman, a courtly gentleman, kissing hands, very friendly. He and his wife are delightful people, and we liked them. It was a small group of about ten or twelve, and I had a thoroughly good time. And then I'd see him during the course of the election campaign. He stayed pretty close to home; he was already then a little old and infirm. Ezer Weizman was running his campaign, doing a magnificent job. He put him over. But Begin would receive me at the house, and I'd go down and talk to him about an hour and get his views, report them. So we had an in with him before, and then Sam, of course, just kept rolling right along.

I liked Begin personally. I didn't agree with many of his policies.

Q: But did we see trouble with Begin and his party coming in, the Likud?

DUNNIGAN: Not really at the beginning. We didn't see much because they'd never been in power, we didn't know what to expect. We knew that they were composed of very disparate groups, many right-wing, former terrorists. None Socialist, and that was welcome in some ways in the Washington side, you know. You remember that crew. No, we didn't know what to expect for quite a while.

EDWARD G. ABINGTON
Staff Aide to Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1975-1977)

Mr. Abington was born in Texas into a US military family and was raised in military posts in the US and abroad. An Arabic language officer and specialist in Near East Affairs, he describes his experience dealing with Israel-Arab hostilities and general regional problems while serving as Political Officer at Embassies Tel Aviv and Damascus. In his postings at the State Department in Washington, he also dealt with Near East matters. Mr. Abington was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: For the record, many of these things staff assistants at the State Department at the upper levels would be taking notes of things to do so that the principal person talking...

ABINGTON: In all the years I spent at the State Department, I felt that the State Department performed at the highest peak when Kissinger was Secretary of State. He demanded a lot from the State Department staff. He didn't tolerate sloppy work and he would be brutal if you sent a memorandum to him that was not well thought out and succinct – he would come back with very acerbic comments. I was a task master for the NEA bureau. I would read memorandum and would rather rudely edit them myself and send them back to the drafters, which most staff aides didn't have that kind of authority, but Atherton wanted me to do it because he felt that Kissinger looked very carefully at things coming out of the NEA bureau and he wanted good work to go upstairs.

The way the Department worked during that period also was that Kissinger and Sisco wanted to bypass the system and the bureaucracy altogether. The number of memoranda going to Kissinger that were "out of the system" was very high. What that meant was that Kissinger, when he wanted something, he wanted it five minutes ago. Or he considered it to be very sensitive and he felt that he didn't want the line officers and the staff secretariat going over the memos or he didn't want to take the time to have them staffed. With the Near East Bureau, it was a very unique relationship with Kissinger's office and with US for Political Affairs Joe Sisco. Many of the memos that we did on the peace process would go directly to Sisco, who would walk them into Kissinger, or would go directly to Kissinger and they wouldn't even be put in the system. Eventually copies of the memoranda made their way into the archives of the State Department, but there was an awful lot of material that did not go through the formal system through the staff secretariat on the problems facing the Middle East Bureau, it looks like it was divided up into the peace process, which is essentially Egypt and Israel, and then the Lebanese thing with the Palestinians. The Palestinians were part of the Lebanese problem as opposed to the Israeli problem at that time. Am I wrong?

During the Kissinger negotiations, we tried to get at the Palestinian problem through negotiation with Jordan. We started talking about things like functional autonomy for the Palestinians. In other words, they would run civic affairs but the Israelis would still be occupying the area but with less of a direct control over the daily life of Palestinians. There were some attempts to try to get those negotiations off the ground between Jordan and Israel but the issues were complex, very difficult, and quickly fell to the wayside as Kissinger really concentrated on things like the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement or the Egyptian-Israeli negotiation or when the crisis in Lebanon became increasingly serious in '75/'76. We tried to deal with the Lebanon crisis in a

way to keep Syria and Israel from being sucked into a war over Lebanon. The Palestinian issue was really secondary and to the extent that it was addressed, particularly in late '75/'76, it was a function of the increasingly serious fighting in Lebanon.

Q: Did the question of Israeli settlements in the West Bank come up then?

ABINGTON: Yes, it was an issue. Of course, it was a Labor government. The defense minister and later foreign minister, Yigal Allon, put forward a plan to establish Israeli settlements in areas that were considered important for Israel's security, the Jordan Valley and the West Bank ridge line that would be to the west of the Jordan Valley. He established a string of settlements and built north-south highways in that area. The Arabs protested this and would take it to the UN. At the time, the United States took a pretty firm line in the Security Council against Israeli settlements and generally voted for resolutions that condemned the settlements and called on Israel to cease seizing land and building settlements and transferring population into Palestinian areas. That included in East Jerusalem as well. But while the settlement issue was a subject of dialogue with Israel it never became the central issue.

One has to keep in mind that at the time we were talking not only about settlements in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, but also there was a very active building of settlements up in the Golan Heights. The Israelis basically razed the Syrian villages that were up there, bulldozed the villages, bulldozed the walls marking off Syrian fields and so forth, and created an uninterrupted area up in the Golan Heights that was open to Israeli settlements. But more importantly from the point of view of Kissinger at the time were Israeli settlement activity in the Sinai. Kissinger even before Camp David understood that an Egyptian-Israeli peace had to entail full Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and that meant that Israel would have to give up all of the settlements that it had been establishing since 1967 in the Sinai. So, the settlement issue was an important issue and it had a lot of different ramifications, but probably the focus in '75/'76 was thinking about how settlements affected the ongoing Israeli-Egyptian negotiating process, and it was less of a focus on the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza, although that was important within an inter-Arab context.

Q: As you were watching this, did you get any feel about the difference in negotiating style or outlook between the Egyptians and the Israelis and then also with the Syrians?

ABINGTON: Negotiations with the Syrians in terms of Israeli-Syrian negotiations pretty much petered out after the 1974 disengagement agreement on the Golan Heights. Increasingly that process in terms of trying to consider or try to work towards an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement was overtaken by the mounting crisis in Lebanon. Syria was faced with a situation of enormous complexity which threatened to suck Syria and Israel into an all-out war. U.S. efforts at the time were focused on trying to reach a series of understandings, informal understandings, of red lines between Syria and Israel so that each understood what each party could or could not do in Lebanon. Those red lines were designed to keep Israel and Syria from going to war over Lebanon. In terms of negotiating style between Israel and Egypt, President Sadat had a very clear vision of where he wanted to go and he was less interested in the actual details of negotiation than getting to the end result. The Israelis on the other hand – and I've seen this throughout – they did it with the Lebanese in 1982, – they might concede certain broad principles but then the

Israelis would win back whatever concessions they've made through nickeling and diming every single detail. The Israeli negotiating style with the Arabs is such that they focus on the details so much, they take away the good feeling that comes from an agreement by making their negotiating partner feel that there is no such thing as a goodwill gesture on the part of the Israelis. They insist on nailing down all of their concerns in writing and the Israeli style is very much to look at the details, to have lawyers draft the details, and the Arabs by comparison the way they negotiate, I think that they were at a disadvantage in drafting the text of agreements. The net effect of these agreements was that the Arabs felt that the Israelis got too much and instead of becoming a win-win situation people who negotiated with the Israelis have a pretty bitter taste in their mouth at the end of the process. Whatever goodwill was there tended to be dissipated as the difficulties of implementing the agreements became apparent.

Q: In the Near Eastern Bureau, you move over to the Tigris, Euphrates, Syria, Iraq, the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, and then beyond, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and all. Did that get pretty short shrift in those days?

ABINGTON: Very much so. Roy Atherton spent hardly any time at all on South Asian issues or for that matter even looking at the Gulf, at Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan. That was backwater of the Near East and South Asia Bureau. At the time, you had a Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asia. That person had a tremendous amount of latitude in terms of dealing with those issues and would spend most of his time dealing with South Asia and Iran. At the time, Sid Sober was the PDAS in NEA. He had a South Asian background. Between him and the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Howie Schaffer, you had a pretty strong team who were dealing with South Asia. The people in the Near East Bureau were just going flat out all the time. There were all these task forces going on whether it was over terrorism, hijackings, or the civil war in Lebanon, or the crisis in South Asia which led to an Indo-Pakistani War, and Kissinger's preoccupation with Israeli-Arab negotiations on the peace process. It was a time when I wonder how the NEA bureau managed to stay on top of everything. There were so many crises going on all the time.

Q: One had the feeling that Iran, being the Shah, was taken care of – give him what he wants and we'll get some money back from him. And with India it was sort of back of the hand. The relationship with the Indian leader was very poor.

ABINGTON: That's true. In Pakistan, the Pakistanis acted as the facilitator for Kissinger's famous secret trip to China. He went to China from Pakistan. He ostensibly was on a visit there. But as I look back during that period, certainly the Israeli-Arab negotiations seemed to be the top priority, but then they would get pushed aside as crises arose like Lebanon or India-Pakistan.

Q: On the Lebanese thing, you had a tribal conflict within Lebanon itself. Was there much we could do about that?

ABINGTON: The actual fighting there was relatively little. Our embassy in West Beirut was in the middle of a free fire zone. We had drawn down to a relatively few number of people. The fighting was so intense that no one could get out and go talk, particularly to the Christian side. During that period in early '76, Frank Meloy, the ambassador, and the economic counselor had gone out to try to go into East Beirut to try to meet with the Christians. They disappeared and the

embassy called in and said they were missing. There was a period of time... Everyone was deeply concerned. I informed Roy Atherton and he in turn informed the Secretary. Then I got a telephone call from the Operations Center that said that the bodies of Meloy and Waring and the Lebanese driver, Magrabi, had been found. I went in and informed Roy. Of course, Roy was just devastated by the news. It was a real crisis in terms of trying to deal with the parties in Lebanon. We had no one who could get out and talk to them. Particularly after Meloy's assassination, the embassy basically was in a bunker. People were living in the embassy. They were raiding the commissary for their food. There were artillery duels back and forth outside and it was just an incredibly dangerous situation. It was at that point that Kissinger decided that we needed to send someone into East Beirut to talk to the Christians and figure out what they were up to. Initially, he picked Ed Djerejian to do this, or rather Ed volunteered to do it. Ed spoke fluent Arabic, excellent French. He is an Armenian-American and spoke Armenian. At the time, Ed was the U.S. Consul General in Bordeaux or Marseilles. He joined up with Kissinger on one of Kissinger's trips to Europe and flew back. I believe Roy was on the flight or Joe Sisco. Djerejian talked with Kissinger and mapped out what they were going to do, what he was going to do. They came back to Washington. Djerejian held briefings, met with a number of people, had his instructions. I remember helping him be fitted for a bulletproof vest. I went and got something like \$20-25,000 in hundred dollar bills for Ed for expenses. Ed took off with two or three security agents, flew back to Paris, went down to see his wife before he was supposed to go to Cyprus to catch a ferry from Cyprus to Beirut. All of a sudden, I got a phone call from the Operations Center which said that Djerejian had called in and his wife was ill or upset about his going and he had decided he couldn't go. The security agents were bringing back the \$25,000. Kissinger just went ballistic. He was so furious at Djerejian. He was determined to punish him. Ed was kind of exiled for a while to a pretty unimportant job in the European Bureau. He had a promotion rescinded by Kissinger. He overcame this. But Kissinger was absolutely furious over this. Roy Atherton and Joe Sisco protected Djerejian and shielded him from Kissinger's wrath. Kissinger had a famous temper.

As an aside, Sid Sober, the principal Deputy Assistant Secretary at the time, just rubbed Kissinger the wrong way. Kissinger ordered Atherton or Sisco to get rid of Sid Sober. Sid continued to be the PDAS but we went through elaborate steps to hide the fact from Kissinger that Sid Sober was the PDAS. He would not attend meetings with Kissinger. We would find someone else to go. If Roy was traveling and we had a memo for Kissinger, we put someone else's name down on the memo so that he didn't know that Sid Sober was there. It was a case where Kissinger would be furious at people but then the FS would protect those people.

But after Djerejian pulled out, David Mack, the office director for the Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, volunteered to go to Beirut along with Bob Hope, who at had been a DCM in Beirut and knew all the actors and was working in Personnel. It took tremendous courage. They went to Nicosia. They got on a ferry boat with a bodyguard or two. If the Christians in East Beirut weren't going to protect them, two bodyguards wouldn't have made the slightest bit of difference. But in an act of tremendous courage, they went to East Beirut, spent a week or two there talking to people and then calling in reports and then writing up the reports. That really gave us a window on the thinking. But our ability to influence either the Muslim or the Christian participants in the civil war in Lebanon was very limited. At the time, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinians had established a tremendous presence in West Beirut. We worked out through the

CIA an informal arrangement with the PLO in terms of the PLO giving some protection to the embassy in Beirut to keep it from being attacked by Lebanese Muslim organizations. The CIA acted as the middleman in doing this. That started the contacts between the PLO and Yasser Arafat. It was in the context of Lebanon and the civil war there in the mid-'70s that we started dealing with them over issues like the security of the embassy in Beirut.

Q: This was at a time when contact with the PLO was strictly forbidden.

ABINGTON: Yes, it was. As part of the 1975 Sinai II disengagement agreement, the side MOU that Prime Minister Rabin insisted on having and we negotiated with the Israelis, one clause in that MOU was that the United States would refrain from any contact with the PLO unless and until the PLO renounced terrorism and recognized Israel's right to exist. I was told that Kissinger thought this was kind of a throwaway and felt that it would not be any particular constraint on American foreign policy in terms of dealing with this issue. In fact, the security channel became a conduit for discussion with the PLO on political issues as well, but it was carried out through the CIA, not by State Department officials. But as of the time of that MOU, contact with the PLO, which had been allowed before then and people in Beirut and Syria used to talk to Palestinians, after '75 overt contact ended.

Q: There is still a reflection of this as we speak today. The head of the CIA is going out to talk to both the Palestinians and the Israelis.

ABINGTON: That's a different story. We'll get to that later. That role really took place in 1997 when Israeli-Palestinian security contacts broke down and the CIA was asked by the Israeli Shin Bet to facilitate the reestablishment of Israeli-Palestinian security coordination. It's in that context that the CIA and George Tenet got sucked into this.

Q: We'll pick that up later on.

You were there from '75- '77?

ABINGTON: Yes.

Q: How did the transition when the Carter administration came in... Every time there is an election of a president, promises are made to get the Jewish vote, particularly about the embassy moving to Jerusalem. How did the actual transition work?

ABINGTON: About the time of the election, particularly as the campaign was going on, and I've seen this during other pre-election periods and afterwards, foreign policy issues all of a sudden took a backseat to everything else. At that point the objective was not to let any crises arise which could become an election issue. As we got into August and September of 1976, the amount of work decreased tremendously because people were focused on the conventions, on the campaigns, on the debates. Kissinger himself was much less active. When the election took place and Jimmy Carter won, we went from being tremendously busy to being tremendously not busy simply because everybody was checking in on him. The senior leadership in the State Department was basically wrapping things up. They were not taking any new initiatives or trying

to conclude agreements. Of course, any time you have a transition, everybody is tasked to write transition papers for the issue that they're working. There was a tremendous number of papers written by the Near East Bureau during that period because there were so many active problems going on. The very interesting thing about that transition was that once Carter was sworn in and Vance became Secretary of State, Carter focused almost immediately like a laser on the Arab-Israeli situation. Almost from the time of the inauguration and Vance becoming Secretary of State, Roy Atherton stayed on as Assistant Secretary. The focus was on Arab-Israeli issues. The first three or four months of 1977 were extremely busy in terms of thinking through our Middle East policy, what we were trying to achieve, drafting a tremendous number of papers... If you draft a paper for the President from the Secretary of State for a visit or an issue, those papers are fairly short, not more than three or four pages. But we used to do 15-20 page papers for Carter on the Middle East issue, on the Arab-Israeli issue. The Carter administration started off with a focus on the Middle East. The very first trip that Cyrus Vance took abroad was to the Middle East. I organized the trip and put it together, worked out the schedule with Vance's people, worked out with Roy the tasking of all the papers and the preparation of all the trip books. And he went to Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, he may have had a brief stop in Lebanon. That trip then set the stage for visits to Washington of the leaders from Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia for meetings with President Carter. That in turn led to Carter's focus on the peace process and laid the groundwork for continuing Kissinger's efforts, particularly on the Egyptian-Israeli front, which culminated in 1978 in the Camp David agreement and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

Q: Going back to the Kissinger time, did President Ford have his hand in there or was it pretty much left in Kissinger's?

ABINGTON: It was very much Kissinger running the show. My recollection on the peace process, I really didn't see President Ford's hand at all.

Q: You left this job when?

ABINGTON: I left in July of 1977 to go to FSI, where I studied Arabic for two year, one year in Rosslyn, and then the second year at the Arabic language school in Tunis.

Q: How did you feel about becoming an Arab specialist at that time?

ABINGTON: At that point, I was really taken with the Arab-Israeli situation. I had worked on it for seven years, an intensive period starting with the hijackings in 1970 and the Jordan civil war, the various terrorist incidents in Israel when I was there, the 1973 war, then Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy. So, as a new FS officer, I really felt that I had been thrown into the maelstrom. I found it tremendously exciting and stimulating and if you worked those issues you really have the feeling that the top levels of the State Department and the White House were following them. You felt like you were involved in something that was important and where you could make a difference. So, I saw Arabic language training as sort of a ticket into continuing on this process. I thought at the time based on discussions with Ed Walker, who was working on the peace process and with Roy Atherton and so forth, that I didn't want to be the traditional Arabist. I wanted to be someone who specialized in Arab-Israeli issues. Although I never learned Hebrew, I never

saw myself as a dyed in the wool Arabist, but really someone who was working in the Levant on the nexus of the peace process and Israel's relations with its neighbors.

GEORGE E. LICHTBLAU
Labor Attaché
Tel Aviv (1975-1978)

George E. Lichtblau has had a long career in the field of Labor Economics. He has served in both the U.S. Department of Labor as well as in the U. S. Department of State. He joined the Foreign Service as a Reserve Officer beginning in 1963 and his career took him to the Ivory Coast, South Korea, and Israel. He was interviewed by James F. Shea in 1992.

Q: Did you have any kind of a layover in the United States before you went to Israel?

LICHTBLAU: No, I went directly from Korea to Israel.

Q: And how did you find the political climate there?

LICHTBLAU: This was an exciting period because it was just about the time of the Camp David Agreement and all the events leading up to that which made things rather interesting there. In some ways, of course, here too there were a lot of critical issues to which I was pressed both on the labor and the human rights situation.

The two major events during my service in Israel were first of all the replacement of the Labor government by a Likud government, which came somewhat unexpectedly, since everybody assumed that the Labor Party was deeply entrenched and that a changeover was very unlikely. Then of course came the peace negotiations with Egypt and the visit of President Sadat to Israel and to Jerusalem, and subsequently the negotiations that led up to Camp David.

Here again, I think my role was generally appreciated by the Embassy because of my extensive contacts and my ability to report not only on matters that were covered in the press and in public announcements, but also in dealing with the different segments of the community, both Jewish and Arab, as well as the various immigrant groups. Getting to know people such as the Russian immigrant community and also the Sephardic groups, the groups that had immigrated from North Africa and the Arab countries, some of whom felt a little bit frustrated because of a sense of neglect, and a tendency to give preferential treatment and the benefits of patronage to those [Jewish immigrants] who had come from Europe.

I was also able to establish a number of contacts with various elements of the non-Jewish Arab community in Israel and, from time to time, I was also sent to make contacts with Palestinian groups in the occupied territories, since human rights was one of the areas that were assigned to me. At times, this ran into a problem on the American side because of the unclarified areas of

jurisdiction between the Embassy and the Consulate in Jerusalem, which was assigned primary responsibility for the occupied territories, Judea, Samaria, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

In dealing with the Arab groups, I particularly remember my contacts with the Druze community and with the Bedouin community, where I established a number of friendly relations and was a number of times invited to meet with them and hear their particular problems and their particular views, which were sometimes different from those of the other Arab elements. They obviously were less inclined to be critical of the Israelis. Some of their members were permitted to serve in the military and the police force. They also had more ready access to the civil service, which sometimes also engendered certain jealousies and frictions among them.

Q: George, how did your fellow officers and colleagues in the Embassy view your activities, and were there any times when you were working at cross purposes?

LICHTBLAU: I think generally in Israel I seemed to have had a pretty good reputation because of my extensive contacts and my circulation outside of the Embassy which probably were more extensive than those of most other officers. Also the Ambassador seemed to have appreciated that, particularly Ambassador Lewis, who was a bit upset when I left. He wanted me to extend my service there, but considering how close I was at that time to mandatory retirement at 60, I did not want to extend, and so in the summer of 1978, I left for an assignment back in the Department of State as NEA Labor Advisor.

Q: How many ambassadors did you work for in Tel Aviv?

LICHTBLAU: Two ambassadors. The first ambassador was Malcolm Toon, and then Sam Lewis. I had good relations with both of them and for a while under Sam Lewis, I was Acting Head of the Political Section, since I was really the ranking officer in the Political Section.

EDMUND JAMES HULL
Political Officer
Jerusalem (1975-1979)

Ambassador Hull was born in Iowa and raised in Illinois. He was educated at Princeton and Oxford Universities. After service in the Peace Corps, Mr. Hull joined the Foreign Service in 1974 and had postings in Amman, Beirut, Jerusalem, Tunis and Cairo as well as serving as Ambassador to Yemen from 2001 to 2004. In Washington, the Ambassador served on the National Security Council and as Advisor to the Secretary of State on Counterterrorism. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005

Q: So you went to Jerusalem?

HULL: I packed everything I had from my apartment including my plants, drove down to the Allenby Bridge and had everything including the plants carried across into the West Bank and

then up to Jerusalem.

Q: You were consul general in Jerusalem from when to when?

HULL: I was the sole political officer in the consulate from 1975 through 1979. Mike Newlin was consul general, and Don Kruse was his deputy.

Q: The perspective of Jerusalem is basically the West Bank?

HULL: Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and West Jerusalem is very, very Israeli. East Jerusalem was under the Hashemites before 1967 and was primarily Arab Palestinian. So what you had in Jerusalem was really a schizophrenic situation where on a daily basis you would be dealing with Israelis and Palestinians who had radically different views of the world.

Q: Had King Hussein renounced his rule over the West Bank at this point? Or was that later on?

HULL: At Rabat in 1974 at the Arab Summit, the Arab leaders agreed that the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) was the sole, legitimate spokesman for the Palestinian people. King Hussein had to accept that decision. So formally the torch had passed, but informally, I think, the King maintained residual ambitions, not in a sense of wanting to impose himself but wanting to be available if others asked him to play a role. And certainly with regards to the Haram Sharif, the Islamic holy places, the Hashemite had had a long, profound association there and continued to pay the salaries of the Haram officials. I think he had a lingering ambition, but one which was rarely articulated. The Israelis for their part, also very much wanted to keep King Hussein and the Hashemites in the picture because one of their preferred options was some kind of a role for Jordan in the West Bank in a final solution.

Q: What was the balance that you all had to deal with? The Israelis were occupying significant parts of the West Bank.

HULL: They were occupying the entire West Bank.

Q: At the same time we did not recognize the legitimacy of this or how was this dealt with?

HULL: We considered it an occupied territory. We didn't recognize Israel's claims to it nor did we recognize, for example, the expansion of the Jerusalem city limit or the annexation of the Golan. We thought all of the territories should be subject to a negotiation in an agreed settlement. The consulate in Jerusalem was unique in the world. It was the only consulate that was independent of any embassies. The consulate reported directly back to the State Department, not through Embassy Tel Aviv. The Consul General had a very delicate position in this regard. Our mandate was to be the liaison and to report vis-à-vis, the Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, not Gaza – Gaza was under the embassy – and secondly, to be the liaison and report on the municipal Israeli government, Mayor Teddy Kollek at the time. That was what we were meant to do. In doing it, of course, we were very much interacting with Embassy Tel Aviv and their responsibilities. It caused a certain amount of friction, a certain amount of tension and was a challenge.

Q: Who was the Consul General then?

HULL: Mike Newlin.

Q: How would you describe the relationship? The ambassador was Sam Lewis, wasn't it?

HULL: The ambassador was Sam Lewis.

Q: You were a little on the sidelines watching these two, but how did they deal with each other?

HULL: Of course, Sam Lewis was a force of nature, he was ambassador for a very, very long time, had an excellent reputation in Washington, an extrovert, very confident. Mike Newlin was quiet, but also extremely competent and very good at getting things done in a low-key way. And Mike Newlin, I think, successfully defended the independence of the consulate and did very delicate reporting with a great deal of integrity. You could admire both of them.

Q: The Israelis are not noted for shyness. And I would imagine there would be constant attempts to, I don't want to say compromise, that's the wrong term, but to do something which would give the Israelis more control than they might have if we didn't do something? Did you find yourself maneuvered or pushed or concerned about something like that?

HULL: Well, of course. The Israelis were always pushing and one of their major objectives was to get the embassy moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and really displace the consulate. We were under constant pressure and receiving constant attention from the Israelis. We were operating in a fishbowl. With me it came to a head. I was responsible for reporting on settlement activity. This was a period of significant expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. There was a great readership for this material. We didn't realize initially how much of a readership until we started getting feedback, and it turned out that President Carter was tracking the issue very closely and would be commenting upon reports we had submitted about settlement expansion. So we felt we had a pretty important mission in that regard. Of course, the Israeli actions were quite at odds what they were saying or giving us to believe and therefore reporting the facts on the ground was reporting something that was embarrassing to Tel Aviv. I would go out on these periodic field trips and record changes. On one field trip, after telling my immediate boss that I was going out, I was in the proximity of one of the settlements and encountered Israeli security people who detained me. I explained who I was, who I was working for, and what I was doing. They detained me, they made some calls, and then eventually after 45 minutes or so I was released. Only fair, I had been detained by the Palestinians in Beirut and now I was detained by the Israelis.

I got back to Jerusalem and reported up my chain of command to my bosses about the incident which was a very good thing to do because quickly Ambassador Lewis was notified by the Israeli government that I had been engaged in inappropriate activity. Lewis called my boss to find out what it was all about, and fortunately Mike Newlin was able to brief Ambassador Lewis that this was in the line of duty, reporting on a subject of great interest to Washington. So Ambassador Lewis to his credit pushed back and, I believe, defended my activity. That didn't

stop the Israelis. The issue was leaked, it was on the radio and the following days an editorial appeared in Haaretz, one of the leading newspapers entitled “Shalom, Mr. Hull”, which was “Goodbye, Mr. Hull.” Haaretz was hoping that I would be given my walking papers, but in fact the Consulate, the Embassy, the Department stood in back of me, and I continued my reporting and finished out my tour quite normally.

Q: At some point you mentioned the settlements. Were you able to talk to the settlers? I assume they were within your area of responsibility?

HULL: With the settlers themselves. Yes, although we didn't take a confrontational, we tried to avoid a confrontational approach, whereby we would be challenging personally what they were doing with their lives, but inevitably you would be running into these People, and they wouldn't be shy at all about telling their story and why they believed they have a claim on one spot or another and what they intended to do.

Q: Were you finding that the settlers at this particular time were for the most part, people who were pushed by religious conviction or was this a pretty good deal? Low rent or what have you?

HULL: There were several factors. There were Labor settlements along the Jordan valley and there it was a security objective that the Labor government had promoted. But then you had a very strong religious element and the settlements, for example, in (???) on the way to Hebron, there you had true believers who were really fulfilling what they considered to be a Biblical imperative. Also though there's no doubt the Israelis provided considerable material advantages to people who were willing to go and settle. You could get a much nicer villa in a settlement than you could ever afford in Israel proper, and you had a number of financial incentives if you were willing to live in the occupied territories.

Q: Was there a significant number of the Israeli settlers who were American citizens?

HULL: Yes. Sometimes the most fanatic were Americans.

Q: How about dealing with them? Did they go to you?

HULL: They would come to the consulate for consular services. Consular affairs were done in East Jerusalem across the Green Line which had been erased physically after the 1967 war but nevertheless, on the Arab side, which was always somewhat of a problem for Israelis because they didn't feel all together comfortable. Other business was done in West Jerusalem. The political section where I worked, the economic section, the commercial section, all of these were in the West Jerusalem, and the Arabs if they wanted to avail themselves of those services had to come across and use those facilities. Mostly what we did with the Israeli public was consular services which were very important because they had many connections with the U.S. and then again as I said, we did deal with the municipal government and that we did out of the office in West Jerusalem.

Q: The Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, was quite a famous figure. How did you deal with him? How would you characterize him?

HULL: He was imaginative, he was active, he, I believe, really wanted to unite the city and not just physically, but also on a human level. I think he had a measure of sympathy for the Arab population that was unusual. He was a showman of the first degree, and I really think his public diplomacy was extraordinary in stamping Israel's "trademark" over most things in Jerusalem. Not all together an easy thing to do when you think of the television shot of Jerusalem with the Haram Sharif's Kubbah As Sakhra (the Noble Sanctuary's Dome of the Rock) in the background. Ironically, the classic visual of Jerusalem testifies to an Islamic character. But Teddy Kollek was quite able and quite effective. He had working with him Meron Benveniste, who knew the Palestinians very well, and who had written on the Palestinians and the Crusaders. It was a relatively enlightened municipal government.

Q: You could not talk with the PLO at this point, could you?

HULL: No, but we found this restriction easy to finesse. Technically any member of the PLO in the occupied territories was a member of an illegal organization and therefore should be in jail. We concluded that anyone who was not in jail was prima facie not a member of the PLO and therefore fair game for us, and we did talk with anyone.

Q: Would you talk a little bit about being a political officer? How did you go about your business?

HULL: I came on board in January, and I believe it was February or March when they had the first municipal elections since the occupation had begun in 1967. These elections were of great interest because there would be a relatively free vote and the true sympathies of the West Bank electorate would be gauged for the first time since Israel had occupied the territories and so the priority was covering that election. I know my bosses had some trepidation because they had a new political officer, green and unproven, and the elections would be his first challenge. It was a very interesting election. Often it was decided by "tazkiat" (consensus). In fact in all municipalities it was decided by consensus. In Bethlehem, the old families – particularly the Freij's – held sway. In most of the municipalities, however, the consensus process came up with a nationalist slate of young, intelligent, active Palestinians who were not formally associated with the PLO, but who made clear their affinity to the PLO and considered the PLO as the spokesman of the Palestinian people. So we dealt with people like Fuad Qasimi, Karim Khalaf, Bassam Shaka'a, Mohamed Milhem – really a new generation of Palestinian leaders, who were impressive for what they wanted to do in their cities and for their ability to articulate the Palestinian position.

Q: At this particular time, was there a concern that the Israeli security services were trying to undermine, discredit any potential Palestinian leader that was coming down the path?

HULL: No. The Israelis, I think, welcomed a homegrown Palestinian leadership and their hope was that this leadership would somehow develop and supplant the leadership that was then outside of Palestine in Lebanon. The Israelis gave these Palestinians leeway.

Q: How big a figure was Arafat at this point?

HULL: Arafat was the embodiment of the Palestinian national cause. He was really without a rival, and Palestinians in the West Bank supported him sincerely.

Q: This would be more of a consular matter, but were there concerns about Israeli security forces beating up or being nasty to Palestinians?

HULL: Oh, sure. This was the Carter period. There was a big emphasis on human rights, and the human rights report coming in from the Consulate General in Jerusalem was one of the most problematic reports to hit the desk in the Department, which is still the case today.

Q: OK, you're putting together this report which consists mainly of totting up incidences of who was doing what to whom and that sort of thing?

HULL: To a large extent.

Q: And I'm sure obviously Tel Aviv didn't like this?

HULL: They had to do their own report, and yes, I am sure they found a lot of what we were reporting created problems for them.

Q: You were a junior officer yourself. There's always the thing in any embassy or consulate where junior officers seek out sensation and are looking for extreme cases and all. The most senior officers tend to modify them. I mean this is the dynamic that goes on all the time. Did you find this going on?

HULL: No. There was a very interesting case which was not actually related to the human rights report. We had assigned to the consulate a woman who had been an INR (Intelligence and Research) analyst and wanted to do political reporting, but she was doing consular work. She was giving immigrant visas, I think. In the course of her visa interviews she had a significant number of Palestinians who had been prisoners of the Israelis. In the course of interviewing, she developed a significant number of accounts of mistreatment of prisoners, and being a trained INR analyst she, of course, was able in a sophisticated way to compare the accounts and come up with certain patterns, accounts from independent sources of significant mistreatment or torture of the Palestinian detainees. She collected all of this and she wrote it up in a very, very coherent fashion and she submitted it to Mike Newlin and Don Kruse, and it was sent in. The cable cite – Jerusalem 1500 – became famous. It exploded in Washington because it included a great deal of detail, very significant analysis, put very dispassionately, but which painted a very troubling picture of prisoner abuse and torture by the Israelis. As I said, the consulate management, Newlin and Kruse, as far as I know, didn't hesitate at all. They sent it right back in, and it had a tremendous impact when it hit Washington and was eventually leaked into the media. Of course, that didn't have to go through the embassy because we were an independent consulate. If it had had to go through the embassy management, I'm not quite sure what would have happened.

Q: The normal response to this, particularly looking at the Israeli pattern, is to try to discredit the messenger which is being done in spades in the United States today. What happened in this

case?

HULL: The reporting officer was subject to a lot of attention and a lot of rumors were put out and her relationships were examined extremely closely.

Q: We're talking about male-female type relationships?

HULL: Right.

Q: If you've got a woman making a report you can always say, you know, some guy got to her or something.

HULL: There were suggestions along those lines but the fact that the material had come from so many different sources, who had just been there for a visa interview, really made it difficult to discredit the reporting. It was rather ad hominin or ad feminine.

Q: What happened? What happened to her?

HULL: She was eventually transferred back to Washington, I think not as any kind of a disciplinary measure. I don't recall if it was on schedule or premature, but she had a rather unusual personality, she was very introverted, I would say not your typical diplomat, more an analyst, and she went back to Washington and I'm not sure what happened to her career after that.

Q: Did you get out? Did you travel extensively through the West Bank?

HULL: We traveled freely throughout the West Bank. There were very few restrictions. Occasionally, when there was a security incident, there would be a curfew imposed and then we would have to talk our way through the curfew or else have to wait until it was lifted. We traveled very freely.

Q: How heavy at that particular time did you find the handling of the Israelis on the West Bank?

HULL: It was fairly heavy. Certainly they were watching the security situation very carefully, and they were also expropriating considerable amounts of lands for settlements. They had a choke hold on the economy so it was a rather heavy-handed occupation.

Q: You spoke of expropriating lands, I have heard stories either losing records or cooking up records or something. In other words, land deeds going back to Ottoman times weren't recognized. Was there a lot of, you might say legal hanky panky going on?

HULL: There were many categories of land. The Israelis almost automatically of course, claimed and disposed of any state land, land that had been controlled by the Jordanian government. There was also land where Palestinians had legal deeds to it which on occasion was expropriated. The vast majority of the land had been Palestinian hands for generations, but there was no legal title. The British had begun to register some of this land, I don't think they had gotten very far. So

there was a great deal of traditional land ownership and that gave the Israelis a certain area in which to act in the fashion they wanted to act.

Q: Did you find checkpoints and as an ex-enlisted man myself, I know the guy who ends up on the checkpoint, particularly at night, is not the best soldier. And particularly you have a citizen military and I was wondering if there were problems with the troops who were doing the guarding?

HULL: It could get very sticky but, of course, our cars were labeled CC (consular corps) so we were advertising our status and our mission. But depending on the circumstance or the individual on duty, it could be a bigger or lesser problem. A good tactic was to take one of the Israelis who was driving for the consulate. I remember David Pinto in particular. He was an Israeli, he'd served in the military, he knew the mentality, he knew Hebrew, and he could talk his way through almost any checkpoint. That was often your strongest ally.

Q: Were you able to go to villages and talk to the various leaders there?

HULL: Yes, because I had Arabic it was quite easy for me. Our responsibility was to get out and report back to Washington on what was going on.

Q: You were there during the Camp David process? When Carter came in what was the feeling at first about Carter?

HULL: Well, early in his administration, Carter made a statement in favor of a Palestinian homeland which echoed in some ways the Balfour Declaration of 1917. That had a very positive echo in the West Bank. There was a feeling that this was a new administration that was serious about dealing with the problem. And then we watched the painful negotiations taking place to try to reconvene the Geneva Conference which were running afoul of such questions as Palestinian representation and how the Geneva Conference would be structured.

Soon after I arrived in Jerusalem, a sea change occurred. I mentioned the Palestinian elections, but you had Israeli elections and Begin became prime minister. This brought Likud to power for the first time, and of course, Likud's attitude toward the occupied territories, especially the West Bank, was radically different from the Labor position. That side of the equation became much more difficult to work. We could follow from Jerusalem the efforts being made by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and people like Assistant Secretary Hal Saunders and Special Mideast Envoy Roy Atherton to get the Geneva Conference reconvened. There was interest in the new mayors, whether they would step up and agree to represent the Palestinians which they refused to do, referring back to the Rabat Summit decision that the PLO was the sole legitimate spokesman of the Palestinian people. The process ground on until President Sadat in Egypt alarmed the Americans by concluding that President Carter needed help and would not get there on his own, and announced that he was willing to go anywhere including Jerusalem in the cause of peace. We listened to this with disbelief; we couldn't imagine that Sadat really meant what he said.

Q: Sadat at that time was still considered somewhat of a lightweight, wasn't he?

HULL: Well, I think after the 1973 War, people were no longer under-estimating this fellow. Anyway, we had Sadat's offer and, of course, this had not come in a vacuum. Israeli Foreign Minister Dyan had been meeting with Sadat's National Security Advisor Tuhami in Morocco. These were secret contacts between the Israelis and the Egyptians about which we knew nothing at the time. With alacrity, Menachem Begin issued the invitation to President Sadat to come to Jerusalem. They were communicating through the consulate because the Egyptians had no embassy in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv and the Israelis had no embassy in Cairo so we were playing a mediatory role.

I still recall one evening I was called in because we had received a cable from our embassy in Cairo which contained President Sadat's acceptance of Begin's invitation to visit Jerusalem. Since I was the junior officer I was the logical person to be the postman and the message was given to me. Menachem Begin was speaking that evening at a large assembly hall in Jerusalem, and I was tasked to take the message to that convention hall and to wait for Prime Minister Begin to finish his speech and then to deliver to him President Sadat's acceptance of his invitation. I thought that was a pretty cool thing for a young officer.

We tracked the Sadat visit very carefully when he came to Jerusalem and, like others, watched on TV as he descended the steps of the airplane and shook hands with Begin and embraced former Prime Minister Golda Meir, listened to his speech in the Knesset, which struck us as very orthodox in terms of Arab politics. Perhaps the most important thing we were meant to do was to get Palestinian reaction to the whole thing. The reaction within the West Bank and East Jerusalem was relatively favorable. Sadat had said the right things, he was still esteemed for what he had accomplished in the 1973 War. It was really only after the PLO weighed in from Beirut excoriating Sadat that public opinion in the West Bank shifted against the visit and against Sadat.

Q: At the beginning of this process from the Consulate General's point of view was the PLO in Beirut considered an intransigent group? Not only did you have instructions we couldn't work with them, but did you feel that their policy or mind set was such that they were probably were undalable with?

HULL: I don't think we necessarily thought that. I think given our parochial perspective we thought that there were good minds, good people in the West Bank and East Jerusalem whose views should count. After all these were the people living under the occupation itself, they were still inside, they couldn't get around to conferences or attend U.N. sessions and some of the other prerogatives of the PLO leadership. I think we, at least I, felt their views deserved to be heard and appreciated.

Q: What were your relations with the embassy in Tel Aviv? Did you go down there? Was there a lot of consultation or not from your part?

HULL: At the top there were regular consultations between Mike Newlin and Sam Lewis, and I think they worked very hard at maintaining that relationship. I personally did not do as much as I should have to cultivate relations with the embassy. I think that I, as a young man, was jealous of the independence of the consulate and resented any possible infringements by the embassy. And

I think the relationships grew quite testy over time as we would be reporting things that made life uncomfortable for the embassy. So it was a strained relationship at my level.

Q: Part of it I think, would be just the normal thing. Here you are the political officer in Jerusalem and you go to Tel Aviv you are a very small fish in a much bigger pond, aren't you?

HULL: It wasn't so much personal prestige or status. It was that we were living in a schizophrenic world. There was very little common ground between the way the Palestinians saw things and the way Israelis saw things. I think, naturally, we took on some of the perceptions of the people we were dealing with primarily. That meant that naturally there would be a divide between the way the embassy would view events and the way the consulate would view events. I think I needed and others needed to make more effort to bridge that divide.

Q: How were relations with the embassy in Amman?

HULL: Cordial.

Q: How was King Hussein regarded on the West Bank?

HULL: With suspicion. The Hashemites after 1948 had moved in and annexed the West Bank and their rule over the West Bank had been heavy-handed in many ways. They'd been resented. Of course, the West Bankers, most of them were Jordanian citizens and they had to be careful about how they conducted themselves, but there was no love lost between West Bank Palestinians and the King.

Q: So the Camp David process started – we are talking about after Sadat's dramatic trip to Jerusalem. How did things work out?

HULL: Well, initially, the United States took a step back from the process, because Sadat had acted to a large extent unilaterally and this of course, had derailed our preferred course which was to Geneva. I think Washington decided we needed to step back and see what the Israelis and the Egyptians could accomplish on their own. Not much was the answer. When the summit occurred between Begin and Sadat at Ismailia, it became very apparent that the two sides left to themselves would get nowhere, and therefore Carter and his team re-engaged and finally got the parties to Camp David. I think from my perspective it seemed like very impressive diplomacy at Camp David. The Sinai was settled relatively easily, although the settlements were a significant issue. The real blood was spilled over what happened to the West Bank and Gaza, because that's what Begin did not want to give on and where Sadat needed something to maintain his position in the Arab world. Of course, what we did was we took Begin's suggestion of autonomy for the residents of the West Bank and Gaza, and we tried to push that as far as possible towards an interim arrangement of self-government which would then be followed by negotiations of the final status.

When I first read the Camp David Accords, I thought from a Palestinian point of view, it was thin gruel. After all the Egyptians had gotten virtually all of Sinai back, recovered the oil fields, the settlements would be uprooted. The Palestinians got what might look like a bowl of porridge,

but the Department made a concerted effort to sell the Camp David Accords. Hal Saunders came out to Jerusalem, and we arranged a series of meetings between Hal and some of the best of the mayors, including Fahd Qawasmi and Mohammed Milhem. Hal made the rounds, or perhaps they came to Jerusalem, I'm not clear, and he made a very good pitch as Hal was always able to do. And again, as with Sadat's speech, the initial reaction from the Palestinians was interest. They didn't rule it out, but predictably in fairly short order the PLO came online from Beirut denouncing the agreements, denouncing the self-government proposal, and then we found our interlocutors scurrying behind the PLO's position, and we could never get self-government off the ground.

Q: What about visiting groups? Israel could almost convene the Congress there at one time or another. How much did they peel off over your place?

HULL: We saw a significant number of Congressmen who would want to hear both sides of the story, and we would arrange meetings for them. We benefited from that traffic.

Q: Every time there was a primary in the state of New York, every presidential candidate, practically, has to say they are going to move the embassy to Jerusalem, and it never happens but it is sort of the ritual. How much did you think of this as an issue?

HULL: It was constant. There was constant pressure from the Congress to do something. We would, of course, hope that the Department would hold the line, as they did largely.

Q: Did you find yourself being pushed in a corner by Congress people who, you know, at least at that time the Arab group was nothing compared to Jewish groups and particularly Jewish political contributions were extremely important to a significant number of Congress people, so were you sort of considered the anti-Semitic Arab lovers or something? Was this a problem with Congress?

HULL: I think Congress, the engaged members, were aware of what the consulate was doing and were uncomfortable with what the consulate was doing so there was a constant tension in that regard. We did get some sympathetic visitors. We were aware of Representative Paul Finley, who was sympathetic to the Palestinian perspective. We were visited by Senator Paul Simon from Illinois, who was very interested in hearing both sides of the story. There were exceptions, but generally we found Congressional attention more critical of us than otherwise.

Q: How well did you feel you were backed by the State Department?

HULL: I think we were backed very well. I think the NEA Bureau and the leadership of Hal Saunders, Roy Atherton by then I think had moved on and was the special envoy, and even in the White House Bill Quandt was the senior director. I think they were very serious, professional and fair-minded people. I never really doubted the Department's position.

Q: What about other countries? Did they have representation on the West Bank?

HULL: Yes. There are a significant number of European countries which have consulates similar

to ours: the British, the French, the Spanish, the Turks have a consulate there and the Greeks have a consulate there, so we had our own little consular corps.

Q: Did they play much of a role from your perspective?

HULL: They were active, they were interested. It was a very high profile issue. The British, of course, had the legacy of the Mandate and a special position therefore. Most of the consulates were active and interested.

Q: In the area that you had responsibility for, were there many holy sites?

HULL: Oh, yes. The Haram Sharif or, as it is known to Jews, the Temple Mount is in East Jerusalem. There were sites in Hebron, notably the Mosque of Abraham where the prophet is buried as is Sarah and other patriarchs. There's Rachel's Tomb, which is on the outskirts of Bethlehem. There was Joseph's purported tomb up in Nablus. The West Bank had many sites of religious significance.

Q: Did these concern you all?

HULL: Oh, yes. They were flashpoints. In Hebron you'd have regular incidents at the Patriarchs' Tomb and the other sites as well.

Q: When you were there, were there any of these Israeli or Jewish fanatics trying to do things at the wrong place?

HULL: Yes. It happened not infrequently in Hebron, and also in the Haram Sharif area. There were significant challenges.

Q: Did that get you involved?

HULL: Well, if there was violence and casualties, it would be reportable. We would try to keep track and try to figure out how the incident occurred, who was responsible, and yes, that was part of our mandate.

Q: Did you have sort of well-meaning Christians coming to see Bethlehem and the holy spots and being in the wrong place at the wrong time?

HULL: A significant percentage of the Palestinians were Christians. Bethlehem is a Christian Palestinian town. The mayor was a Christian. And Ramallah was primarily a Christian town. First of all, you had Christians among the Palestinians. You had Americans, also pilgrims coming in, and we would be responsible for their safety and well-being. We would have to warn them if there were dangerous situations, but the situation was not as dangerous as is the case now when terrorism is widespread, there were real no "no-go" zones. At that stage you could still travel virtually anywhere in the West Bank in relative safety.

Q: I would imagine you would get the usual speeches – as a former consular officer – the people

who believed they were Jesus coming back to his hometown and that sort of thing?

HULL: We did have those cases. Since I wasn't doing consular work, I really didn't interact very much with that element but it was certainly there.

Q: By the time you left in 1979 how stood things compared to where you were in 1975?

HULL: From our perspective, they had worsened. The settlement activity had expanded in a major way, and the political process had come to pretty much of a dead end after Camp David. The hope that had come with the election of the mayors in 1975 and the new blood, with the intense Carter negotiating efforts early in his administration, all of those promises had not really produced change. We left feeling that times would be tougher.

Q: Did a significant other develop during this period of time?

HULL: A very significant other developed. My wife, Amal, is a Palestinian. She was the director of the Islamic Museum in the Haram Sharif. She had been an International Visitor (IV) grantee, and therefore was on the consulate's list of contacts, and we had met at one of my welcome parties. I had with great relish recounted to her my experience in the Peace Corps living in Mahdia, the capital of the Fatimite Dynasty, an account which she found rather quaint. Over time our relationship became serious, and we married in 1978. It so happened that Vice President Mondale decided to visit Jerusalem on that day. My boss, Michael Newman, was always a great gentleman and gave me the day off.

Q: Did this cause any problems, having a Palestinian wife?

HULL: I think it raised many eyebrows. The Department handled it very well indeed. Michael Newlin had married a Czech national during the Cold War when Czechoslovakia was communist. He had had a similar personal experience, and that made him sympathetic to my experience. But the Israelis found it puzzling. When we went on our honeymoon, we arrived at the Ben Gurion Airport with one suitcase. They looked at my American diplomatic passport, and they looked at her Israeli-issued laissez passer identifying her as Palestinian, and they wanted to know to whom the suitcase belonged because if it was a diplomat's suitcase it would get cursory treatment, but if it was a Palestinian suitcase it would get very thorough treatment indeed. We told them that it was shared which produced a quandary. It was pretty clear that we made an impression. When we arrived back a week later and went through the processing, our passports were requested for processing and the official took one look and said, "Oh, yes, we've heard of this case." It was somewhat unusual and took some delicate handling.

Q: Since essentially you were reporting things that the Israelis rather not be reported, was the fact that you were married to a Palestinian used against you in the newspapers or anything like that? Did you ever feel any pressure of this nature?

HULL: No, this was 1978. No, actually, I think the pressure predated it and postdated it. Perhaps unusually, I don't think it was ever cited as a factor.

MICHAEL NEWLIN
Consul General
Jerusalem (1975-1980)

Ambassador Michael Newlin was born in North Carolina in 1929. He received both his bachelor's degree and master's degree from Harvard University in 1949 and 1951, respectively. His career has included positions in Frankfurt, Oslo, Paris, Brussels, Leopoldville/Kinshasa, Jerusalem, Vienna, and an ambassadorship to Algeria. Ambassador Newlin was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on October 10, 1997.

Q: So you went to Jerusalem in what is always an interesting, but controversial post, with the Israeli government fairly well entrenched in Jerusalem and yet surrounded by the masses of Arabs. It was a challenging assignment. Did you have a large staff?

NEWLIN: No. The staff was quite small. Certainly on the political side, we had just myself and the Deputy Consul General, and one Political Officer. We had a fairly large Consular operation, issuing visas and passports.

Q: You were divided into two offices?

NEWLIN: Yes, we were. The Consulate General is located in an Israeli neighborhood even though the building is an old Arab one. The Consular operation was over on Nablus Road, over on the other side of town, on what was then known as the Arab side. These terms, of course, were rejected by the Palestinians and the Israelis, but this reflected the composition of the neighborhoods.

Q: What were your relations with the Embassy?

NEWLIN: It depended with whom you talked. I managed to, I think, get along reasonably well with Mac Toon, a difficult and opinionated individual, who had his own problems I guess while he was Ambassador to Israel. In my first interview with him in Washington before I went out, he made it quite clear that he didn't agree that the Consulate General should be an independent post; it should be a constituent post. I pointed out that this policy went back to the founding of Israel. The status of Jerusalem should be determined at the ultimate peace negotiations. He tried his best to get Jerusalem under him, but it didn't work. But we got along very well. I will say for the record that thanks to DCM Tom Dunnigan, we had very, very good relations not only with Tom, but with Blackwill, the Political Counselor. I think we worked albeit independently but in a coordinated effort to achieve U.S. objectives in the area.

Q: Thank you very much for the commercial, but it's true, Mike. I know we had good relations there.

NEWLIN: That was thanks to people like you and Blackwill and the others. We always

welcomed people to come up and meet with us at the Consulate General and whenever I was invited, I always went down to the Embassy. Historically, this was not always the case. There were times when the Ambassador and the Consulate General didn't even speak. I did not feel that that was the kind of relationship one should have at Foreign Service posts.

Q: No. And I will say one thing for Mac Toon, my Ambassador. He treated everyone the same. (Laughter)

NEWLIN: And, bless his heart, he is alleged to have taken an initiative without mentioning it to me, and for getting a Presidential letter from Carter telling the Israelis to stop settlements to help peace prospects. It was all secret. He handed it over to Rabin and Rabin said, "I can't accept this. The government would fall." (Laughter) So he took the letter back. This shows that his heart was in the right place.

Q: Yes. Absolutely. It always was. Now, what were your relations with the Israelis?

NEWLIN: Minimal. I had Israeli friends, of course, from my years in New York, where we worked very, very closely with the Israelis on anything to deal with the Middle East. Tekoah, Eppie Evron, Cahana and some of the others. My commission as Consul General to Jerusalem was signed by Kissinger. The Department noted there was no chief of state to present it to for an exequatur. If anyone, it would have been to Teddy Kolley, the Mayor, who was a wonderful, wonderful person. I had very good relations with him and his staff. Always the inevitable problems would come up. We always managed to find a solution. I wound up being a guide for high ranking officials who naturally wanted to visit the sites in the Old City. Such visitors were supposed to go under my auspices rather than Israeli.

Q: Several of the Israeli officials mentioned to me that they would like to see the Consulate General closed.

NEWLIN: Sure. Sure.

Q: I tried to point out that we were going to keep it open. They never pushed very hard. Finally, what were your relations with the Palestinians?

NEWLIN: We were really on the political side, accredited to the Palestinians in Jerusalem and the Left Bank. Due to an historic anomaly, we were not accredited to Gaza. It would have made sense to have us accredited there as well, though I had a very good relationship with the Gaza leaders. Of course, during this time no American officials were permitted to have contacts with the PLO. While a majority of the Palestinians supported the PLO, none admitted to PLO membership since if they did, they would be deported or jailed.

I arrived in Jerusalem a year after there had been probably the only free and fair elections held in the Arab world in the Left Bank. The Israelis let this go forward and they respected the results. Therefore, I had an elected leadership in the Mayors of all the towns. They were all very, very capable, moderate people. They were trying to do their best under very difficult circumstances of Israeli military occupation and the inevitable problems of trying to rule a large population--a

young population. I made regular visits to the West Bank mayors and other notables; sometimes I met at their offices and sometimes met in their homes. I did most of my political reporting that way.

Q: Could you intervene with the Arabs?

NEWLIN: Yes. Some of the Arabs in East Jerusalem would not come to the Consulate General, but I would have a chance to meet with them. This all changed, of course, after Camp David, when they would come. Not only the West Bank mayors but the Gaza leaders too.

Q: You were there, of course. You were in Jerusalem at the time of Camp David. And also during Sadat's visit.

NEWLIN: We were there for Sadat's visit. It was one of the great experiences of my Foreign Service career. Indisputably an historic event.

Q: Would you like to say a word or two about that?

NEWLIN: The Consulate General played a minor role. We provided secretarial and other assistance to the Egyptian delegation right around the corner at the King David Hotel. We typed the English version of Sadat's speech for the Knesset. I took my daughter, who was a teenager at that time, over to the King David Hotel. I said, "In a few minutes, through that door will walk the President of Egypt and the Prime Minister of Israel. (I went on and on.) You'll want to remember this."

Q: An historic first.

NEWLIN: An historic first.

Q: What was the effect on the Consulate General of the Camp David agreements?

NEWLIN: I was called up by Dick Viets, who was then the DCM in Tel Aviv. He said, "Go turn on your television set, Mike, early in the morning. You will see a broadcast from the East Wing." When I heard this, I thought it was too good to be true. When Jimmy Carter said, in effect, that during the negotiations for the final status, there will be a moratorium on settlements, I said, "This is really something. This is more than just a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. It is laying the foundation for a permanent Arab-Israeli peace." Carter repeated his statement on settlements the next day in his statement to Congress. In New York, two days later Begin held a backgrounder for Israeli journalists, he was asked about this. Begin said, "Do you think that I, a member of the Likud, would ever agree to a freeze on settlements?"

I immediately called up Dick Viets in Tel Aviv. He had noted the contradictory statements and said he would ask Moshe Dyan, the Foreign Minister, about this when he met him at the airport on his return from New York. Dyan told Viets that there was some misunderstanding and that he would sort it out when Begin returned a few days later. Of course, that never happened and Camp David became a bilateral peace which resulted in Israeli withdrawal from Sinai.

At any rate, I didn't wait for instructions from Washington. I got in a car and I went off on my West Bank rounds, telling the Palestinian leaders and mayors and notables that, "This is your chance. If you want to bring about an end to occupation, you will accept it." They all got a little cagey and said you'd have to bring the PLO in, what would Arafat say, and were we consulting Arafat? We weren't. But I made a strong pitch for them seizing the opportunity for negotiations offered by the Camp David agreement.

Q: Those were exciting periods, weren't they? Were you inundated from visitors from State, Congressmen?

NEWLIN: Oh, yes. That was one of the byproducts. We had the sitting President, Jimmy Carter, was there once. We had former President Ford, we had Senators so, as I say, after Camp David we made a strong pitch. This was followed up by high-level people from the Department such as Hal Saunders coming out and meeting with the Palestinians, people from Gaza would come to the Consul General as well as people from the West Bank and we made a very hard sell, saying, "This is your chance to start getting rid of the occupation or ameliorating the situation now. Are you going to take this, or do we go back and tell the President that you're not?" They would take evasive action, basically because the PLO--Arafat--were not involved and they didn't feel they could do this on their own. It was asking really too much of them to take this on since they were under Israeli occupation. It was unfortunate. It was particularly unfortunate that the understanding that Carter tried to impose of a freeze in settlements did not succeed. Settlements remain a major hurdle. It was still a major achievement...firmed up peace between Egypt and Israel, and things of that nature.

Q: What do you feel about the question of moving our Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem?

NEWLIN: I think that shouldn't be done until we have, in effect, an overall peace agreement. Congress, for political reasons, keeps opposing that. I hope the Administration...That's just one other erosion of our position.

Q: Finally, do you feel that your policy input had any effect in Washington?

NEWLIN: Yes. I remember sending off a telegram once concerning the West Bank and at the end where you could have a comment, I fudged in making the comment by also making a policy suggestion--a relatively minor one--but a policy suggestion. I remember about two days later I was called up, and David Korn said, "Your suggestion has been approved." I said, "What? What?" They said, "Yes, your telegram came out of the Oval Office. In the margin of the comment was, 'Okay. JC.'" I said, "You don't mean to tell me that the President reads telegrams from Jerusalem?" They said, "He reads most of the telegrams you send." (Laughter)

I am happy that the potential of the Consul General has now been realized. Ed Abington has played an active role in reviving the peace process and has shuttled between Jerusalem and Gaza conveying our views to Arafat.

MICHAEL G. ANDERSON
Israeli Arab Affairs
Washington, DC (1976-1978)

Michael Anderson was born and raised in Illinois and educated at the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, Mr. Anderson became a European specialist, serving at posts in Poland and Italy and on the Poland desk at the State Department in Washington. Mr. Anderson also had a tour as Political Officer in Islamabad, Pakistan. Other assignments concerned Arab-Israel affairs, Population and Refugee matters and Peacekeeping and Humanitarian affairs. Mr. Anderson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

ANDERSON: Back to Washington and did two years in Israeli-Arab affairs, IAI.

Q: 1976 to 1978 you were in the Arab Israeli desk?

ANDERSON: That's right.

Q: Tell me, who was the assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs at that time?

ANDERSON: Roy Atherton.

Q: What slice of the pie did you have on Arab Israeli affairs? Affair seems to be almost the wrong term; Arab Israeli fight or whatever.

ANDERSON: Well, actually I think it was called Israeli Arab. Israeli because we were covering both the State of Israel and the areas that were taken in the 1967 war and that would be West Bank and Gaza. My portfolio there, I was the junior officer of the group. There were probably six people on that desk including the director and deputy director and I did some programs that AID had for assistance to the Arab population in the West Bank and Gaza. We were trying to sponsor scholarships, assistance to Bethlehem University and Birzeit University. A few other things like that and so I worked a lot with AID. I worked with some people, nobody at the Israeli embassy and really nobody in the Palestinian community but this was AID. I think AID had more contacts with the Embassy. We were supposedly giving the policy directions to AID for these various programs.

Q: How would you characterize the status of Palestinian Israeli affairs at this time when you came in 1976?

ANDERSON: I don't recall that we had a terrorism problem or anything like that. The security situation from the Israeli point of view was good. I remember making a trip out there and went to Gaza, went to the West Bank and of course never had any problems with any kind of security. So that was certainly a more positive aspect of the relationship than we have today. The thing that I recall most from that two year period was that the Begin government which came to power in

1977 was the first time the Likud got power in Israel and I remember that it was quite a shock to us when that happened. It had followed on from the Rabin government, the Rabin government fell over Leah Rabin's bank account in Washington when Rabin was ambassador here. After he left there was a big expose about how she had kept an illegal bank account here with foreign currency in it for her shopping trips or whatever and his government resigned and there were elections and lo and behold the Likud with Begin at the head became the ruling party. They were the largest party and for the first time we had a government led by a man who, from many points of view, was viewed as a kind of extremist. This was our main concern. What to do about that.

Q: Did that have any impact on your type of work?

ANDERSON: I don't recall that it did, no. Other than the fact that we had a flurry of visits at that time and I was pulled away from doing that sort of administrative work on those programs to do more administrative work when Dayan came or Begin came. We had just a very lot of high level visits at that time.

Q: Did you feel that the Arab Israeli, particularly on the Israeli side, our desk was sort of trying to figure out who this guy Begin was? They knew who he was but what did this mean. Was this a matter of intense discussion?

ANDERSON: It was, yeah, you know I recall that people were shocked as I say. I know our ambassador out there, I believe it was Sam Lewis at the time, whether he was there or he went out subsequently. I believe he was already there. He was chagrined. He definitely was not happy with this at all. It was of course 1977, the Carter administration in Washington. We were somewhat looking for a peaceful kind of settlement with things and it looked like this was going to accentuate the settlements policy taking over the West Bank and so on. Eretz Israel or whatever it was called. I mean that was a concern. We did have Begin over for state visit and everybody, I remember going to Andrews Air Force Base with all of the other administration greeters. Cyrus Vance was out there to greet him when he got off the plane. So I mean we were looking to try and form a relationship with this guy and I don't think we had much in the way of contact with the Likud at a high level up to that point because we were hoping, I guess, that we wouldn't have to deal with it. But as it turned out of course, with Camp David of course following on after that meant that somehow or another the extremist people worked better than anything else.

Q: You were there until 1978 so Camp David hadn't started at that point?

ANDERSON: I'm trying to remember whether I was still on the desk when Sadat went to Israel. I can't remember the exact date. Right after that I was in the mid-level course. I was on to another assignment and I was following it on TV and so forth.

Q: Did you get a feeling because you were sort of in the AID side of what we were doing to help the Palestinian? Were people talking within the NEA about the lack of real assistance that was coming from the Arab countries? My impression is that there is a lot of using Israeli occupation as a political issue but there wasn't much attempt on the part of the Saudis or the Egyptians as something to really help the people in Gaza or Palestine to turn into them into viable countries.

ANDERSON: You're right and I don't believe there was much money flowing in. More likely it was the Palestinian population in the West Bank especially going to places like Jordan, Kuwait, elsewhere to work and then sending the money back home. There wasn't too much in the way of any assistance. I don't know whether the Israelis would have supported that but you knew there was money coming in because the level of housing construction on the West Bank was quite, to me, striking when I went through there. I just had that one trip. I was out in Israel itself, the West Bank and Gaza maybe for a week. I just recall as we drove through the West Bank that I was struck by the number of houses being built.

Q: These were Palestinian houses?

ANDERSON: Yeah, this was Palestinian housing and so I assumed that was money being earned by workers in Israel itself, that is to say Palestinians at that point were working in Israel and others were perhaps sending money back from work that they had done elsewhere in the Arab world. It looked pretty prosperous really. There was not any sense there of economic crisis by any means. Gaza on the other hand was a classic kind of post-colonial syndrome or something. Nothing had been done. What you saw there is what the British put up until 1948. You didn't get the impression that the Egyptians during their period of control had done anything. It basically looked the same as it had always been.

Q: Did you feel at all the impact of the Jewish lobby in the work you were doing or talking to other people or was this much of a factor? Jewish lobby in the United States, APAC in other words.

ANDERSON: Not too much. I mean they were looking over our shoulder because obviously AID assistance to the Palestinians was not a popular cause with the Jewish lobby. They allowed it to go forward. The government of Israel also had to consent to anything we were doing there. Birzeit University was looked upon especially as a kind of hot bed, a breeding ground of radicalism. So I don't recall having had too much direct contact with any of the lobbyist group, APAC included. I should say that I eventually met and married a girl from the Israeli Embassy so I became pretty cozy with a lot of Israelis socially afterwards but while I was on the job I don't have too much feel for that.

Q: When did you meet your wife? Was that during this period or not?

ANDERSON: Yes, right after I joined the desk. In the fall of 1976 I had contact with the embassy by phone all the time. I got to talking with the assistant economic consular there and that was Tami Goldblum and we had worked, not on the program for the West Bank at all, although she worked, the AID program was really kind of a big money transfer to the Israeli government to, still is I guess to the tune of over a billion dollars a year. It's called budget support. So their economic office in Washington was very close to AID since that was the conduit through which American aid to Israel, government aid, was being sent. We worked with some of the same people in the AID office so I got to know her in that way.

Q: What was her background? I think it's interesting you know.

ANDERSON: She was born in Israel, a Sabra. Her parents were Polish Jews who both survived the Holocaust and ended up in 1951 immigrating to Israel. Her father was an engineer, a well educated man, civil engineer and worked on the aqueducts from the Sea of Galilee into the southern part of Israel. She went to Tel Aviv University, majored in mathematics and then before she graduated, I guess she was a junior, she had an offer from a friend of hers, somebody she had met in the army, because right after high school she spent two years in the army and I believe she was in army intelligence; so one of the people she had known from the army who was back from his job in Washington at the embassy, mentioned to her at a get together that they were really looking for somebody, they needed a secretary, administrative aide and would you be interested and she said sure. You know Israelis love to travel and this was a chance to travel at government expense so she snapped it up even though she had only one more year to go before she got her degree. I think she came in about October 1974. When I met her she had been in the U.S. almost two years.

Q: Did you get married then or when?

ANDERSON: We got married in October 1977. She of course had to resign her job in the embassy.

OWEN W. ROBERTS
Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1976-1979)

Ambassador Owen W. Roberts was born in Oklahoma in 1924. He received his A.B. from Princeton University and his M.I.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army. Ambassador Roberts entered the Foreign Service in 1955, serving in Egypt, the Congo, Nigeria, Upper Volta, Ethiopia, Gambia, Seychelles, Chad, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

ROBERTS: In June of '76 I went off to be deputy director of the Sinai Field Mission. Kissinger had managed to stop the Israelis before they completely crushed the Egyptians around the city of Isma'iliya on the Canal. With a great deal of difficulty, he also got United Nations troops inserted to make the Israelis respect the cease fire and initiated a very intelligent peace-monitoring system for the Sinai desert. It basically set up a north to south empty zone about five miles wide and 85 miles long, with five more miles of limited-force zones on either side of it. This grid, as peace developed, would then slowly be shifted eastward across the Sinai until it reached the 1967 frontier between Egypt and Israel. The first of those demarcations, in which the U.S. Sinai Field Mission (SFM) was located, divided the Sinai north-south about 30 miles east of the Canal. The SFM was set in the empty zone north east of Isma'iliya in a strategic, rocky, mesa-like area through which ran the two main cross Sinai routes.

The particular arrangements for the U.S. managed SFM were accepted by both sides, who

insisted that the United Nations alone wasn't competent enough to provide good peacekeeping. They wanted the United States to be responsible within the U.N. zone for the most critical area. This was the Mitla and Gidi passes, through which all significant traffic passed, whether they were caravans as in the old days, or whether they were the tank columns from Israel and Egypt that variously attacked each other. The SFM was given the job of monitoring the peacekeeping program in a 15 by 20 mile area of mesas, wadis, and rolling sand dunes.

Given that the UN was to have about 6,000 men in the peacekeeping zone, I wondered at first how significant our role, with 150 people, would be. I didn't have to be in the field very long to find out that 6,000 U.N. troops, spread along 15 by 85 miles of desert, did not actually amount to very much surveillance of the actual territory. The UN was supposed to assure that absolutely no one was in the neutral zone and that in the limited-force zones on either side there were only the agreed, limited number of tanks, artillery pieces, and military personnel. The U.N. established widely scattered outposts of five to ten men, mostly out of sight of each other. A very loose network indeed, particularly as they seldom patrolled. During nighttime, about ten hours of every day, these outposts could not see and were wholly ineffective. Then, during the day, there were sand storms and heat that limited visibility. While parts of this Sinai area consisted of open flat stretches that you could see over clearly with binoculars, other parts included a lot of gullies, big mesas, semi-mountains, and rolling sand dunes, that made monitoring very difficult. The UN would have needed maybe ten times as many people to watch over their area even adequately with its traditional outpost system. The Egyptians and Israelis were right: the UN system as designed could not assure the two parties that arrangements were fully respected. Finally, UN execution, given its political-bureaucratic operations, has always been inherently very fallible.

So I've come to think that the U.N. is a marvelous institution to discuss international issues and to authorize peacekeeping activities. This mandate is the first essential step. But a UN mission, by its multi-national composition, is inept at the next stage, the operations of peacekeeping. For instance, in the Sinai, the UN mission consisted of five different national military units as monitors: Swedes, Indonesians, Ghanaians, Nepalese and Finns. There was also a Canadian administrative support group and a Polish road repair unit.

Q: Any Irish?

ROBERTS: No. The Irish occasionally send units, but mostly they send individuals, often for staff functions.

These five national military units varied tremendously in capability. In some, all the enlisted staff and officers were college or high school graduates. In others, the average educational level might have been fourth grade. Some had all necessary equipment, including vehicles and communications. Others had only sidearms, if that. Some units could communicate with their outposts by radio; others only visited them to bring a daily ration. None of these military units could communicate with each other. Often, most of them could not reach their local UN headquarters near Isma'iliya by phone line or radio. This abysmal level of competence was and is still common for UN operations. It does not represent serious operations but rather a costly farce. UN "peacekeeping" in the Sinai was reduced largely to being a "presence." That was and is totally unacceptable for serious situations. The UN's technical capability needs major

overhaul.

The Sinai Field Mission (SFM) thus indeed had a serious assignment in supplementing the UN in monitoring effectively the terms of the demilitarized zone agreement. "Effectively" meant in fact to a level satisfying mutual Israeli-Egyptian suspicions. As such suspicions of outright flouting, cheating, or manipulation were very intense, the monitoring standard had to be extremely high. Even after two years of steadily improving our capability, and strong assertion of our role, I don't believe we earned their full trust, but we did establish ourselves as a serious element in the situation and helped move the system on to its final multi-national non-UN, monitoring stage at the 1967 frontier.

The Sinai agreement fortunately was conceptually very sound. It did not make the UN or the SFM responsible for such a sensitive role as providing the two antagonists warning of military threats or maneuvers. Rather, it set up an elaborate system whereby both Israel and Egypt could watch for themselves what the other was doing in the monitored zones and beyond. The UN and US roles were rather to monitor the two countries' activities to assure they were in compliance with the agreement. If not, a violation was reported to all parties. Warning of a military threat is much too vital a concern to entrust to any third party. Even our monitoring of the terms of the agreement was barely acceptable to both parties.

In order to watch each other, both were authorized to fly up and down the neutral and demilitarized zones on alternate days and take any pictures they wished. They could only come down to, we'll say, 5,000 feet altitude, and they could choose to fly or not, but they had to stick to their chosen schedules. To supplement the two sides' aerial monitoring, the US had the right to over-fly the same area. We did this about once a week with a Blackbird SR-71 from Cyprus. The US photographs were then promptly distributed to the U.N., and to both sides, so that they could check their results on emptiness of the neutral zone and the number of tents or pieces of equipment or what evidence there might be of activities in the two limited force zones.

Then, on the ground, both sides had combination observation/intercept stations overlooking the other's territory neighboring the zones.

Q: Intercept means a radio intercept.

ROBERTS: Yes, a radio intercept and passive radar station. The Israelis already had one on the Gidi Hills, overlooking the 30 miles of flat sand desert to the Suez Canal. They were allowed to keep it. But the Egyptians didn't have any such post, so the US helped them build one, overlooking the Israeli central Sinai positions. These arrangements gave both sides a fairly good ability to reassure themselves continually that nothing too dangerous was going on in the Sinai.

Our job was simply to see that the rules were followed: that airplanes maintained their height and scheduled days; that no airplanes other than the scheduled ones flew over the demilitarized zones; that the two intelligence stations contained only intercept and observation capabilities; and that no unauthorized persons or vehicles of any type were in our section of the empty neutral zone. The job essentially was that of a referee. We watched for violations and blew the whistle, when justified, by reporting any breach immediately to the Defense Departments of both parties,

to the UN Sinai Headquarters in Jerusalem, and to Washington. We also watched for anything that might be preparations for a major violation, as a military buildup, but we would only report actual violations of the agreement.

What became increasingly obvious was that we had to be a good enough referee to convince two very dubious parties that we in fact could detect all types of infractions. That is something that cannot be mandated; it must be earned in the field.

Monitoring -- refereeing -- the over-flight arrangements of the agreement had not been considered in much detail by the drafters. It was technically difficult and there was little guidance. Capability and procedures had to be built up. This was particularly hard for the UN, given its operational weakness. The five UN military units never agreed on what had happened in the air. Quite often, the units weren't notified that an Israeli or an Egyptian flight was due, and they would report an infraction when in fact it was the scheduled flight. Then an airplane, or several, might come that should not have been in the area and represented violations. The Swedes would report that the plane was an Israeli-made copy of a French Mirage flying at such an altitude and time. The Indonesians would report that, no, it was actually a fixed-wing aircraft, but they agreed on the direction it was going. Then the Ghanaians would report, a day later after their ration run to their outposts, that they had been looking very carefully and nothing had crossed their area. The next unit would say, oh, yes, they'd seen planes but they had not been over the prohibited zones. The Finns might largely agree with the Swedes, but introduce significant variations.

The poor U.N. commander would get all these conflicting observations, received 24 hours or more after an event, and be hard pressed for what to report. He couldn't take the first data to arrive, despite the need for urgent reporting, without affronting the other national units; he couldn't accept one report as probably more accurate than another without exhibiting bias among nationalities; and he could hardly average them out. In practice, the U.N. commander had to wait until all his units reported in, so it might be two or three days before he would have the materials to comment on an airplane infraction. From the Egyptian and the Israeli point of view, this was wholly unacceptable. Plane infractions could be terribly serious, because military jets could get back from the Sinai to either capital in just a few minutes. They needed to know immediately whether or not something unauthorized was flying over the demilitarized zone and if it were dangerous.

Peacekeeping missions frequently require really efficient, high-tech kind of monitoring. Just as war is an extremely tense, technically executed process, so peacekeeping has to be equally fierce and efficient if it's going to handle relations between terribly suspicious people.

To implement the good basic mandate and operational arrangements in the Sinai agreement, the SFM brought in much technical equipment not previously used for peacekeeping. This included several hundred seismic ground sensors, each with a radio reporting unit, that were buried along likely travel routes; infrared sensors set up in wadis and stony areas where seismic sensors could not easily be used; and strain-sensitive cable sensors buried across roads or tracks. These sensors were much like a home security system that detects fiddling with doors or windows and movement within a house. The seismic sensors had been developed for use in Vietnam. They

were adaptations of regular earthquake sensors and were highly reliable. They could detect a tank or heavy vehicle at a mile or more distance, a person within fifty meters, or a rabbit nearby. Their sensitivity could be increased, but then very slight tremors, as created by windblown desert plants tugging at their roots, would activate them.

The sensors were laid out somewhat like a minefield to cover strategic areas. Their layout was plotted on a large map in SFM's operation room with red lights that lit when a sensor was activated. The appearance and advance through the layout of an intruding entity could be immediately spotted and tracked. The sensor fields were also watched over by three SFM outposts, manned to both spot and identify violations 24 hours a day. This system worked as planned, largely because of effective adaptations and fine tuning by Washington and by the contractor personnel (from E-Systems of Dallas, Texas) who handled field administration and technical services. The State Department provided Mission management, international communications, and monitors at the Egyptian and Israeli observation/intercept stations.

Our first major capability problem was augmenting the sensor alarm system with means to identify the cause. The planners had assumed large-scale violations by easily identifiable tanks, attack aircraft, and lots of soldiers. The reality was intrusions by one or more light vehicles, a few persons on foot, or camels moving about with or without riders. We could not report a violation but fail to identify the cause without raising much more alarm than we settled. So we had to check out any alarm with our own staff. Considering what or who might be out there triggering our system, especially at night, was scary and actually dangerous.

To increase our identification capacity, we used the highest power binoculars and the most sensitive night vision scopes available. This helped but was still inadequate. So Washington approved a major technical improvement. We put up towers with remote controlled TV cameras that could scan most sensor layouts. The towers also had big searchlights. The TV cameras worked on both infrared and white light. This not only improved our identification ability but provided a graphic record that could be shown to doubters or to those denying involvement. This steady increase in SFM's monitoring capacity was one of the major reasons for its success.

In military terms, there were no major violations in our area. Both sides wanted the agreement to work. But there were lots of violations of varying seriousness. Even minor ones really counted because as the number of "gotchas" mounted they proved the effectiveness of our peacekeeping system. When I left after two plus years of SFM operations, there had been 71 Israeli violations and two Egyptian ones. The big spread is because the Egyptians and Israelis are such fundamentally different types of people. It shows up particularly at the individual level when ordinary people are in contact with a system. Israelis will hop in a jeep and poke about the desert, disregarding their own instructions, barriers, keep out signs, or even warnings tendered in person. They may be just picnicking or exploring, or deliberately testing the system. The Egyptians don't go walkabout, are not so assertive in the face of restrictions, and are system abiding. If caught out, the Israelis, like good lawyers, deny everything down the line. The Egyptians are more inclined to accept the violation but plead circumstances.

We almost never got the Israelis to admit to a violation. The individuals involved, military staff of various ranks, would report their version to senior local officers. These were loyal first to their

own men and to an international agreement hardly at all. The senior officers' report would go up the Israeli chain of command and disappear into their Defense Ministry. We tried to end-run this process by also reporting through a liaison channel to the Prime Minister's office. While we seldom won an acknowledgment of our violations calls, I believe we built up some credibility within both parties' action offices.

This credibility was evidenced mainly by increasing cooperation among all those out in the desert living with the demilitarized system. First we got to know each other by repeated visits to each others' installations, and eyeballing the equipment on hand. Then we began cooperating a little.

For instance, after about a year of operations, an Israeli major phoned us about nine p.m. An aggressive type from a nearby military unit, he said, " Why haven't you reported, as you should have, the Egyptian intrusion in such and such a place? There are three helicopters right in the empty zone, where they have no right to be. I've already reported to Tel Aviv. We're going to shoot them down if you guys don't get them out of there."

We said, "What?!"

He yelled, "Yes, they are very clearly visible. We checked and they're at such and such a place."

We checked our sensor layout and not a sign was showing of any intrusion. This was particularly significant as a helicopter puts a tremendous pressure on the ground with the beating of its rotors. Much of our sensor board would have been lit. We cross-checked with our outposts. One of them reported, "Oh, yeah, there are some winking red lights way west about where the Suez Canal is, maybe 30 miles from here. The lights go on and off, and they're moving too slow to be fixed-wing. We think they're probably helicopters."

So we called back the major and told him that there were helicopters, all right, but they were 30 miles away, over the Suez Canal, way the hell out of even the Egyptian demilitarized zone. He said, "You're absolutely wrong, and I have asked for further instructions." Now, with further experience and contacts, we phoned J-1, the Israeli intelligence intercept station, which was looking out over the Egyptian demilitarized zone and the Canal. We asked, "Do you guys see some red lights out over the Suez Canal at such and such a place?" They replied, "Yes, we've been watching them for some time."

We then asked: "Would you kindly call Tel Aviv and tell them what you see, because your military camp has reported back that the helicopters are in fact right here in the Sinai demilitarized zone, and they're asking for orders as to what to do about them." J-1 agreed, and a matter that could have led to greater excitement was settled.

Incidentally, the Israeli major was not all that misguided. A light can be seen on a clear night in the desert a very long way. We once got stirred up by a light that appeared to be right at our perimeter fence. After careful triangulation over two days, we finally found it was a light bulb inside a tent at a Ghanaian outpost eight miles away. It "blinked" at us whenever the tent flap was opened.

Q: Was either side really trying to do anything, outside of individual officers or soldiers who were playing games, particularly on the Israeli side? Was there a "testing" problem really?

ROBERTS: There was no effort by either side to upset the overall system, but various situations that arose suggested they would try manipulate it. With many Israelis, if you drew a little line on the sand and said, "Now don't go over this," they'd shake your hand while pushing out a foot to see where exactly a call would be made. Done in a friendly way, but it was testing the system. Equally, there were accidental violations. And once we had deliberate cover-up. We reversed this by stringent enforcement of our violation call. It was perhaps our best handled peacekeeping incident.

We had one SFM State Department officer in a little monitor shack at the entrance for each of the two intelligence stations. An officer from each station was also assigned at each monitor shack to work with the American to coordinate with the intelligence command and its personnel. The two worked together screening everything going in and out to assure that no prohibited, offensive-type weapons went in and that the personnel level remained within the 150 allowed.

Our officers worked rotating shifts at these stations. After weeks and months of living with their counterparts, handling routine matters most of the time, everyone got well acquainted if not downright friendly. At the entrance to the Israeli station, J-1, there was also an Israeli guard post of eight soldiers. Their meals were brought out from the administrative buildings by pickup truck. One morning, our officer walked over to say hello to the driver and he noticed that in the back of the truck, along with some pots of hot food, was a bazooka. This was outlawed. So he said, "Hey, you got a bazooka in there!"

"No, I haven't," said the driver.

"Oh, yes," said our guy, "look at it right there."

"My God," said the Israeli, and he jumped in his truck and drove off.

So our officer phoned in the presence of a bazooka, a clear violation of the Agreement. But the evidence was gone. I was in charge then, as the SFM director, Nick Thorne, was in Jerusalem. I sent our operations director, Jim Shill, over to J-1 to review the matter with our officer and with Colonel Dani, the head of J-1. This was not a time sensitive issue and we could carefully verify the facts before issuing a significant violation. Colonel Dani met with Shill and said: "Yes, there was something in the truck, all right, but it wasn't a bazooka. It was a mock-up thing that we practice with, and it's rather realistic looking." He promised to produce it, which he did in about 20 more minutes. He showed Jim a piece of tubing as large as a bazooka with a plastic guard shield and a handle on it. He added: "Anyone could easily have mistaken it. You know we wouldn't have a bazooka on this place. We all understand that's not allowed."

Jim asked our officer, "Is this what you saw?"

He said, "No, I saw a bazooka. It was in the back of the pickup truck. I had my hand on the side

of the truck; I wasn't four feet away. I know I saw it."

So Jim told the colonel, "I'm sorry. Where is it? You've got to send it back."

And Dani said, "No, this is it."

So we had a standoff. Jim and I reviewed the situation. On the Israeli side was that the mock-up was very realistic; also, had there been a bazooka they'd only had at most 30 minutes to make the mock-up, and we knew Colonel Dani to be a very dedicated, straight officer. On the other hand, Jim knew Dani well and felt Dani had been uncomfortable in presenting the mock-up story. Furthermore, which we had not mentioned to Dani, our man at the J-1 gate was an ex-Marine who had been in Vietnam. There was no way that he wasn't going to know, four feet away, what was a bazooka and what was a mock-up. This was more serious than just the infraction decision. We were also calling the senior Israeli officer a liar which would leave no room for compromise. But it was a violation, so we informed all parties of the bazooka finding (but not the of background discussions). Thorne was informed by phone. He approved and noted we now had to get J-1 to cough up the bazooka as its presence was an ongoing violation and we needed to enforce our call.

I went back to Dani and argued the matter. He said, "That's fine, but you're mistaken. Your guy, I'm very sad to say, is mistaken." When I reported this to Thorne, he said, "All right. One of the things we can do is to cut them off. You close down the station; don't let anyone in or out." This was daring. Under the Agreement, we had authority to assure that the flow of arrivals and departures never resulted in more than the permitted 150 personnel at the station. We had no written authority to stop arrivals and departures per se, but there was nothing saying we could not. Furthermore, there was a practical problem. It was by now noon on a Friday. The Israelis always sent out about 100 staff on eight or more trucks for their Shabbat at home; and an equal number were on their way across the desert to J-1.

But either we took the risk or we let the Israelis get away with flaunting the Agreement and undercutting the US monitoring role. So I phoned Dani and told him we were closing entry and departure at J-1 until he produced the bazooka. We told our officer at the gate to inform the Israeli guards and to stand in the road if necessary. We sent some extra officers as help and witnesses. Then I went to the UN checkpoint on the road entering the Israeli side of the neutral zone and persuaded them to stop the Israeli relief convoy. I pointed out that we had closed J-1 and that if the Israeli military vehicles and personnel stayed in the neutral zone, that would be a violation. They protested that they had no authority to do this. Ultimately, to avoid being responsible for a violation in their area, they agreed to hold up the Israeli convoy pending instructions from H.Q. Jerusalem. As that was likely to be some time coming, we were spared potential Israeli pressure immediately outside J-1.

This worked out in part because we had good relations with all the UN units and personnel. We visited them regularly and they had standing invitations to visit and eat at the SFM. We had excellent food and the most reliable air-conditioning and plumbing for hundreds of miles. We were a much visited oasis. One of the UN checkpoint officers later explained to me that they were sympathetic with our move, and were suspicious of the Israelis in this instance, but as UN

officials they could only follow their own rules. As there was nothing clearly applicable, it had been possible to cooperate while seeking instructions.

The Israelis were hopping mad. The excitable major at the neighboring Israeli army base phoned to say we would open J-1 or he would send out armor and overrun our Mission Headquarters and our J-1 outpost. He did indeed send vehicles as far as the UN checkpoint. But he did not cross the line into the neutral zone. That would have been a blatant violation. We discounted his threat to overrun SFM, but he might well have broken down our flimsy barrier at J-1. It was a dicey moment. As the major was volatile and unpredictable, we took initial steps to execute a frequently practiced hasty evacuation.

Meanwhile we began getting excited calls from further and further up the Israeli military chain of command, up to the HQ of their Southern Command, and finally the Ministry of Defense. Nick Thorne, whom we fortunately could contact frequently, told us to stand fast and to pass any proposals to him to negotiate. He was enjoying it. Originally, he'd sounded a bit doubtful about our violations call. Jim Shill knew him well and suggested that he was generally doubtful about judgments other than his own. So we agreed early on that Jim should drive to Jerusalem and explain things we could not mention on the radio or phone, particularly our assessment of Colonel Dani and the identity of our J-1 watch officer (whose military experience Nick knew personally). Jim made the three plus hour trip to Jerusalem in barely over two.

The Israelis first proposed that we open J-1 and that they would send an inspection group from Southern Command next day to review the situation. Then Tel Aviv said a general from the Ministry would come directly by helicopter. We said, "No" to all proposals and referred them to Nick in Jerusalem. We continued to get a lot of protest from J-1 and from the major. We could see his heavy vehicles at the UN checkpoint barely two miles away.

We were also in regular phone contact with our senior Israeli liaison officer in Jerusalem. He was a regular army officer, a colonel, had been on Peres' staff, and had direct access to the Prime Minister's office. As the tension increased, it behooved us to convince someone outside the immediate military chain of command around us. So we explained to him that our watch officer was an ex-Marine from Vietnam who had used bazookas, had seen it from four feet away, and that there was no way that we're wrong on this. The standoff continued right up to dusk. Then we got a call from the Ministry of Defense in Tel Aviv. It was just a message: "The colonel in charge of J-1 will meet you now at his perimeter now and turn over the bazooka." He did that, we collected it, and turned it over to the UN checkpoint for removal from the Agreement zones.

Much relieved, I invited the Israeli military in the area, including Dani and the major, to have supper with us that night. After dinner was over, and temperatures were somewhat calm, one turned to me and said, "What was all this fuss about, for just a little old bazooka?"

Basically the fuss was about the integrity of the system. We had been able not only to identify an event correctly, but had enforced our finding and buttressed our referee role. Once players in a rough game can intimidate or disregard a referee, his role is much reduced. The same in peacekeeping. I would go further, considering the stakes and costs, and say that if peacekeepers are reduced to being just a presence, they should be withdrawn.

I also think Nick Thorne exercised a lot of courage and was correct in not asking Washington for instructions. He said: "This is our call. It's up to us to make it work. If we report to Washington, they will look at it politically and say, "Hey, you can't do this to the Israelis, we're negotiating something urgent with them. Also, the legal office will say there's nothing in your Agreement mandate that authorizes you to close off J-1 in order to break a deadlock. Furthermore, this should be negotiated; you are threatening disruption of a major international Agreement." All that is eminently reasonable. We were taking a real risk of disrupting the system. But if we let the Israelis get away with it, the system was also disrupted, but less visibly. At the heart of this was that as referee we in SFM were ready to walk off the field if ignored; I'm not sure the Department was willing to risk the operation in order to maintain it. I'm not aware there's ever been a decision on this point.

As for the other parties, we had reported to the United Nations and to the Egyptians that the violation had occurred. Then we followed up with general reports of on-going negotiations with the Israelis about resolving the problem. At the end of the day, we reported that the bazooka had been turned over and the matter was settled. So, for the outside world, there was just a small matter of a bazooka turning up where it shouldn't have been and it was turned over to the UN.

Later, I learned from a senior Israeli staff officer that the issue had gone up to the Prime Minister's office. The Israeli government, however, had negotiated the Agreement and they wanted to keep it alive. The senior political level also did not have quite the military's strong chain of command loyalty. Furthermore, all this was occurring pretty privately on phone and radio so there was less loss of face. Finally, I was chagrined to learn much later that the top Israelis knew the bazooka was there because some illegal weapons had been stockpiled at J-1 before we got there. Just in case the Agreement didn't work out. Security, for Israelis, is too vital to trust to anyone or anything except their own capability.

Q: I take it that the pressure from the Egyptian side was negligible. No problems?

ROBERTS: Very negligible. They were less concerned about territorial security than the Israelis. They had the confidence of thousands of years that they would always be around. They also had a single interest. They wanted the Sinai back. Right away of course; but the process could take time. Everything does. So they were more relaxed about operations out in the field. They did not act first and talk later; we discussed problems with them upon visiting their regional HQ near Isma'iliya and the Defense Ministry in Cairo.

There were some problems with the Egyptian supply of their intelligence station, E-1. Their trucks were in such terrible condition that it took them hours to negotiate the 40 plus miles from the Canal to the station. Then the trucks frequently broke down in the demilitarized zones. Once, several of them could not get up the last steep pitch to E-1 in time to meet the close-down dead line. We closed the E-1 gate, called a violation, and without saying anything over a radio or phone, sent over blankets and hot food for the soldiers who had to sleep overnight in their vehicles.

MICHAEL E. STERNER
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1976-1979)

Ambassador Michael E. Sterner was born in New York in 1920. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University. He served in the U.S. Army prior to joining the Foreign Service in 1951. Ambassador Sterner served in Aden, Beirut, Cairo, Washington, DC, and was ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed in 1990 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: How did Kissinger at this time use the Desk? Or the Country Directorate?

STERNER: It was frustrating. Kissinger really was his own show. It was frustrating for me but if you talked to Joe Sisco who had by this time become Political Under Secretary, and he reminisces accurately about this period, he would admit to at least equal frustration. Kissinger was an exciting guy to work for. I mean he was the man who was getting these agreements done, he knew how to use power, he was a supreme diplomat, he had these Middle Eastern leaders eating out of his hand. At the same time he was maddening because he wouldn't confide in you completely and wouldn't delegate authority on any systematic basis, which maybe a Country Director couldn't expect, but the Under Secretary had a right to expect every now and then. He dealt behind your back with other intermediaries. The end result was that you got used as a flunky of one kind or another. And if you got upset about it, he sent you off as an Ambassador somewhere. He didn't hold it against you, he just didn't find it very convenient to continue to operate with you around. In fact, he may have thought these are the people we ought to have as Ambassadors. He was frustrating. But there was a lot to do at the desk level. We were emerging from a situation of severed relations with Egypt. I had a very busy desk all of a sudden which meant without even messing with high policy up there on the Arab-Israeli problem, I had a lot to do. We had to reconstruct our entire embassy staff, get an aid mission out there to take care of aid matters, and deal with debt problems. I helped negotiate a debt-relief program and also spent a lot of time organizing the effort to clear and reopen the Suez Canal.

I actually got back [to work on more Arab-Israeli affairs] at the very tail end of the Nixon Administration. But Carter came in...

Q: You mean Ford.

STERNER: I mean Ford. Exactly. The job I was brought back for did not as it happened open up. It was to be the Middle East man on the NSC staff, but that didn't pan out. Then one of the Deputy jobs in NEA opened up. It was back to my old Arab-Israeli specialty, but the timing was very fortunate. I took the job only a few months before Sadat made his famous trip to Jerusalem, and what had been in doldrums the whole time I was in Abu Dhabi, suddenly became the liveliest thing in town. Originally the job was to cover geographic responsibilities, several desks that had Egypt, Israel, the Levant, as well as Arab-Israeli negotiations. But the Arab-Israel negotiations side of it proved to be so time consuming that they split the job off, and I took over that responsibility. I went along on all of Vance's shuttles.

Q: That's Cyrus Vance.

STERNER: Yes, the Secretary of State. Under Hal Saunder's direction, who was the Assistant Secretary, I was responsible for preparing all of the staffing for the trips and the paperwork that had to be done. I was expected to come up with ideas on how to move this thing forward. Later, when it was decided to use a special emissary, first Roy Atherton, then Bob Strauss, and Sol Linowitz, I had a sort of double role. I was a Deputy to them and made trips with them while still holding the Bureau responsibility. I did an awful lot of traveling in those days.

Q: We have to stop this here.

STERNER: Working both for the Secretary of State and for the special emissaries was interesting and sometimes a bit difficult because there were frequent differences of view about how to proceed. It ended as we know with Jimmy Carter summoning everyone to Camp David in September of 1978. I then had the professionally rewarding experience of being on the American delegation which supported the peace treaty negotiations at Blair House and at the Madison Hotel, that finally resulted in the Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt. We thought the Egypt-Israel negotiations would give us a good start on doing something about the Palestinian issue, but unfortunately we were wrong. Before the day was over, I must have spent thousands of man hours trying to get the so-called autonomy talks for the West Bank and Gaza off the ground. Bob Strauss and Sol Linowitz were our leaders in that effort. We ran into the insurmountable problem which was the Israelis wanted their bilateral peace treaty with Egypt, but did not want anything to happen on the West Bank or Gaza. They just stalled, and Washington was not prepared to have a major crisis in U.S.-Israeli relations to break the impasse. So, the autonomy talks gradually ran into the sand. In my final year in the Department, before I decided to retire, I had another assignment coming out of the Peace Treaty, which was to set up the peace-keeping force that is a buffer between the two sides in Sinai, between Israel and Egypt in Sinai. The U.N. Security Council, not favoring what increasingly became apparent as a bilateral peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, would not participate, would not agree that this force should be constituted under a United Nations mandate. So the three parties, Egypt, Israel with the United States help, determined to set up their own peace-keeping force, outside of the U.N. and I headed the negotiating team that helped the two sides fashion an agreement. I had a good time doing this and it was nice to leave the Department -- instead of on a note of disappointment which would have been the case with the autonomy talks, to leave on an upper, at the conclusion of a successful negotiation and a professionally rewarding experience. I don't know how much time you want to go spend on this, Stu.

Q: I'd like to go into it. But first I'd like to go back one and then come back to this. When you came back and you were dealing with the Arab-Israeli problem once again, what was your impression of the Israeli Government, particularly Menachem Begin and his Government? How did we view it and how did we deal with it?

STERNER: Anyone who knew anything about the background of the Arab-Israel problem had deep cause to be worried about the implications of Begin's coming to power because in 1970, if I remember correctly, Begin led his party out of the then National Coalition Government on the

issue of whether Security Council Resolution 242 calling for Israeli withdrawal from territories in exchange for peace applied to the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. His position was that the Security Council Resolution was all well and good for the Syrian front and the Egyptian front but it didn't have anything to do with the old mandated territories of Palestine. On this he parted company with Prime Minister Golda Meir, whose government had agreed to the proposition that Security Council Resolution 242 applied to all occupied territories. Now when he reappeared as Prime Minister, head of the largest coalition in the Knesset, six or seven years later, people who remembered his personality which was single-minded and stubborn, could have made the reasonable assumption that he was not going to change his views on that subject. On the other hand, Begin was a bold leader. He'd after all created a party out of nothing. Herut was his creation. And built it to a point that it had become the main challenge to the Labor Party. I think there was something of that in his background, a willingness to take chances which made it possible to get the peace treaty with Egypt. Unfortunately the present leader of Israel, Yitzhak Shamir, with whom we're wrestling now, voted against the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, even though he was a member of Begin's party. And I think one of the problems we're finding with Shamir is that he has all of Begin's stubbornness and none of his imagination and none of his boldness. Maybe imagination is too strong a term but at least none of his boldness. So, we were mainly frustrated, and God knows so was Anwar Sadat, but at least the leadership in Israel in those days was strong.

Q: And could deliver.

STERNER: And could deliver. Today you have a Government that's not strong and no one knows what it could deliver.

Q: What was your impression? I mean, as time goes on, Jimmy Carter seems to grow in my estimation; he's been involved in the tricky business in Nicaragua and he's comported himself extremely well. This is my own -- but what is your impression of how he operated and how much he was in control of this process, as you saw it?

STERNER: He was, the most effective President that we've had on Middle Eastern Affairs, because at some point he got interested personally in the Arab-Israel problem. And I think he genuinely felt, without any anti-Israeli feelings, that some kind of redress should be done for the Palestinians, that they had lost their homeland. He also felt a keen personal bond with Anwar Sadat, that Sadat was a great statesman of the period. Carter just got involved in a way which was unprecedented for an American President. A great deal of credit must be given to him for his boldness in summoning everyone to Camp David. A lot of these things are pre-cooked and you have these Presidential meetings, summit meetings, you know exactly what's going to happen ahead of time. Quite clearly this was not the case at Camp David. It was a high risk proposition. He could have looked very poorly if it had turned out badly, and it damned near did, if Sadat hadn't gone the extra mile and saved his bacon.

Q: How did he do that?

STERNER: Well, Sadat gave in, perhaps not wisely, on a number of key issues. Jerusalem was one of them, the question of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza being another, the whole

question of linkage between the bilateral peace settlement between Egypt and Israel, and the Palestinian question.

Q: Well, this is whole other thing and I hope sometime we can work something to go into this, maybe with Dick Parker. I wonder if you could tell some of the problems you had with setting up this peace keeping operation.

STERNER: The first problem was to get the Israelis and Egyptians to agree on the terms under which the force would be set up. I had no idea how complicated this would be -- establishing a peacekeeping operation *de novo*, outside of the U.N. I got good advice from Brian Urquhart, the U.N. Assistant Secretary General who had set up so many peace keeping forces.

Q: Was he British or Irish?

STERNER: No, he's British, and a fine man. Incidentally, if you haven't read his memoirs they're quite interesting. He also did a good biography of Hammarskjold. He writes well. He had fascinating experiences in the Congo as well as the Middle East. Anyway, to get back to the Sinai force, there was the question of the size and composition of the force: the Egyptians wanted it as small as possible, and the Israelis had no confidence in it unless it was considerably larger than that. How should it be equipped? The Egyptians wanted very lightly armed forces, the Israelis wanted heavy military equipment.

Q: Why? I mean why would there be this difference between size and equipment?

STERNER: The Israelis basically saw it as a force that might well have to fight. The Egyptians saw such a large force as a derogation of their sovereignty because of course the force was entirely stationed in the Sinai, on their territory. And as they saw it the peacekeeping force had been imposed on them as a condition of the peace treaty. It was not something they liked. There were also problems about where these units should be stationed, about where the observation posts should be placed. The Israelis made a determined effort to try to get the Egyptians to agree that two large Air Force bases in Sinai that the Israelis had built should be used exclusively by the force. The Egyptians didn't want that because they saw that as a further detraction of their sovereign right to reoccupy Sinai as they saw fit. At the beginning the two sides disagreed about every provision and detail. There was the additional problem of creating the zones, of how you staffed the observer mission to carry out the peace treaty's provisions for the other zones in the Sinai. We also had a major problem about American involvement. The Israelis wanted American troops in the force. The new Reagan administration also liked the idea. You know, we must reverse the Vietnam syndrome. Let's show them that we can send American boys out there. But the Egyptians didn't want American forces there. They wanted contingents from non-aligned countries. We had difficulties over such matters as a status of forces agreement. What happens when one of these soldiers was arrested for drunkenness in Cairo or Jerusalem. So it was a prolonged negotiation, but I had the enormous advantage that both sides knew that unless they came to an agreement the Peace Treaty would not be implemented. I had a little delegation that consisted of a political officer, a military adviser -- a Colonel in the American Army -- a legal adviser from the State Department, a couple of other specialists brought in from time to time to help me out. And we had excellent support from the Embassies and the Consulate General in

Jerusalem. We negotiated to have one session in Jerusalem, next session in Cairo and got to know those places pretty well. I must have made nine or ten trips to both places, occasionally shuttling between the two with the help of the Cairo Air Attaché's little Beechcraft aircraft. It was a professional challenge and also a lot of fun. As your career goes along in the State Department, no matter what position you reach, there's always somebody looking over your shoulder, so to have almost exclusive responsibility with nobody between you and the Secretary of State to just get something done, was very gratifying.

Q: Was this really the orders -- Get something! I mean, rather than we want it like this, I mean it was really let's get this thing going?

STERNER: No one cared what the details were, but they wanted this thing to be in place by the time the peace treaty was supposed to go into effect. So I had a deadline of about eight months to get it done. And we had a lot to do in this period. For example, funding turned out to be a major problem. Both the Egyptians and the Israelis started out saying we're not going to contribute a penny to this. I had to go back and say to them, Uncle Sam sure as hell isn't going to pay for the whole thing and you know, we had some tough sessions on this point. I finally got Sadat to agree to put up a third of the money and the Israelis -- I said, if he puts a third, you've got to put up a third -- and got them to agree to that. I committed the USG to the other third, and to a financial arrangement for the initial year, because there were some major start up costs, for the U.S. to pay 60% of the costs, the Egyptians and Israelis 40%. We made a hand-shake deal on this without even reporting it to the Department, let alone Congress. I knew I had to get something done, and that time was limited. I said this may be the end of my career but to hell with it. I then came home to face the music in Congress. I went down there and said this is the arrangement which I think will be real good if we can get it, if we can only sell it and Lee Hamilton and others down there said, Gee, it sounds all right to me. Compared to what Federal officials generally have to go through to get funding for projects, I still can't believe it happened so easily. People tell me now, who are involved in that part of the world, that the Sinai peace keeping force works well and that the agreement and all the details we negotiated provide a good foundation for its operations. Much of that was not my doing but the doing of Ray Hunt, who was appointed to be the first Director General of the Multi-national Force and Observers, and was tragically assassinated in Rome where he had his headquarters by Italian Red Guards.

Q: Was it connected with it, or just...

STERNER: I think he was just a convenient target of some kind. You know, next to the Ambassador who may have been better guarded, he was one of the prominent Americans in Italy.

Q: How did the other great power, the Pentagon, which was going to supply the troops, how did you find dealing with them?

STERNER: It was difficult getting countries, including our own country, to participate. At first the Pentagon really didn't want to have anything to do with this thing. They were with the Egyptians. It ought to be a non-aligned operation. But at a very high level the Israelis clamored for American participation. The answer is they didn't have any confidence that...

Q: Well, they'd already been through this other thing in '67.

STERNER: Exactly. And had a good reason to have some lack of confidence in peacekeeping forces. So the State Department made up its mind that it was in favor of American presence, and we after all had a Secretary of State at that time who had been a military officer, who had considerable clout with the Pentagon. And it was decided that the Pentagon should contribute an infantry battalion and some support elements. The only trouble was these packages came in much larger units than we wanted in the Sinai. For example, we got a Fijian battalion that was 600 man strong. Self supporting American battalions don't come at less than a thousand and we had already negotiated an overall manpower limit for the force which had been very difficult to get because the Egyptians had been so sticky about it, and then we had to go back to them and say, listen, I'm sorry, but if we have to have American forces and we do, we have to raise these limits. It was also very difficult to persuade any other countries to participate. We finally got a battalion from Fiji, that great power out there in the South Pacific somewhere, and Colombia, which was somewhat more respectable or at least a country which people had heard of. And that was the initial force along with the U.S. battalion. Then with that in place, our European and other allies began to say that it was something we can participate in in a quiet way and they contributed some support elements. The Italians gave us a couple of frigates, well not frigates, but small naval vessels that patrolled the Sharm el Sheik area. The French gave us helicopters. The Australians and New Zealanders gave us fixed wing aircraft. The British gave us an MP contingent. And gradually it became a real international force. Since then the Canadians have come in with something. So it's worked out well. I had several meetings with Anwar Sadat himself, shortly before he was assassinated, and with Menachem Begin, so it was a fascinating experience for me. And before I got involved with anything else, I decided to retire and do other things.

DONALD A. KRUSE
Deputy Principal Officer
Jerusalem (1976-1980)

Donald A. Kruse was born in Philadelphia in 1930. He later attended Wheaton College and majored in history. Following his graduation in 1952, he received a masters degree in political science at the University of Pennsylvania and then joined the army. Following his two year run in the army, Kruse joined the Foreign Service and served in posts in Canada, Luxembourg, France, Belgium, Jerusalem, Italy, and England. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 1997.

Q: You were there from '76 to when?

KRUSE: To 1980, which were the years of the Carter presidency, just by coincidence, as you know. We had arrived in Jerusalem in September 1976 with the Brookings report just being completed, which talked about the need for a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict,

that is, that all Arab countries would somehow make peace with Israel. That Brookings report had great influence on Carter's thinking and on his administration's actions. We started with some of our own efforts to get this going. Then Anwar Sadat decided to, in fact, follow his own inclinations. As you know, after he talked about his willingness to go to Jerusalem, Prime Minister Begin invited him. And so there in November of 1977, he arrives at Tel Aviv Airport, the first Arab leader not only to recognize Israel, but to actually come and step on the soil of the state. So, that happened just a year after I got there. It was from there on in a roller coaster. We were busy.

Q: Let's take it when you arrived. You got to Jerusalem. The consul general was Mike Newlin. What was the role of the consulate general in Jerusalem at that time?

KRUSE: The district for the Jerusalem consulate general was all of the city of Jerusalem and all of the West Bank. It did not include Gaza. So, aside from handling the typical visas and passport needs and all that kind of business, we were charged with making contact with the Palestinian leadership on the West Bank and in essentially East Jerusalem. We also were dealing with the Jewish mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kolleck at that time. We were jokingly called "the outlaw consulate" because we did not recognize Israel's claims to territory in Jerusalem nor, obviously, in the West Bank. Therefore, we did not have exequaturs with the Israeli government. We were not recognized officially as our mission being responsible for dealing with the Israelis. All of that was done by our embassy which was in Tel Aviv. So, it was a kind of an anomalous situation, but it had existed since 1967 when the city was no longer divided. Although the Israelis, of course, wanted us to accept, their claims to all of Jerusalem, etc., we were not about to do that. So, we operated under Israeli benevolence, if you will. They allowed us to do our thing. But essentially, our thing was to deal with the Palestinian leaders on the West Bank in East Jerusalem. At that time, the political leadership consisted mostly of elected mayors. The Israelis had allowed municipal elections in '76, which had PLO supporters, but not identifiable PLO figures becoming mayors in all the cities of the West Bank.

Q: At that time, contact between the United States and the PLO was forbidden by Congress.

KRUSE: Not really Congress at that time, the prohibition stemmed from Kissinger's promise to the Israelis at the time of the '73 agreements not to deal with the PLO until it essentially accepted the fact of the state of Israeli and stopped the terrorism. So, it was first Henry who got this started. The Congress later on codified it. In 1976 there was absolutely no possibility of dealing with the PLO. As you may remember, Andrew Young dealt just quietly with a PLO representative in New York and that got him fired. Some other ambassadors got in a little trouble if they seemed to be talking to or were involved with the PLO. We would say in the consulate that, "If any of these mayors that we're dealing with are PLO, then it's the Israelis fault that they're still there. We're not in the business of deciding whether somebody is PLO or not. That's Israel's concern."

Q: Could you talk about the relationship between the consulate general and the embassy in Tel Aviv during this time?

KRUSE: As you can see, there would be certain different emphases in both places. We were

emphasizing the desire to have the Palestinians become involved, particularly after the Sadat visit and the Camp David process, when finally the Palestinians were indeed given a part of the Camp David agreement. That is, we were to get the local Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to become a Palestinian negotiating partner for future dealings with Israel. This was the first time that we had really given- We said as we tried to sell this, "You're now given a ticket to get into the conference room." It's the first time Palestinians in any way had gotten such an invitation to join in the discussion of their future. So, that was our prime interest at the Consulate General.

The embassy's interest, of course, as a typical embassy, is to continue a good relationship between the host country and the United States, to, in effect, help accomplish our goals with Israel, which always is to make it secure and prosperous and all that. So, we dealt with different people, different constituencies. Although we both were reading from the same policy script, we emphasized different things. We were trying to tell the Palestinians that this was a great opportunity for them. I don't know that the Israelis were that concerned that Palestinians joined in the negotiations. There was this built-in difference of emphasis. I think you could say that, personally, some of the officers at the embassy and officers at the consulate had different views. The officers at the embassy would tend to feel that the Palestinians would always resent the existence of the state of Israel and that it's almost impossible to see a peaceful resolution of the conflict. I think those of us at the consulate who had known the Palestinians better felt that there was a possibility. Of course, you can say that in retrospect 20 years later, we were maybe more right than they. But the game is not over yet. We still have to see. There are many Israelis who would certainly agree that it isn't possible to have peace with the Palestinians.

I'll give you an incident which occurred when we had a Congressional delegation out in which the members typically, if they were a serious delegation, wanted to hear both sides. They wanted the consulate to brief them and they wanted the embassy to brief them. We would usually emphasize the Israeli settlement building activity that was going on indicating that this was something that doesn't help the peace process. The embassy would agree with that because our policy was opposed to settlements. But I think the embassy would be able to put this in a context of why the Israelis were doing it because these were the ancient Biblical lands that were near and dear like Hebron, Jerusalem, Bethel, and other places would be where, naturally, Jews would want to live. So, sometimes CODELS would detect almost a policy difference. You can imagine that they would be more inclined to be favorable to the Israelis and would raise some questions back in Washington as to "Are these two posts really in line out there? It seems like we hear a little different thing from both sides." Of course, the Department would say, "They've all got the same policy, no change." There were times when there were complaints about the consulate being not pro-Israeli enough. I don't think anybody ever complained that the embassy was not pro-Palestinian enough. So, we had to live with that. I think you can easily draw the reasons why we were different and often times, depending on the zeal of people at the consulate or people at the embassy, you could have some pretty lively discussions.

Q: I would have imagined this was the time when, even before the Carter administration came in, Congress had mandated human rights reports shortly before. Then you had the advent of Pat Derian and the increased power of the Bureau of Human Rights. I would have thought this would have been both an opportunity for you and a track for the consulate general. The Israelis are not a benevolent occupying force. They have a difficult job to do, but they also are as rough-

handed as probably any occupying power can be.

KRUSE: They seemed to have learned their lessons well.

Q: So, how did this play out for what you were doing?

KRUSE: The human rights thing was a very big part of our reporting. Reporting on settlement activity and reporting on human rights, as well as representation for the Palestinians were the three major political issues that we dealt with. Human rights, we tried to report as objectively as we could, mostly based on hearing stories from Palestinians who had been affected by Israel's occupation policies. We had opportunities often when we interviewed Palestinians wanting to get visas to hear why they have a police record. Usually, it was because it was some political accusations by Israeli authorities. In the course of the interview, often, the visa officer had occasion to ask, "What was the charge? Why were you convicted? Why did you admit your guilt?" In many, many cases, if any infraction at all, it was some nationalist manifestation of some kind, but hardly a bloody, terrorist effort. You got the convictions either because the client had no way of understanding what was going on because the whole thing was conducted in Hebrew or our recognizing that he'd get a little better treatment if he just admitted to something. So, you had that kind of perversion of justice. It was such a consistent pattern. You heard it time and time again. You heard about how they were initially questioned and they were kept incommunicado and had hoods over their faces and made to stand for long periods of time, sometimes doused with water and put out in the cold. I guess you could say that not much of this was really life threatening, but some of it was pretty painful or uncomfortable. So, we would report these things. Then, Washington, of course, wanted to be sure that all of this could be proven. In some cases, it wouldn't have been easy to prove it. Every human rights report was a negotiating process. Of course, it was always the consulate that came in with these reports. Although the embassy was responsible in Gaza, they didn't get the same level of stories that we did. So, it was really the consulate that always was reporting the Israeli bad things.

Q: I would think that you would have, I won't say a problem, but you're up against really not a policy power with which, close on, a young Foreign Service officer would not be comfortable with. This type of activity and all. It would naturally stir up the underdog juices of a reporting officer and yet you kind of know that the reporting can be accurate as all hell, but it would immediately get leaked to the Congress, which would immediately leak it to the Israelis. It's not completely the Jewish lobby, but it's damn close. I mean, there are other allied groups to it, but essentially, the most politically powerful lobby in the United States during this whole time. Yet you've got these young officer whom it would be very difficult to control. They've got a story and they want to get it out.

KRUSE: Yes, it's clear to them as the truth and they feel it should be reported. In many cases, that's what we tried to do.

I was going to say that I had been in the Service 20 years in the late '70s and I never had expected that what we reported from Jerusalem was so liable to become public so quickly. Maybe it was the issues I had dealt with before weren't as volatile or the subject was not of as much deep interest as reporting on Israeli violations of human rights and Israeli settlement

activities. The one great criticism in retrospect that, I think, one can levy at American policy was its refusal to talk to the Palestinian Liberation Organization. We inhibited ourselves from going down the road to a solution with the Israelis and the Palestinians because we basically said, "We don't believe that the PLO is a legitimate party." Our reporting from the Consulate General made it clear that Palestinians on the West Bank would never substitute themselves for the PLO. Our contacts always said, "You must talk to the PLO-only it can represent us." So, we delayed almost 20 years before we began a dialogue with the PLO. I have to think that, if this was a policy that could somehow have been set free from domestic pressures and Congressional pressures, we would not have waited so long. We would not have had the painful burdens of so many people lost on both sides.

Q: Did you have to work to, one, to a certain amount, restrain your young reporting officers and, two, to protect them?

KRUSE: We were aware of the need to make sure that individual officers didn't get singled out. Of course, when we sent in the human rights reports, it was the post leadership that took the responsibility. There was an occasion of one of the junior officers named Alexander Johnson, who prepared reports on her interviews with Palestinian visa applicants, which showed the pattern of human rights violations. We allowed those reports to go forward with a covering memorandum that this represented the effort of one officer and that we accepted this as a valid effort on her part. That report apparently became public. We had to go through a season of phone and other inquiries from press people about, "What's this Alexander Johnson doing?" To make it clear, unfortunately, Alexander had a lot of problems personally and in her work otherwise and we felt was not really the best candidate for advancement in the Service. Eventually, in fact, she did not get her tenure. I believe that she quit the Service a few years later went public completely with her book called "Jerusalem 1500," as I remember because that was the number of the airmail that we had sent in with her reporting. That got a little publicity. It was the same time that "The Sunday Times" in London had done a very thorough report of Israeli practices with prisoners in the West Bank. So, a lot of this stuff was hitting the West Bank at the same time and the Israelis were getting very sensitive to all this. Getting back to the point of what we did with the officers who felt they had to report this, we tried to do it as matter of factly as possible and tried to protect the names of individual officers. I think, to a great extent, we were successful, not that it changed Israeli practices, unfortunately.

Q: Were you concerned about the Israeli secret service doing disinformation on your officers to discredit them and all?

KRUSE: Yes, it was an issue. It is true that, from time to time, Israeli officials (high ranking) would say something to the ambassador in Tel Aviv.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KRUSE: Sam Lewis, as you know, a career officer. He was there a long time, although at a certain point, he did resign as a career officer and then was reappointed as a political appointee. There would be times that Israeli--I heard once or twice about Israeli officials complaining to the Embassy about Consulate officers being anti-Israeli. I think the embassy had quickly rebuffed

those kinds of accusations. But I will say that I never felt in any way that the Israelis would do anything to us in any physical way because that wouldn't be in their interest to go that far. But they did think of the whole consulate as being anti-Israeli, I'm afraid. Many Israeli politicians would say that.

Q: What about your contacts with Teddy Kolleck, who was the mayor for many, many years in Jerusalem, who seemed to try to bridge the gap between the Arabs and the Jews?

KRUSE: We tried to have a correct relationship. He was the Israeli mayor of Jerusalem. However, we get immediately to this question of where Israeli authority should go, where the Israelis thought it went. They had annexed all of Jerusalem, including the part they took in '67. Without going through all the details, suffice to say that we never accepted that nor did any government in the world. Certainly, the people who lived in Arab East Jerusalem, never thought of him as their mayor. But Teddy Kolleck tried to present himself as the mayor of all Jerusalem. He was a humane person in terms of not wanting to unnecessarily offend Arabs. His vision was to have Arabs in Jerusalem living happily under a Jewish mayor who would be willing to dialogue with them and attempt to treat them, if not equally, because there has never been an attempt by Israel to treat its Arabs equally, at least as humanely as possible. This was a very difficult and, I would say, impossible job that Teddy may have thought he should try. We had some difficulties with him from time to time. We had two separate receptions on July 4th, one for the east side (the Arab side) and invited only the Arabs, and one on the west side for the Israelis and essentially only invited them. This was a great offense to Teddy, who thought that we were attempting to continue the division of Jerusalem. We said that, in fact, we're just trying to fulfill what our policy is. So, we did not ever, in my time, combine the receptions. But this made him very unhappy. To finish off on Teddy, he would constantly tell the United States Consulate General and the other five or six consulates that existed in Jerusalem with our same non-status (the Brits, French, Italians etc), "You consulate people don't get the picture at all. You are helping contribute to the division of this city into Arab and Jew. What we're trying to do is make us all live together." The implication was that if only we would get on board the program of a single Jewish administration, the Arabs would eventually be happy, would accept it, would be quiet, and that would be the end of it. At the time I was there (I left in 1980), the Arabs had still not risen up in the way that we thought, eventually, they would. But with the Intifada, which started in '87, it was clear to me that Teddy has his answer, that he was the one who was wrong and we were the ones who were right, that there were two cultures in Jerusalem, and that they weren't going to mix unless there was a basis of equality.

Q: What about reporting on the settlements during this time? As we talk today, a settlement is causing civil disturbance and deaths in Jerusalem. The Israelis are putting one up in Arab Jerusalem. It's on the front pages. During this '76 to '80 period, what was going on in the Jewish settlements on the West Bank in Jerusalem?

KRUSE: Well, a lot was going on, but I think the most important thing was going on here in Washington, where we had a President who effectively said that settlements are illegal. It was very clear cut and very simple. They were not obstacles to peace only, but they were absolutely illegal. Now, that did disturb the Israelis. When the new administration came in in '80 under Reagan, they changed that formula to just being obstacles to peace, not illegal. So during my

time in Jerusalem we had a lot of backing here in Washington for reporting fully on the settlements. We did that. We interviewed settlers. We talked to those who were organizing the settlements. This was one issue where we actually talked to some Israeli officials--if not talking to them, we were quoting them because the settlement issue was, of course, a West Bank and Gaza issue, but mostly the West Bank and Jerusalem. Washington welcomed this. It was a big effort going on in the intelligence community to keep completely up to date on this. I suspect and hope that it is continuing. It looks like it is because I see maps from time to time that show the growth of these settlements. It goes back to what Hodding Carter said in these days. When we objected to the Israeli settlements, Hodding Carter said, "It's like two men negotiating over a glass of water and one picks it up and starts drinking from it. This is what Israel is doing with its settlements. It's simply trying to preclude the outcome." That's true to this very day.

Q: Were you getting a fix on who was going into these settlements?

KRUSE: Yes, we would interview settlers. In fact, at one point, one of our officers actually got stopped inside one of the settlements and was challenged as to how he got in. He said, "I just drove in." But he was detained briefly and questioned because he had been asking questions of the people that were there. This was, of course, before the big settlement push in the early 1980s when Shamir simply advertised cheap living on the West Bank. These were mostly zealots, pioneers, putting up settlements, in some cases wildcat settlements with no authorization and defying the Israeli authorities to get them out. On the other hand, there were some completely approved settlements by Israel that were going ahead. They had a master plan. You knew what they were hoping to accomplish--implant as many Israeli settlers as possible. Particularly around Jerusalem, they had pretty well accomplished that. They have encircled Arab East Jerusalem with these high rise settlements, basically suburban high rises, that now have about the same number of Jews living there as Arabs living in the core of East Jerusalem. When I was there, this was just a gleam in their eye. But they've accomplished it.

Q: I would have thought you would have had problems because you're the American consulate general. When you talk about zealots, from what I assume, a disproportionate number of zealots are actually American Jews who come to Israel are reinforcing their faith and, like a convert to Catholicism, are more Catholic than the Pope - that they would come, get involved, and then if things got bad, scream and yell for American help.

KRUSE: You're right. Of course, many of them continue to carry their American passport and therefore had a parachute if they wished to get out. They were usually unhappy with the American consulate and particularly when we expressed our policy. But, in retrospect, they probably thought that it didn't matter what we said or did, they were just going to go ahead and build settlements. Sometimes they did defy their own government. But eventually, most of those wildcat settlements were authorized. It's called "creating facts on the ground." It's like so many of the Israeli soldiers or settlers who have shot Palestinians. We go through the whole business of the Israelis bringing them to justice and meting out some kind of punishment. Unfortunately, usually, that is followed in a few years by a pardon granted to those offenders by the President of Israel. So, it's very clear that Arabs are treated much differently from the Jewish population. House demolition is standard treatment for a Palestinian charged with a security offense-- no Jewish Israeli has ever had this treatment, not even the assassin of Prime Minister Rabin.

Q: What was the impact of Sadat's visit to Tel Aviv and the Camp David process?

KRUSE: When the Camp David Accords came out with the idea of autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza, we finally had a program to present to the Palestinians as something that they should look at and hopefully find it greatly more attractive than their current situation under occupation. We essentially tried to sell it as being the end of Israeli occupation. The question of what it would lead to was open. We never could promise them a state, but we did say that, "You can participate in your own future." So, our sale was, "This is better than you've ever been offered. It's better than you have now. Join in." We had a very active program. Washington expected us to sell this to the mayors of Nablus, Bethlehem and Hebron etc. We tried that. But the essential answer, which, I have to say, is very understandable, was that, "You've come to the wrong party. We are not representing the Palestinian people. The PLO represents that Palestinian people. We are like prisoners in a cage. We can't talk for the rest of the Palestinians and we don't have any strength. So, we choose not to be involved." I think there were some Palestinian leaders who would have joined in if we had made more clearly what the end result would be. They just said, "We're not going to take a leap off into the dark. We don't know where you're going to lead us. The idea of a ticket to the conference table is not enough for us. We want to know what the end is going to be." You see, we were not prepared to tell them what we wanted the end to be. Frankly, to this very day, we're not prepared to tell the Palestinians what we think they should have at the end. This continues to be one of the great failings of our policy.

Q: As you looked at this policy, did you see any solution?

KRUSE: Frankly, I didn't. Back then, I had the fear that the Palestinians would just be ground into the dirt, unless we changed our policy toward dealing with the PLO. So, I'm half way encouraged that it does seem that whatever happens now in the future, the Palestinian cause is not a completely lost cause. There were many who thought that it would become a lost cause. How the Palestinian cause can be fulfilled properly and happily is still not sketched out by our policy. I could say that the outcome is uncertain. When Golda Meir was around, she said, "Who are the Palestinians? Where are they? What are they?" Nobody says that now. The whole world now knows who they are. Whether they're treated justly or not depends largely on Israel and the United States.

Q: You had not grown up in this particular atmosphere. Coming into it, reflections from your memory of how we treated the blacks in the South?

KRUSE: I think there was very much that feeling although I thought more of the South African experience, where there was a very definite racial difference that was policy. In Israel, that's a little more nuanced than outright apartheid. I remember from my time in the South before the civil rights movement got moving that... The thing that strikes you is that a lot of people, even when the blacks were treated so poorly in the South, there were a lot of people who thought this was wrong. It was just a question of how you're going to change (inaudible). In the case of Israel and its treatment of the Arabs, what I can never answer a Palestinian is why we give Israel four or five billion dollars a year. It's one thing to let human rights abuses go and not blow a whistle or stop it somehow, but it's another thing to wound the party who is doing all these unjust things

continual unquestioned support no matter what it does.

Q: As a Foreign Service officer, to see the power of domestic politics on something that may not, in your opinion, be in American world interest, not only you, but the young officers, was this something you sort of had to work on to keep people from getting too discouraged and too cynical?

KRUSE: It is a problem. I guess all of the young officers had come to realize that, in many ways, our relationship with Israel is not a foreign policy issue; it's a domestic issue. Certainly, our French and British and other colleagues in Jerusalem would say, "We just can't understand why you do these things. What is the reason for your support of Israel, your vetoing resolutions, etc." Then in the second breath, they'd say, "But then we know about your lobby." It is unique. There is no other country that finds itself so under the control of such a powerful lobby. Recently, there has been reporting about the President's reaction to Netanyahu, which is generally a mild one, even though clearly there is disagreement with him. The newspapers are quoting unnamed administration officials, suggesting that how else is the Democratic party going to pay off its debt? But this whole issue of Jewish and Israeli supporters and their contribution to the campaign seems to stay outside the whole ongoing debate on campaign funding. In my view, Israel's influence on our political process and our foreign policy is the most egregious and dangerous example of the influence of a foreign country on our government.

Q: In 1980, where did you go?

KRUSE: I went to the Sinai Desert for a year. I was the deputy director of the Sinai Field Mission. That was kind of a follow-on to my years in Jerusalem. The Sinai Agreement came and the reason they had this American team out there, the Sinai Field Mission, was because of the peace agreement that Henry Kissinger brokered in '73 and '74 between Egypt and Israel, which called for the U.S. to monitor the forces in the Sinai. So, we were out there monitoring, we with our helicopters and Cheny Blazers out among the Bedouins and the camels. So, we were right in the middle of the Sinai Desert.

Q: What was the status during '80 to '81 during this period you were in the Sinai?

KRUSE: It was half way into the terms of the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt; their peace treaty in '78, which called for a complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Sinai within a certain period of time. The period of time was, I think, eventually to end in '82. So, while I was there, we were still half way there. We still had some Israeli forces in part of the Sinai. It was a confidence-building measure for the Egyptians and the Israelis to have us there, particularly for the Israelis. They insisted on us. They wouldn't take the UN. So, we paid the price to do that. It was a fascinating experience. It was unusual because it was the only time in my career when my family could not be with me. In that sense, I would wake up in the morning and look at myself in the mirror and say, "What in the world are you doing out here?"

Q: Tell about how it progressed while you were there first.

KRUSE: This was the first time I had dealt directly with the Israelis in an official sense, and

Egyptians; dealing with each of them. When you would go into Cairo, you'd have an agenda for the meeting. You had a lot of tschai (tea), coffee, soft drinks, lots of jokes, lots of laughs, get through the agenda, come back in a month or two and not a thing had been done. But we had had no arguments. When we would go in with the Israelis, there were a certain amount of refreshments and that type of thing, but every item on the agenda, every jot and tittle, would be argued over. You would set deadlines for this or that. You'd have courses of action for every one of the items. When you came back in a couple of months, it was all done. Everybody had done their work. So, it was a difference between the way the Israelis acted and the way the Arabs, in this case, the Egyptians, acted. The Israelis were such sticklers for every phrase of that agreement they signed with Egypt. That's why I was so appalled when it comes to the agreement that Israel signed with the Palestinians, they don't care at all about keeping any parts of it, no deadlines, no nothing. No apologies. Just forget it. If we had tried that with the Egyptians, we would have been frayed by the Israelis.

Q: You mean the Israelis.

KRUSE: Well, if we had let the Egyptians get away with violations. If the Egyptians hadn't met a deadline, boy, we would have never heard the end of it. So, it all depends on who's is a superior position.

Q: I've talked to some other people who have been involved in this and they say that, as you said, things were a little bit haphazard and sloppy and all. But the Israelis were always testing. They would try to get things they weren't supposed to have--overflights or get arms in or something. It was almost a game of doing this. People I've talked to say it was basic, almost hostility there. Did you feel that or not? Was that unfair?

KRUSE: I think what you've got is this dual strain in the Israeli psyche or makeup. You've got the one that identifies with the Labor party, where indeed, they strive and believe that a Jew can make it in the world on his own, that he doesn't need to worry that everybody is after him. The Likud is the mentality that it doesn't matter what the Jews ever do, they would never accept them as normal people. Therefore, according to Likud, if Israel wants something, it's going to have to fight for it and don't worry if the world objects. I think that kind of paranoia is, to a certain extent, in every Israeli. Given the history of the Jewish people, it is understandable. Of course, the history of the Middle East has not been one where their arrival and setting up their state has been wildly welcomed. So, I understand that they may not feel that they are completely a normal state in the region. But I think the Labor people felt that normalcy was a possibility. I'm afraid Likud doesn't think it ever is going to be a possibility.

Q: Were there any incidents or any particular problems that you might want to recount?

KRUSE: No, just the fact that we almost had the helicopter crash one time with our director and a whole gaggle of Egyptian officers. I wasn't on it. It had taken off with a full load of fuel. They had forgotten that they were at an altitude of about 4,000 feet. It was somewhere near Mt. Sinai. That makes a little difference in your lift. So, the thing got up and bounced a whole lot, turned over, but did not catch fire. It was a scary thing. If a tragedy had happened, I must say, it would have marked the Sinai Field Mission in people's minds forever.

C. WILLIAM KONTOS
Director, Sinai Support Mission
Washington, DC (1976-1980)

Ambassador C. William Kontos was born in Illinois in 1922. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of Chicago. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943-1946. Ambassador Kontos had served in the USAID program throughout most of his Foreign Service career. His career included positions in Greece, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Pakistan, Lebanon, Israel, and an ambassadorship to Sudan. Ambassador Kontos was interviewed in 1992 by Thomas Stern.

Q: Then in 1976, you became the Special Representative of the President and Director of the United States Sinai Support Mission. How did that come about?

KONTOS: I guess it was the result of my directorship of the two Task Forces that I have earlier described. Since those groups worked well, I guess I became known to the Department's leadership. The Sinai job was not one that I sought; in fact I don't think I ever went out to seek any job, beyond my first one.

At that time, the headquarters of the Sinai Mission was on the Seventh Floor of the Department of State. That is where it was established initially; much, much later it moved to Rome as headquarters of the successor organization -- the Multilateral Force and Observers organization (MFO).

Essentially, the Mission was one result of Kissinger's shuttle which took place after the war of 1973. At that time, the Secretary was able to persuade the Egyptians and Israelis to agree to a transition period before the Sinai was turned over to Egypt. The transition period was intended as a time when both sides could build confidence in the peaceful intent of the other. It enabled Kissinger to lower tensions between the two foes and reduce the prospects of further clashes between them.

The Sinai Mission was established in the Sinai astride the traditional invasion routes -- the Mitla and Gidi Passes. Under the terms of the agreement signed by the U.S., Egypt and Israel, the U.S. was committed to deploy a civilian peace-keeping force in the Sinai that would protect the approaches to these passes from either side. This was to be done by setting up observation posts, electronic sensors and listening devices that would monitor any activity in the passes or nearby. Moreover, as part of the agreement, both Egypt and Israel were permitted a major observation point, which was to be manned by themselves. The Israelis already had one; the Egyptians were permitted to build one of their own. That allowed each side also to verify with its own people that no invasion force was approaching the passes. The Secretary and the NSC decided that the State Department would become responsible for the management of this observation effort. The Department decided to employ a civilian contractor who would work under the direction of the

Department.

In the Fall of 1975, Joe Sisco, then Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Frank Wisner of the Secretariat and Bob Oakley of the NSC were assigned the responsibility for drafting the first mission statement. In December, 1975, I was asked by Winston Lord, on behalf of the Secretary, to take charge of the project. The man who had been working on the project had already brought in some people -- one from the Pentagon, a naval contractor, a couple from the research arm of the Army, a Marine Corps Colonel. When I was sworn in as Special Representative of the President, a partial staff was already in place and a request for proposals (RFP) had been publicized in a Commerce announcement. The proposals were for the establishment of a field mission, including housing for up to 200 people, observation posts at both ends of the passes, deployment of electronic gear, placement of the sensors, procurement of observation gear (telescopes, binoculars, night vision devices), and finally to construct a facility in the Sinai. The contractor also had to man this observation operation 24 hours each day. The responses were coming in as I took over the job. There was some urgency in making decisions because we were working on a deadline, which was sometime in the following Spring. A special appropriation had been made so that funds were not a problem.

My first task was to review each of the proposals that were already coming in. That was done meticulously and with great care. We set up a special board which included people with contracting expertise from various agencies to review the proposals. We established a dozen criteria that had to be met. Weights were given to those proposals that best met the criteria. In the end, the successful bidder was a Texas organization, headquartered outside of Dallas, called "E Systems". It, in turn, negotiated a subcontract with a Texas construction firm to build the facilities -- housing, offices, observation posts. The subcontractor, H.B. Zachary, was headquartered in El Paso and accustomed to building with pre-fabricated concrete units. They had used that process in the construction of motels. These concrete units were ideal for the Sinai requirements; each had living accommodations, kitchens, bedrooms. They were designed to be placed one on top of the other, so that a building of almost any dimension could be put up. The contractor obtained these units from an existing job and put them on a ship leaving Corpus Christi, Texas to be delivered in the Sinai.

Meanwhile, a group, including two or three men from my office and some we borrowed from the Defense Department, went out to the Sinai to survey the situation. They went to both Cairo and Jerusalem and established links with liaison officials of both sides. They identified a site appropriate for the Sinai Field Mission. The Sinai was then still Israeli occupied up to the passes. Beyond those passes, towards the Suez Canal, the land was in Egyptian hands, although Egypt had no military presence there. Only nomads wandered around in the area between the Suez and the passes. The only Egyptian military presence in the Sinai permitted by the agreement was the personnel to man the observation post. We chose the site, the perimeter of which was to be patrolled by armed U.N. guards. Our personnel would be unarmed.

We are now in January 1976. "E Systems" and the construction contractor used a number of airplanes -- converted 747s -- to ship the construction material in order to build a temporary facility on the site we had selected. This temporary base was to be used by the construction workers and also to serve as the beginning of our operations. We established communications

between Washington, Jerusalem and Cairo. There was a lot of work that had to be done in a short period of time. E systems was expert in loading the planes so that the material was unloaded in a proper sequence. We did have a crisis when the issue arose as to how the heavy concrete units would be brought into the Sinai; this required flat bed trucks. The passes were obviously much closer to Egypt and we thought we would use that route -- from Cairo to the Canal, across the Canal and to the site. But the roads on the Egyptian part of the Sinai were meager and primitive; also there were no facilities in any Egyptian port for unloading these heavy units. Even if there had been adequate cranes, the trucks might have had problems crossing the Suez and might have blocked the Canal. So we scrapped the idea of landing them in Egypt and took them to Haifa instead. The route was obviously much longer, but roads were paved all the way to the Sinai site.

As the ships were en route to Haifa, I got a call from my deputy in Washington. I was in Cairo on one of my frequent trips during this period. He told me that the construction contractor's shipping agent had said that if the ship docks in Haifa, he would be in violation of the Arab embargo. That would mean that no other ships of that shipping line would henceforth be permitted to dock in an Arab port. So we had to get involved in finessing the Arab embargo rules. We had our Ambassador approach the headquarters of the embargo enforcement agency, which was in Damascus, to see whether the Haifa docking would be a violation. We were able in the end to persuade the shipping line to dock in Haifa without penalty. I have a vague recollection that in order to avoid the embargo, the ship had to stop in a neutral port first (Nicosia, I believe) and then it could proceed to Haifa. I am not clear on the details, but some kind of legal subterfuge was worked out. That was one of the many, many difficulties that we overcame.

I must say that I had terrific cooperation from both the Egyptians and the Israelis. The Egyptians appointed a Major General to be the liaison officer and the Israelis appointed an Army Intelligence Corps Colonel. They both were skilled at cutting corners and through red tape. I shuttled between Cairo and Jerusalem and Washington.

The temporary camps were constructed. The first message was sent reporting to me and to the Secretary that the Mission was in business. The living conditions were far from ideal; winter in the Sinai in prefabs was not exactly a picnic.

We also had to establish a continual support system for the Mission. Most of the fresh fruit and vegetables came from Egypt and the rest of the food stuffs from Israel. E Systems was responsible for supplying all the provisions.

After the Mission was working, its main functions were to observe events around the passes and to maintain liaison with both sides to resolve any disputes that arose from observations -- ours as well as theirs. We had to report any trespasses into the neutral zone. We had a very elaborate reporting system to both sides and to Washington, so that if there were a violation of either the airspace or the neutral zone by any unauthorized vehicle or person -- we had occasional mistaken penetrations by people who did not know where the boundaries were or who may not have had appropriate authorizations -- there would be an immediate report made. There were a number of unauthorized penetrations, mostly by uninformed people. The more difficult aspect was air violations, which we did not handle as well as ground ones. We had a U.S. airplane monitor the

Sinai periodically, that provided air cover for events in the Sinai and provided pictures to both sides from those flights. These planes had very good military photographic equipment on board; we used U-2s with the agreement of both parties.

Our main objective was to build confidence that the U.S. was serving both sides even-handedly and effectively.

We had a number of sticky moments. None of the Egyptian or Israeli observers were to have arms of any kind -- personal weapons or otherwise. There were some attempts made to bring arms into each side's observer posts. The Israelis had a very sophisticated observation point filled with the latest in listening and detecting equipment. The Egyptians were building a much more primitive post on their side of the passes. Both sides tried from time to time to pass our posts with guns, which they always said were with them inadvertently. We always checked the Israeli and Egyptian observers as they went to and from their observation posts. The Americans who did this checking were Foreign Service officers from State and AID. We had 12-15 young FSOs who were liaison officers to the two sides. The E Systems people manned the sensors and other observation equipment, but dealing with each side was left to the FSOs who were stationed at each observation post. The FSOs lived first in temporary and then in permanent barracks along with the E Systems people. They would go to their posts every eight hours where they observed what was going on in the observation posts of each side.

Q: Why was it decided that these observation post duties would be performed by Foreign Service officers?

KONTOS: Because it was a ticklish matter. We needed some people who had a feel for the sensitivities of the situation. The FSOs had other responsibilities. From time to time, they would be assigned to our offices in both Egypt and Israel. Two or three would man those offices on a rotational basis. They served as our day to day liaison to both countries. We therefore needed people with some good sense; in some cases, we required an officer with language skills. The assignment of an FSO or an AID officer to the Sinai Mission was for one year, but I think for them it was a very interesting, rewarding assignment despite some of the long and tedious hours at the observation posts. They got a lot out of their assignments.

Q: How does one evaluate the success of an enterprise like the Sinai Support Mission?

KONTOS: You judge it by the fact that it had a beginning, a middle and an end. It fulfilled all the agreements signed by all three parties after the Egyptians withdrew from the Sinai: the US, the Israelis and the Egyptians. The deal was sweetened for the Israelis -- who in giving up the Sinai also had to give up two airbases -- by two substitute bases financed by us on their territory. That cost the US several hundreds of million dollars. The Israelis withdrew from the whole of Sinai by the end of 1981, except for a very small area called Taba, which had been in dispute ever since the negotiations had started. It took further international mediation before Taba -- with its large Israeli tourist hotel -- was returned to the Egyptians.

The whole arrangement worked out very well, thanks in major part to our presence and our role as intermediary plus our financial generosity -- that made it worthwhile for the Israelis to give up

their two airbases -- including large amounts of foreign assistance for the following years up to and including today.

Q: What was your role in obtaining Congressional support for the Sinai arrangement?

KONTOS: The enabling legislation which authorized the funds also included a requirement for semi-annual reports. So now there is a complete record of what occurred throughout the life of the Sinai Mission. There were also Congressional hearings. On the House side, it was Lee Hamilton's Europe-Middle East subcommittee that held the hearings; on the Senate side, it varied. For a long time the hearings were chaired by Senator Kassebaum of Kansas. I used to brief her privately as well. Hamilton had regular hearings. I was very pleased that I was able to report to him regularly that we had not spent all the funds appropriated because of our efficient operation. The Congressmen were very pleased to hear that.

I was the Director of the Sinai Support Mission for four years. After I left, the construction work was all done, the observation routine had been well established. While still Director and after things had settled down, I made it a practice to visit the area periodically, making sure that I would alternate my starting points between Cairo and Jerusalem. I used to talk to both sides and brief them on what was going on. The trips were often just an opportunity to maintain cordial relationships with both sides, but there were always problems cropping up -- transportation, clearances. At the height of our construction program, there were probably 185 people on site; we never reached the 200 mark. E Systems brought in people largely from Greenville, Texas which is where their plant was located. Many of them had never been outside of Greenville when then, all of a sudden, they found themselves in the Sinai with access to both Egypt and Israel. To deal with culture shock, we mounted an orientation program for the E Systems people, with specific emphasis on the principal executives of the contractor. Initially, we put on a two day program for them. They were briefed by Gordon Beyer who was on the Egypt desk, Larry Eagleburger, and others.

Of course, E Systems had to recruit their own staff for the tasks in the Sinai. I was amazed at how few problems their personnel created. Only a few got a little tipsy, but there were no real drinking problems. One or two were sent back home because they were found with some pot but, in general, there were no drug problems. In the latter stages of my tour, we permitted women to work in the Sinai; we had no problems with that. It was remarkable how little trouble we did have. In part, that was due to the E Systems' careful selection process; they picked people who were courteous, flexible and tolerant and who turned out to be good representatives of America abroad, even though most had never left Texas before. The supervisory staff served for two years and the others worked for 12-18 months.

I had two deputies on my staff: one was living in the field and one was in Washington. The deputy in the field was in charge of the whole operation; the E Systems people reported to him. He controlled the operations; he in fact was the Mayor of a small town in the Sinai. They had a fire brigade, a security force, a cafeteria, etc. My deputy established the ground rules for leaves, etc. He was also the principal liaison with the UN which as I mentioned guarded the perimeters of our observation operations. They consisted of two rotating battalions: one Ghanaian and one Fijian. My deputy was also the principal liaison with the Egyptians and the Israelis and in charge

of our two offices in Cairo and Jerusalem. My first deputy was Nick Thorne, whose wife resided in Cairo; his deputy was Owen Roberts, whose wife lived in Jerusalem. The officers themselves lived in the Sinai station. They may have seen their wives briefly every two weeks or so.

There was a story I might mention at this point. One of the drivers of the Sinai Field Mission director was made available to me when I would visit the area. He was a 19-20 year old Texan who had never left Greenville until this assignment. He may have had one year at the local community college and then had joined the E Systems. He was a splendid driver. But the most fascinating part of this young man's experience was how rapidly he mastered basic Arabic so that he could drive around Cairo. He knew all the labyrinths in Cairo of which there are many. He mastered the topography of Cairo so well that he could find almost any location in the fastest way possible; he knew where the traffic jams were forming and how to bypass them. He acquired the same skills for Jerusalem and Tel Aviv -- he learned enough Hebrew to get by in Israel as well. Everybody knew him; everybody greeted him warmly. Sometimes, when he needed to get directions, he would ask for them in the local tongue with a Texas accent. It was an eye opener for us and a wonderful experience for him.

Before we leave my Sinai experience, I would like to make one more point. The Sinai Support Mission was, in my view, one of the most successful cooperative ventures between the government and the private sector that I know about. It was run by the Department of State; it handled a major contractual negotiation; it oversaw the work of two splendid large Texan firms; it was a model in many ways of how the U.S. government and the private sector can collaborate effectively. We issued guidelines on the dos and don'ts. The relationship was very amicable and constructive and in the final analysis, very productive. When people say that the State Department doesn't know "how to run things", they should look back on the Sinai operations which were exceptionally well orchestrated and an illustration of good efficient and effective management.

Q: Before we end this discussion, I would like to ask how much interest did the Secretary and other senior principals show in the work of the Sinai Mission?

KONTOS: A great deal. Initially, the whole operation was run out of Eagleburger's office, when he was the Under Secretary for Management. He was personally involved until the Carter administration came in and then it was to the NSC that I reported regularly. The Congress, when it authorized the Sinai operation, made it technically an independent agency. We had our own line item in the budget. My official title was Special Representative of the President and Director of the Sinai Support Mission. I reported to the Secretary of State and to the President, although in the real world, it was to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, first Scowcroft and then Brzezinski, who followed our activities on behalf of the President. So I worked closely with the NSC as well as Larry Eagleburger. Secretary Vance showed considerable interest in the operation when he became Secretary of State; he was very much engaged during his early days when Congress mandated a restriction on the number of Americans who could be posted in the Sinai. (They were concerned for their security.) I remember that one day, right after lunch, I got a call from the Secretary's Office that I needed to come up with a master plan which would determine the number of Americans needed to be in the Sinai at any one time so that he could convey this information to a Congressional committee

which was in the process of establishing this limit. So the two of us decided rather arbitrarily what the personnel limits would be.

Ben Read, who succeeded Eagleburger as Under Secretary for Management, also continued to show much interest in our activities.

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Washington, DC (1976-1978)

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KULICK: [In 1975 and 1976] what followed was the real turning point in my career, at least. In the course of a year [in INR] I got to know people all over the State Department and became much more aware of how the system worked and who was doing what. I don't remember exactly how this came about, but I met a fellow working on the Israel desk, named Mike Sternberg. I remembered very clearly being struck that Sternberg was working on the Israel desk, because it had been almost taken as a "given," from the time that I entered the Foreign Service, that Jews were not assigned to work on Middle Eastern affairs, and certainly not on Israeli affairs. I remember saying to him that an assignment like his wasn't supposed to happen. He said that he had been told the same thing but he just decided to test the system and found that, in fact, there was no resistance to such an assignment. No one ever spelled this out, but it would seem to me to have something to do with the fact that you had a Secretary of State named Henry Kissinger who, while hardly a card-carrying Zionist or a synagogue-going Jew, certainly would have fit the category of people who hitherto had been supposedly excluded from Middle East policy affairs.

Q: As a matter of fact Kissinger had been excluded from Israeli affairs for a while during the Nixon administration, when he was National Security Adviser. At least it's been said that he left it to Secretary of State William Rogers to "play" with the Middle East while he did everything else.

KULICK: Yes. That's interesting. That may have been his own decision. I confess that I have not read Kissinger's memoirs. He may have addressed this question, although, knowing his ego, he probably didn't. In any case, by 1975 any taboo that may have existed previously was about to

disappear, and Mike Sternberg was more or less the first, entering wedge. There also was a Jewish political officer serving in Tel Aviv at that time.

Q: He was John L. Hirsch.

KULICK: So I thought, if he can do it, I can do it. I went over and said that I understood that there would be an opening on the desk. I speak Hebrew, I know the region, I had been a student in Israel, and so forth. Again, this was before the process of "open assignments" began. [At that time] if you worked out a deal with the office director, that was it. The Bureau said that it wanted me, and I was assigned.

That really was kind of a turning point in my career because all of this sort of "pent up" desire to get involved in "Listrud" issues was released. I had what I found to be a very exciting assignment in the Office of Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs (IAI). I dealt with human rights and settlements issues, as well as United Nations affairs, all of which were really meaty questions. I did a great deal of "outreach" work, you might say. I went out and did a lot of public speaking. I spoke to a lot of Jewish groups, often quite hostile because the State Department then -- and I suppose even now -- enjoys a very bad reputation in the Jewish community, much of which, I think, is long outdated. However, it probably goes back to the 1930's. The performance of the State Department in dealing with the question of Jewish refugees, Hitler, and the subsequent prosecution of the war is very well known and well documented. The allegations of anti-Semitism in the State Department...

Q: Coming from a class that was basically anti-Semitic?

KULICK: That's right. I think that subsequent writings and the release of records and so forth have authenticated that. I was not aware of that when I first got onto this [speaking] circuit. I was puzzled by a continuing atmosphere of suspicion and hostility that I found when I would go into a synagogue or a B'nai B'rith meeting. Almost the first question someone would ask would be, "Are you Jewish?" If I said, "Yes," they'd say, "How can you work for an organization like that?" I always thought that this view stemmed from a kind of knee-jerk objection to anybody who would criticize Israel or take issue with Israel's policies or in any way try to demonstrate a "balanced" approach to the Middle East. I mean, [the view of these Jewish community group's was], "If you're not 100% for Israel, you must be anti-Semitic." There was an element of that, but it was much more complicated than that. It really had much more to do with the historical [background]. It was at that point that I went back and started to do some reading on the holocaust. I read a book called, "While Six Million Died," by Arthur Morse, which documents quite fully and persuasively the U. S. response to the holocaust. There is quite a bit of material in there on that subject. There are quotations from various memoranda prepared by people like Sumner Welles [World War II Deputy Secretary of State] and Loy Henderson [later Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs]. I think that both of these individuals [were concerned], but I don't want to libel anyone. I recall that those were the two people who were mentioned. Also there was someone called Summerfield, I think. I don't recall precisely.

Q: There is almost a mental exercise I find myself going through as a non-Jew, every time I come up against Israeli policy. I keep going through a mental exercise, examining myself, asking

whether I am falling into anti-Semitism because I have real problems with the State of Israel. I'm partly of German descent, but it doesn't mean a thing to me. I don't have to go through an examination on how I look at Germany but with Israel I go through this process. I believe that a lot of Foreign Service Officers go through the same process. However, as a Jew, dealing with Israel, did you have to go through some mental adjustments or were you examining yourself to say, "Am I being too hard or too easy?" Was this a part of your thought process?

KULICK: No, surprisingly not, because I had always been, not exactly on the fringe -- these terms are not terribly precise -- but "on the Left" of the Zionist [political] spectrum, let us say, with respect to Israel. That is, particularly after 1967. Before 1967 there really wasn't much debate. But after 1967, when the Occupied Territories became a very central and emotional kind of issue, I had always been in that group which believed that it was not in Israel's interest to occupy these territories on a permanent basis. I thought that Israel, for its own sake, should go as far as possible, consistent with its essential security requirements, to make accommodations and to seek a peace agreement with the Arabs and the Palestinians. This was pretty much, I think, the policy of the U. S. Government and of the State Department. Only very rarely -- in fact, almost never -- do I recall the State Department taking a position that I thought was truly threatening to or disadvantageous to Israel, in my perception. That didn't mean that it didn't put us at odds with the Government of Israel, even before the Likud Government came into office. However, it was a policy that I felt comfortable with. I did not feel that it was jeopardizing Israel's security and I surely did not feel [that U. S. policy] was the result of any animus or bias against Israel. If anything, particularly during the Reagan administration, I was critical of U. S. policy as being too lenient, too accommodating, and too willing to take the Israeli point of view on subjects like the settlements [in the Occupied Territories], the invasion of Lebanon, and a variety of questions. Of course, in a highly political, highly effervescent environment like that of Israel, no matter what your point of view, you can find a significant body of people within Israeli society who share that view.

To anyone who says that this represents an anti-Israeli point of view, you can say, "Well, what about those 20 people in the Knesset whose views are precisely like this? Are they anti-Israeli, too?" [They may answer], "Well, it's different there. They live there." The point is that for me, personally, there was never any problem like that.

Q: I think this point is very important. How did you find the "outreach" program [conducted by the Israeli desk in the U. S.], particularly to the Jewish community, because they have a disproportionate impact on our political process -- which means on our policy process. How did you find dealing with them? Were you able to break through or...

KULICK: Let me stop and just comment on your use of the word "disproportionate." I am assuming that you are not using that in any nefarious sense.

Q: No! I'm just saying that there are ethnic groups -- I'm thinking [now] about the Greek community. I've dealt with Greek, Korean, and Croatian groups. They have more influence on our political process, say, than Turkish, Arab, or other groups.

KULICK: I think that the point is that the influence is commensurate with the degree of interest

and concern on the part of the groups involved, rather than any nefarious...

Q: No, but statistically, you know...

KULICK: Well, that's true. This is an issue of very great importance. More so, probably, than any other ethnic group, the Jewish community has more of a commitment on this particular foreign policy issue with the possible exception of the Serbs and the Croats -- and perhaps the Irish. I'm sorry. What was your question?

Q: It's very important for the State Department to be able to explain its position to an influential political group, as it would be to newspaper publishers or any other. You said you encountered a certain amount of initial hostility [among some Jewish community groups] to the State Department. How did you find the response [from these groups] over a period of time?

KULICK: I felt satisfied after talking to such groups if I could leave them believing that, whatever differences may exist between their particular views and those of the State Department and, therefore, of the U. S. Government, these were based, not on any animus against Israel and not any latent anti-Semitism, but on an honest disagreement stemming from different perspectives as to the broader interests of the United States in the world. In other words, this was an honest debate, discussion, or disagreement, if you will, stemming from the same set of values but from a different perspective, rather than a question of anti-Semites in the U. S. Government who were out to "get" Israel. Or, to put it the other way round, from people subject to Arab influence who are only concerned about currying favor with the Arabs because of their control of oil, money, and other kinds of resources.

If I could come away from a session like that and [have them] say, "Well, we still disagree, and you're being too hard on Israel, but we concede and we recognize that there is a basic commitment there to Israel's welfare and that the United States will not pursue any policies" which, certainly by their reckoning and any reasonably objective reckoning, are injurious or threatening to Israel. The fact that I was Jewish, that I spoke Hebrew, that I had lived in Israel, and that I came from the background that I did -- undoubtedly contributed to my credibility. Although, in [the view of] some audiences that kind of thing triggers the "traitor" kind of [epithet].

Q: "Uncle Tom" or something like that. What were some of the major issues [you faced during your time on the desk]? You were there from when to when?

KULICK: This was from mid-1976 to mid-1978. The issue of [Jewish] settlements [in the Occupied Territories] was very "hot" then, even though the number of settlements and the number of settlers was one-tenth of what [they are] now. The U. S. still had not, if you will, reconciled itself to the inevitability of this process as, I think, the Reagan administration, to its discredit, did -- to its great discredit it did. Every new settlement occasioned an announcement by the State Department spokesman, articles in the newspapers, and a whole debate on whether they were "legal" or not. The position of the State Department at that point was still that the settlements were not only an obstacle to peace, which was the point which was settled on by the Reagan administration, but that they were "illegal" under international law. Of course, you can

imagine that [that position] gave many Jewish lawyers a field day. Although most don't [practice] international law, there were several who prepared very trenchant and scholarly legal defenses. This was an issue that was debated endlessly. As I say, ultimately the Reagan administration withdrew from that position, either because they felt it wasn't worth fighting for or because they had a Legal Adviser [in the State Department] who had a different or more sympathetic view. That was one issue.

Q: How did you get involved?

KULICK: Human rights questions were also very controversial. It was during that period, under the Carter administration, that the State Department began issuing annual human rights reports. I wrote the first report [on Israel].

Q: This must have been the "touchiest" one. Surely, everybody must have been looking over your shoulder to see how this would be done, because all the other [reports] were difficult, but this one...

KULICK: Every word was parsed and every comma was examined. Long after all the other reports were in, that one was still outstanding.

Q: The first human rights report was a seminal document. The first one really had to be just right. What happened? This was at the beginning of the Carter administration [1977]. [The report on] Israel was the most controversial. Everybody would be looking at this one. Would we be fair?

KULICK: That's right.

Q: People would say, "Is this a real report?" Because it was well known that Israel had problems. So the question asked was, "Is this real or is this another one of these..."

KULICK: The process evolved with every [issue of the Human Rights Report]. At the outset the real debate was over whether there were such things as "extenuating circumstances" and to what degree should the report try to be subjective in addressing such extenuating circumstances. The bias in the human rights community, if you will, was very much against the use of extenuating circumstances. They wanted, as much as humanly possible, all of these reports to be based on essentially the same criteria and to reflect a uniform set of analyses that would each stand on its own merits as a statement of the truth in that particular country. [In their view] it was unacceptable to say, "They've been bad, but the guys next door are even worse," or, "Well, they may have been bad, but when you consider that the previous regime was incomparably worse, these guys look pretty good."

It was inevitable that those kinds of comparisons would influence the drafter. However, the point was to try to keep the reports as "clean, uniform, and objective" as possible. That can be done with relative dispassion if you're talking about Lesotho or Burma or Australia. Nobody really cares very much [about them]. But when you got to Israel, it mattered enormously, because, first, Israel was by far the largest recipient of United States aid and military assistance and political

support out of all proportion to its strategic value or any of the other criteria normally applied to these kinds of positions. Secondly, most of that [aid and support] was based on the proposition that Israel was a democracy, Israel was "like us" in an area very alien and very hostile to our values. Therefore, Israel "deserved" all of this support, not because American Jews had an emotional attachment [to Israel] but because, objectively speaking, this was a country with which we had a great deal in common and whose support and security were a vital security interest of the United States.

Any report like this which undermined that proposition was clearly very threatening. A report which said that the Israelis torture people, blow up people's houses, and expel people without due process and so forth would be very damaging. All of those things happened [in Israel], to one degree or another. The question was how do you treat them? Do you minimize them, do you ignore them, do you describe them with extenuating circumstances? Particularly at the very beginning of this process it [required] an enormously delicate and painstaking effort.

The first drafts [of such reports] were generally produced [by the U. S. Embassy in the country concerned]. But they were nothing more than a first draft. They were not intended to be the final report, which was produced in the State Department. The draft that came in from [the Embassy] went to the country desk, I think, and perhaps also to the Bureau of Human Rights Affairs. Basically, it was the desk and the Human Rights Bureau that produced the draft which everyone else looked at. There was a big struggle between the Human Rights Bureau and the various desks.

Q: Who controlled that process?

KULICK: Obviously, the Human Rights Bureau would say, "Oh, the desks suffer from clientitis. They're going to make these things come out 'right.' Only we have the [necessary], lofty kind of objectivity." The desks said, "Oh, the hell with that. These are not just academic documents." That was the nexus of the struggle.

Q: We're talking about the Human Rights Bureau, a new organization under a "true believer," Pat Derian. Whom did you deal with and how did it work?

KULICK: You know, it's funny. I don't remember [the names of] the individuals involved.

Q: They allowed you to "play" with the draft first, before it [went any farther]? Perhaps the word "play" is the wrong one.

KULICK: Yes, sure, we wrote a lot of it. They were right. The draft that came from the Embassy did tend to tread too lightly on some of the less attractive aspects of the subject. But the version prepared by the desk was still looked upon by the Human Rights Bureau as far too indulgent, far too protective of the "client." This wasn't true just of Israel. This was true across the board, but without question the draft [prepared by the desk] was the version most closely looked at. When the report came out, the newspaper stories on the Human Rights Report led with a comment like, "Israel's human rights practices criticized," or, "Torture alleged," or something like that. That was the lead, even though there were 140-odd reports in the document. Anyhow, it was a real

education in the interaction of domestic politics and foreign policy.

Q: Did you feel "heat" from the Assistant Secretaries of the Near Eastern and Human Rights Bureaus? Were they sort of fighting above you on this report?

KULICK: Yes. The real, "heavy" combat did not take place at the desk level.

Q: But you could see the tracer bullets. [Laughter]

KULICK: Yes. That's a good metaphor. They would come back to us. We would be told, "Rewrite this, rewrite that, or touch this up a little bit." I think that, ultimately, what came out was pretty good. It was truly a product of the clash of ideas and perspectives.

Q: And it really set the pattern for later on, not only for yours...

KULICK: One thing that I was responsible for was that the report that came back from the Embassy treated Israel and the Occupied Territories as a unit. I said, "The first thing you have to do is to split those apart, because there are two, radically different sets of premises here. Within Israel proper [the authorities] must be judged like any other country. Israel is a democracy, and clearly there can be no distinctions as to how it treats its citizens. On the other hand, the Occupied Territories are under military occupation, which, by its very nature, is not democratic." I said, "This inevitably involves human rights practices which would not pass muster in a democratic society."

We were successful in introducing that distinction, which, I think, holds even until now. The lead paragraph [of the Report] says that these are two different situations. I haven't read the report for several years. It has waxed and waned in its harshness, depending on the political climate between the U. S. and Israel.

Q: As you were sitting on this very touchy issue, did you find, at that time, a difference between the reporting from our Consulate General in Jerusalem and that of the Embassy?

KULICK: Oh, very much so. [It took some doing to manage] that because, as you know, the Consul General in Jerusalem does not report to the Ambassador [in Tel Aviv]. That and, I guess, Hong Kong, are the only consulates general that report directly to the Secretary of State. They are, to all intents and purposes, embassies by another name, in terms of their relationships with Washington. Of course, there was a constant struggle between the Consul General and the Ambassador in Tel Aviv over that. The Embassy always tries to assert more control or authority over the Consulate General. The Consulate General always insists that it is an independent post, not hostile to the Embassy, obviously, and desirous of a good, working relationship, but a post with a different constituency, perspective, and chain of command.

There were some zealots in the Consulate General. I would say they were unabashedly pro-Palestinian. "Pro-Palestinian" doesn't necessarily mean "anti-Israel," but in the case of these two individuals I'm thinking of they were both. Their reporting, of course, was a major factor in preparing the [human rights] report on the Occupied Territories. Of course, the Embassy

weighed in very heavily on that, saying that you couldn't base the report on the [situation in] the Occupied Territories just on the basis of the reporting from the Consulate General in Jerusalem. The Embassy expressed -- I think correctly -- a major voice in that process.

There was one famous case of a young woman, a consular officer, Alexandra Johnson...

Q: She wound up on the front pages of the newspapers.

KULICK: Yes. Someone "leaked" a cable, which had the very euphonic number of "Jerusalem 1500" [Cable No. 1500 from the Consulate General in Jerusalem]. It was a cable about torture in the Occupied Territories. It became a major piece of "samizdat" in Palestinian circles. Everybody knew about it. In fact, she even wound up writing a book called, "Jerusalem 1500." She [later] left the Foreign Service. I don't know whether she leaked [the telegram] herself or whether somebody else leaked it. It became a very big stick which the "Israel bashers" [used] to try to discredit...

Q: Were you getting any outside pressure -- one, from the "Israel bashers," and, two, from AIPAC [America-Israel Public Affairs Committee]? While the process was going on, particularly since this was the first issue [of the Human Rights Report] and would be setting the mold, all of the power groups on all sides must have been trying to weigh in to set the pattern.

KULICK: Yes, but not at my level. This was going on well above my pay grade. This would have been going on at the level of the Secretary of State or, certainly, the Assistant Secretary [of the Near Eastern Bureau]. It would filter down, but in general I very rarely got a note from anybody which I could attribute to "muscle" [being exercised] by one side or the other.

Q: What was your feeling about Israel's rule in the Occupied Territories? This was during the period of the Likud Government.

KULICK: Well, [I had mixed feelings.] Prime Minister Begin came into office midway through my tour on the Israel desk.

Q: Even so. Was there a change? How did you see this, looking at this very controversial situation as a Foreign Service Officer? How did you feel that the Israelis were dealing with Palestinian problems?

KULICK: I was devastated by Begin's victory. Going back to what I was saying before about my own, personal orientation on these issues, I regarded that as a disaster. Some 15 years later I haven't changed my mind at all. I think it was a disaster for Israel. I don't accept the notion, for example, that only Begin could have returned the Sinai [Desert area to Egypt]. I think that that's baloney, although that is the argument that people often make.

Clearly, there was a change in policy. Rabin and the Labor Government did try to "hold the line" on the settlements, although they allowed themselves to be manipulated, intimidated, and kind of worn down by the Right wing in the Occupied Territories in setting up these "guerrilla" settlements which were subsequently "legitimized." When Likud came into power, they blatantly

reversed the policy of the Labor Government, which was to have established settlements in those portions of the Occupied Territories over which they felt, for security reasons, Israel had to maintain long term control. Labor had avoided establishing settlements in those areas which were thickly populated with Arabs. Under the Labor plan these areas would be returned to Arab sovereignty. Labor never accepted the idea that there would be a Palestinian state, but I think that all along the notion was that the Jordanians would come back and take over most of the land on the West Bank.

The policy of the Likud Government was antithetical to that. It sought to ensure that no segment of the Occupied Territories would [be without] Jewish settlements. [This would] make it impossible to partition the area in any way which would leave Jewish settlements out [of the consideration]. In other words, they wanted to put Jewish settlements all over the Occupied Territories, so that you would have a Bosnian type of situation. You couldn't partition the area without having to move people and thereby stirring up so much emotion that it would practically prevent it.

Q: Well, we're ready to start again.

KULICK: Let me start this phase by saying that [Prime Minister] Begin came to power just about halfway through my [period of service] on the [Israeli] desk. One of my duties during my assignment there was to help to prepare the new Ambassador, Sam Lewis, for his assignment to Tel Aviv. I made many of his arrangements. We got to be quite friendly, and just before he went out, he said that he'd like to have me come out to serve in the Embassy [in Tel Aviv] as a political officer. He was interested in building up the Hebrew-speaking component of the Embassy. Up until that point it had consisted of only one or two officers. I was thrilled at the idea, although I had a major struggle with my wife over it. I eventually accepted the Ambassador's offer and spent my last year [on the Israeli desk] getting ready to go out [to the Embassy in Tel Aviv].

Q: This was...

KULICK: The fall of 1977, which also happened to be the time of [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. This visit completely galvanized and captivated the imagination of everybody involved in the peace process and the Arab-Israeli issue. I said "peace process," but this term had not yet been invented. The Sadat visit really started the peace process.

Q: What impression did you have of Sadat at that time? What was the word in the corridors [at the State Department] about Sadat and Israel?

KULICK: Well, this man was a great visionary. Personally and single-handedly he shattered a stalemate that had lasted almost 30 years. There was nothing but the greatest of admiration for him. He was certainly an unorthodox kind of character. I mean, it goes without saying that the president of the largest Arab country who announces -- and then promptly follows through on -- a pledge to go to Jerusalem is extremely unorthodox. I recall at least one Foreign Service Officer grumbling about how he [Sadat] had "betrayed" the Arab cause. But there were very few people in the Foreign Service who had that unbalanced a sympathy for the Arab cause and saw [this

development] in that way.

Q: I was in [South] Korea at the time. It was thrilling to feel that there might be some movement.

KULICK: I remember the day that he [Sadat] made his statement. At first everyone was convinced that it was some kind of trick, that he was engaged in some sort of rhetorical flourish. However, the Israelis, to their credit, [accepted it at face value]. Of course, later on it turned out that this was a kind of "put up job." It didn't come out of the blue. The Israelis had been talking with the Egyptians behind the scenes for six months or so. The Egyptians had already gotten certain commitments from the Israelis before Sadat made his announcement. But nobody else in the world knew that, and it seemed like a "bolt out of the blue." However, the Israelis said, "Yes, sure. Come ahead." At that time many people expected Sadat to find some excuse or put up some condition, such as, "Yes, I'll come, but..." or something like, "You'll have to commit yourselves to withdrawing from the Occupied Territories." But Sadat didn't do that. It was just an incredibly thrilling four or five days. From that point on the whole atmosphere changed completely, although it took nine months after that for the Camp David Agreement to be reached, because it turned out that "one visit to Jerusalem does not a peace agreement make." All of the intervening meetings, including the one at Leeds Castle [in England in 1978] simply could not [resolve the outstanding issues]. Imagine what's going on now. They talk and they talk and they talk.

Q: You're talking about Palestinian-Israeli...

KULICK: No, it was Egyptian.

Q: Yes, but I'm talking about what's going on today.

KULICK: Right, the post-Madrid Conference talks. The Palestinians were not involved in the [discussions that led up to the Camp David Agreement]. Just the Egyptians and the Israelis. But President Carter decided that these conversations were not going to [lead anywhere] unless he personally took responsibility for them, put the prestige of the American Presidency on the line, and took the enormous gamble of inviting Sadat and Begin to Camp David. Carter basically decided that he would not let them leave until an agreement was signed. I contended then and I continue to contend that Jimmy Carter is probably the most under-appreciated President of this century. Hopefully, history will rectify that view.

Q: Usually, it does.

KULICK: Yes, the "shade" of Harry Truman can attest to that. Without [such a commitment from President Carter] the [Camp David Agreement] would not have been reached. People forget that. After [the Agreement was signed], he still had to make a trip to the Middle East himself and personally shuttle between Tel Aviv and Cairo to [ensure] that the last few unresolved issues were settled. Anyhow, the whole tenor of the office and the policy process shifted after that and became much more focused on the Sadat visit to Jerusalem to bring about a breakthrough in the peace process.

Then, of course, in March or April, 1978, the Israelis invaded Lebanon, and everybody was

terrified...

Q: This was the first incursion...

KULICK: Operation "Litani."

Q: This wasn't the one which [took the Israeli Army] all the way to Beirut.

KULICK: No, no. I can't recall what was the immediate, precipitating cause [of the 1978 incursion]. Probably, some terrorist incident. At the time it was Israel's biggest incursion into Lebanon, but it only went up as far as the Litani River.

Q: Operation "Peace for Galilee" was in 1981 or...

KULICK: 1982. I think, to the credit of the United States, that we came down very hard on the Israelis [in 1978] and told them that this [kind of behavior] just wasn't "on" and that they had to get out. We could see that the whole peace process with Egypt was at stake. If we hadn't [taken the action that we did], [this whole process] could well have fallen apart. It was against that backdrop that I went off to Israel in the summer of 1978.

Q: The last question, before we move to [your assignment to] Israel, is what was the opinion of people who were dealing with [this issue], like King Hussein of Jordan? For a long time it was considered, as you mentioned before, that when push comes to shove, Jordan eventually might take over the West Bank and be a controlling factor in the peace process. How did we feel about him at that time?

KULICK: I think we pretty much felt about him the way we feel about him today. He is, first and foremost, a "survivor." Sometimes, I think, the man has more luck than brains, when you consider all of the "bad" decisions that he's made over the years. It's quite astonishing...

Q: That he's still around.

KULICK: But he just celebrated his 40th anniversary on the throne [of Jordan]. We looked on him as very useful, obviously, and extremely important to us. I think that there were doubts about his statesmanship and about his popularity in his own country.

"Black September," you may recall, took place in 1970, I think it was.

Q: I can't remember right now. I think that it was in the early 1970's. We can add this later.

KULICK: In any case he was always [considered to be] very shaky on the throne. There was always the fear that the Palestinians were somehow going to "get" to him. We were very much committed to keeping him around. I think that at that point we probably agreed with the Israeli view -- in fact, I know that we agreed with the Israeli view -- that the ultimate solution to the West Bank problem was for Jordan to take control of [that area] again. Of course, at that point [Jordan] had never renounced its claim to the West Bank. It was not until the late 1980's that

King Hussein finally washed his hands of the West Bank -- at least, legally speaking. So we saw him as the key to any Palestinian-Israeli settlement, because we were completely opposed to any idea of an independent Palestinian state. Yet, we were also opposed to the idea of perpetual, Israeli rule [of the Occupied Territories]. The only alternative to those [possibilities] was Jordanian control of the West Bank.

Q: We'll stop now and resume this interview at the point where you went out to Israel as a political officer.

KULICK: Yes.

Q: When did you go out?

KULICK: In August, 1978.

Q: This is [date inaudible], 1993. Gil, we left you when you were [assigned] to the Political Section [in the Embassy in Tel Aviv], where you served from 1978 to 1981.

KULICK: That's right.

Q: What was the political situation [in Israel] at that time?

KULICK: I went at a very dramatic time. I believe that I went [to Tel Aviv] in August, 1978, which was a time of intense activity on the Arab-Israeli peace front. You will recall that President Sadat [of Egypt] had gone to Jerusalem in November, 1977, and made his famous and dramatic appeal to the Israeli people for peace. I was then on the Israel-American desk. I guess that we talked about that in an earlier part of this interview. I was on the desk when Sadat made his visit. That, of course, redrew the whole political map in the Middle East with a stroke, or certainly as far as the solid front against Israel which the Arabs had maintained up to that point. From November, 1977, and for the next few months there was a series of negotiations to try to convert President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem into a permanent peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. They had been "floundering," I would say, trying to find a formula which could bridge the gap.

There had been meetings in England, the most intensive and extensive of which was the meeting at Leeds Castle, I think, in April, May, or June, 1978. The "breakthrough" still eluded them. It was in August, 1978, that President Carter decided that it was going to require his personal intervention to break the logjam. The elements were there. Sadat had made his trip, and the Israelis had responded openly and warmly, but they were still too far apart to [reach agreement]. So President Carter invited Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat to Washington -- to Camp David. I don't mean to go into all of the details of the Camp David [negotiations]. I wasn't there, but everybody knows that it was the real "watershed" in the history of the relations between Israel and its neighbors.

I was [serving in the Embassy] in Tel Aviv in September, 1978. I had just been there about a month when the [Camp David] Agreement was signed. Of course, it electrified [everyone in

Israel]. The whole Camp David process had riveted the attention of everyone in Israel. When the announcement was finally made that an agreement had been reached, it was probably the most dramatic moment of my career, in terms of the political environment in which I was working.

Q: I think that one's senses are sharpest when you first get to a place. As you had come from the Israel Desk [in Washington], you were already sensitized. What was your impression of the reaction [in Israel], across the political spectrum, as far as the Camp David Agreement was concerned? Were people pretty favorable [to it]?

KULICK: You will recall that the negotiation was entered into and was conducted by a Right Wing government [in Israel] -- by far the most conservative government that Israel had ever had. If this same negotiation had been carried out by the Labor Party, one could have expected massive opposition to it and, perhaps, "blood in the streets" and so forth. The fact that the [negotiations] were conducted by [Prime Minister] Begin and the Likud Party gave [the agreement] far more legitimacy with the [political] Right [in Israel] than would have been possible otherwise. You often hear the "Nixon to China" analogy used very loosely. I don't "buy" that, but it was that sort of motif, which explains why the Israeli Government was able to bring most of the people along. Certainly, there was a very Far Right faction which was much opposed to the Agreement. However, by and large, [the Agreement] was welcomed with open arms by the Israelis, because, I think, Egypt and the occupied Egyptian territory in the Sinai [Desert] played a very different role in the Israeli psyche than the territory of Palestine proper, that is, the West Bank and Gaza. Prime Minister Begin was able to reach an agreement which, in principle, and ultimately in practice, provided for the complete return of [the Sinai Desert] without evoking the kind of emotional response that we're now seeing in the negotiations with the Palestinians.

Q: And also the Golan Heights weren't looking down on [Israel].

KULICK: The Golan Heights weren't involved.

Q: Yes, so this was something that was, in a way, "out of sight."

KULICK: There was no emotional attachment to the Sinai. It was purely a security issue in the minds of all but a tiny handful of people in Israel.

Q: What areas did you cover as a political officer, at least to start with, and how did they develop? Then, how did you go about doing your work?

KULICK: I had several "portfolios." One of them was the whole question of the Occupied Territories, Israeli settlements and settlers, and human rights practices in the West Bank and Gaza. I was the person in the Embassy who wrote [the first draft of] the Human Rights Report. I visited the settlements and reported on Israeli settlement activity and so forth. I also handled the whole "international organization" account. So it was my responsibility to handle [all of our contacts] with the Israelis regarding UN resolutions and the UN system [as a whole]. As you know -- at least it seemed to me at the time -- most of the political work we did in the UN, in one way or the other, always ended up with Israel's position.

Q: It always seemed to end up that way.

KULICK: So it occupied an inordinately disproportionate amount of time, relative to the real significance of it. But we had to give it the time it demanded.

Finally, because I spoke fluent Hebrew and had lived in Israel before, I backed up the officer in the Political Section who dealt with Israeli domestic affairs. This meant primarily covering the Knesset and so forth. I was clearly being groomed to take over that position when he left, which I did, a year later, when my "portfolio" changed. I still followed the settlements, but someone else covered the UN, and I focused almost exclusively on the domestic, political scene. I probably drafted two or three telegrams a day. The debate on the peace process occupied a fairly large part of my work, as well as Israeli reactions to various bilateral issues, and so forth.

When I went out to Tel Aviv, I don't think that my rank in the [Political Section] was specified, beyond the fact that I was an O-1. Most of the people in the Political Section were O-1's and O-2's. But about two months after I got there, the Political Counselor called me in and said that he was very dissatisfied with the person who had been designated as [his] deputy. He felt that [this person] wasn't competent to do the job. He didn't draft well at all and didn't have the contacts that I had. He said that he was going to designate me as his deputy. That made me a little uncomfortable because this other guy had come out [to Tel Aviv] with that assignment. He was, in fact, the Labor Attaché, as well, and was an FSO [Foreign Service Officer]. But I said that I was perfectly prepared to take on the job and I said that I hoped that [the Political Counselor] could do this in a way that wouldn't "poison" my relations with [the Labor Attaché]. The Political Counselor had no problem with that. He was a very tough...

Q: Who was the Political Counselor?

KULICK: Bob Blackwill, a man reputed for his heavy hand in dealing with colleagues. However, perhaps precisely because he was so tough-minded, I found that I learned a great deal from him.

Anyhow, the change was effected. The other guy, in effect, was demoted back down to his regular position as a political officer, and I was named Deputy Political Counselor. That was the role which I filled during [the rest] of the time I was there [in the Embassy in Tel Aviv].

Q: Let's talk a bit about the human rights issue. We've already talked about [how this issue was handled] in the Department. For Israel, more than anything else, [this issue] is extremely important politically. It's important domestically as well as in foreign [policy terms].

KULICK: It was as sensitive as it was important.

Q: All right, sensitive. Did you find that there was a difference in reporting on [this issue] in Israel than when you were back in Washington, putting together [the Israeli section of the annual Human Rights Report]? You had the West Bank [issues], you had allegations of mistreatment -- maybe more than allegations...

KULICK: Of torture.

Q: Torture, and the whole business. The Israeli Defense Forces are not exactly a benevolent organization.

KULICK: But bear in mind that this was long before the "Intifada" [Palestinian uprising]. For the first, I would say, 15 years of the occupation, the Israeli occupation was, on the whole, a benign or a benevolent occupation. I accept the view of those who say that that is [somewhat of a contradiction in terms], because there is no such thing as a benign or benevolent occupation. Nevertheless, one can make relative comparisons to other kinds of military occupations. By those standards one would have to say that the Israeli occupation was a "relatively" benign [occupation]. That is to say, it was carried out with a minimum of brutality and a minimum of bloodshed. But having said that, I found that there were a lot of distasteful aspects to Israeli behavior [in the Occupied Territories].

However, the first thing that we did, when I wrote the [Israeli section of the] first Human Rights Report in 1976, was to divide the report into Israel itself and the Occupied Territories, making it quite clear that different circumstances obtained [in each area] and [that there was very] different behavior. Within Israel proper the behavior [of the police and security forces] could stand up pretty well against that of most Western democracies, although, given the kind of "siege" circumstances under which they lived. Even within the "Green Line" [Israel proper] there were practices to which we would not give a 100% bill of health. There was [the practice of] detention without trial and that sort of thing. They used coercive methods of interrogation, and so forth. But by and large [their practices] would stand up against the records of most Western political democracies.

In the Occupied Territories there was obviously a different situation. Again, the clear caveat at the beginning of all this is that a military occupation is not a democratic situation. The responsibility of the military there is to maintain their security. Within those [parameters] practices are -- I don't wish to say "sanctioned" or "approved" -- but "recognized" as necessary which would not be acceptable in a democratic kind of situation. The point that I always made was that these practices -- and, again, I'm choosing my words carefully -- can be "tolerated," though I wouldn't say "sanctioned" -- only if the occupation is a temporary and transitional arrangement toward an evolution, at the end of which the people there are accorded some form of self-determination. If the military occupation, in fact, turns out to be a "permanent" state of affairs, then one cannot make those kinds of rationalizations. It then becomes a dictatorship or a tyrannical situation, rather than a less than perfect situation necessitated by the need to bring about a transition to democracy.

But the issue was controversial -- within the Embassy and between the Embassy and the Consulate General in Jerusalem. There was always a running battle...

Q: Can you talk [a little more] about this? Part of what we're trying to do is to show the dynamics of the foreign policy apparatus. And this is one of the classic cases.

KULICK: Yes, it is. At its most fundamental level there was always a question of "Who's in

charge?" in Jerusalem. Under our legal definition of "jurisdiction" applicable in the area, Jerusalem was not, formally speaking, part of Israel. It was a contested area, whose status had not yet been finally determined. Our Consul General in Jerusalem was not accredited to the Government of Israel, in any formal sense.

Q: Who was the Consul General then?

KULICK: When I was there [in Tel Aviv], there were two: Mike Newlin, who was later replaced by Brandon Grove. In the "Foreign Service List" [the post is not called] "Jerusalem, Israel." It is simply "Jerusalem." The consular stamp which we placed on people's visas and passports says, "Jerusalem." This is a matter of great sensitivity with the Israelis. The more sophisticated Israelis recognize this as a fact of life. Journalists were always bringing it up, and indignant American Jews and indignant Israelis would, from time to time, make an issue of this. But it was even controversial within the Department, in the sense that no one challenged the formal distinction between Jerusalem and Israel. However, there was naturally a [certain] level of tension between the Ambassador and the Consul General. It was all handled in Foreign Service terms. No one formally challenged the jurisdiction [of the Consulate General], but the Consulate General regarded itself -- and no one would have ever acknowledged this -- as a sort of "proto-Embassy" or "crypto-Embassy" to Palestine. Or at least certain individuals within the Consulate General [so regarded it]. I wouldn't say that that necessarily applied to the Consul General.

The Consul General had a very difficult job because he had to be on good terms with both [Israeli and Palestinian] communities. Everything he might do to ingratiate himself with one community -- automatically and in a Newtonian kind of balance -- would alienate the other guys. If he didn't get along with the Israelis, his life was going to be unpleasant. So we had two [office] buildings -- one in East and one in West Jerusalem. We had two Christmas parties -- one in East and one in West Jerusalem. The Consul General's residence and the main office building, if you will, were in West Jerusalem. But the Israelis consistently and always talked about the American Consulate in East Jerusalem as a way of driving home [their view] that we "tilted" toward the Palestinians.

You asked about human rights. This dichotomy was very clear in the way that human rights developments were reported. [One officer in] the Consulate General who was there when I was [in the Embassy in Tel Aviv] ended up by resigning from the Foreign Service and publishing a book about Israeli human rights practices.

Q: Who was that?

KULICK: Her name was Alexandra Johnson.

Q: I remember. She was on the front page of the newspapers at one point.

KULICK: Yes. She wrote a book called, "Jerusalem 1500," which happened to be the number of a telegram which she had drafted, a [cable which denounced] torture in Israeli prisons in the Occupied Territories. The cable was "leaked," and there was a huge "to do" about it. [In my personal view] she wasn't suited to the Foreign Service. She had clearly become very partisan

and emotional on this issue.

However, when the Embassy reported on this issue, [it tended to be] from the perspective of the Embassy's "client," the Government of Israel. Well, any Foreign Service Officer will understand the situation automatically. [The Consulate General in] Jerusalem was reporting from the point of view of its "clients," the Palestinians. So this kind of thing went on all the time -- on settlement activity, and so on. Whenever there was any question, the Consulate General would always [tend to] "tilt" on the side of exaggerating or highlighting the more damning version of the story as to what was going on at any particular time or place.

This [situation] also affected relationships between individual [Foreign Service Officers]. My counterpart in Jerusalem and I used to have a lot of arguments about it.

Q: I was wondering whether there was ever any effort made to "get together" and have lunch, because of what was almost built-in antagonism. [This kind of situation] sometimes happens between our Embassies in India [and] Pakistan. But here you were so close together.

KULICK: Well, [we saw] each other practically every day. It might be interesting [to discuss this further] for the purposes of this interview. The Embassy, of course, was in Tel Aviv. But as [the Israelis] didn't recognize it [Tel Aviv] as the capital [of Israel], [virtually] all of our [Embassy] business was carried out in Jerusalem. Sometimes, the Ambassador would literally make 10 trips a week [to Jerusalem]. He once said that he made three trips up and back between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in one day. The Ambassador's chauffeur [could drive along the road] almost in his sleep. He could make the trip in about 50 minutes. An average driver might take one hour and 10 minutes. But the Ambassador did a lot of his business in the car. He would dictate cables on his way back from Jerusalem. I was probably up in Jerusalem three or four times a week, for example], going to the Knesset or Parliament, which was my principal "beat."

It was a funny kind of "split" existence that we lived. [The Embassy] had a suite of rooms at the King David Hotel [in West Jerusalem to accommodate Embassy people] who were up there [in Jerusalem] late at night and didn't want to go back [to Tel Aviv]. We saw our colleagues [in the Consulate General] a fair amount. I would say that the relations on a personal level were really quite good. I mean that none of us took [this problem] so personally that it really interfered [with our duties]. However, on a professional level [it was different].

Q: When a cable would go out from [the Consulate General in] Jerusalem, presenting, you might say, "the dark side of the moon" regarding action on settlements or something like that, would you feel constrained [to comment in another cable] or would the Ambassador say, "Here, we've got to get [our view on record]?"

KULICK: It happened. Again, [you are putting it in] very stark terms. [We] didn't have sharp confrontations. One point on which [the Consulate General in] Jerusalem always stood very firmly was that they were not required to "clear" their reporting with the Embassy. On the other hand, a certain amount of discretion was required. When the [Consulate General in Jerusalem was] preparing a report to which they thought the Embassy might take exception, we'd get a "back channel" copy for comment. There was a pretty high degree of cooperation on these

things. Obviously, the Consulate General would like to avoid a situation where they would send something in, and the Embassy would come back with a rocket which would say, "No, this is nonsense." Occasionally, the differences couldn't be negotiated out, and you'd have these two different versions. But, on the whole, it was all solved in a diplomatic kind of way.

Q: But you were both working with the thought that this could end up in the press very quickly, through leaks and so forth.

KULICK: Well, not usually, but it occasionally happened, as in the case of [the telegram known as] "Jerusalem 1500." In this case the officer in question had become so emotionally embroiled in all of this that, I think, she arranged to [get its text] into the press. But I think that most people were pretty professional about it.

I remember that on one occasion there was a visit by a Congressional Delegation. The Ambassador went up to Jerusalem to brief them. It was sort of a joint Consulate General-Embassy briefing. This may have happened more than once -- I don't know. There was a younger officer at the Consulate General -- not the woman in question, but another person -- who challenged the Ambassador. The Ambassador said something to these Congressmen about something that was going on in the Occupied Territories on the West Bank. This [Consulate General] officer stood up and said, "No, that's not right, Mr. Ambassador." This guy was almost on the next plane out of town, but he managed to [resolve this] problem. I don't know whether this was just personal indiscretion or a surfeit of zeal or what. That was unusual. Usually, these things were kept within the family.

Q: How about on the Israeli side? Here you were, reporting on sensitive issues. Did you find that the Israelis were making an effort to "get to you" and make sure that "their" side [was heard]? If something happened on the West Bank which was brought to the attention of our Consulate General there, would some [Israeli] come and "work" on you and say, "Hey, this isn't really what happened" or something like that?

KULICK: We were rarely dealing with specific episodes or incidents. It was not a situation where there was a massacre or a big "shoot out" or something like that, and [the Israelis] would come and say, "Those guys shot first." It was much more a collective kind of reporting -- on the general situation, rather than a specific incident. However, the Israelis in the Foreign Ministry, the Prime Minister's Office, and other places monitored very closely at least what came out in public in the U. S. They would go out of their way to correct the record, as they saw it, if necessary. I don't want to distort the picture. This was not the sole or even the primary focus of our [contacts] with the Israeli Government. What we've been talking about was my "beat." But we had eight political officers in an Embassy to a country of three million people. We had the same size Political Section that we had in Moscow or Tokyo. So you can imagine that there were very, very few aspects of Israeli political life that were not the subject of American Embassy interest.

Q: When I was in Italy, I used to think that at times we got too involved in political life there [and] that American interests, in reality, [were not fully considered]. You can step back, as it were, and wonder where, for example, the Israeli ship of state is going.

KULICK: We had no problem in maintaining perspective between the particular and the general. Sam Lewis was an outstanding Ambassador. He is a genius and a first-rate diplomat, in my opinion. He never lost sight, for a second, of where things were going. He certainly was the most effective Ambassador that I ever dealt with. I would guess that there were very few members of our profession as effective as he was in doing what he was sent out to do -- though not always in a manner that pleased everybody. There were a lot of people who thought that he was much too close to [Prime Minister] Begin and too close to the Israelis. I thought that myself, sometimes, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I think that, whatever slightly excessive intimacy or excessive sympathy there may have been, it gave him an influence and an access that was absolutely unparalleled. That is, assuming that you use this access judiciously and when you really need it. Access counts for nothing if all it does is ingratiate you [with the government] and make you reluctant to come down hard when you have to.

[Ambassador Lewis] was a major player on the Israeli political scene. He used to be called the "Pro-Consul." He had a number of nicknames like that. He was a major figure on the social scene in Israel, too. A social event was not complete without Sam and Sally Lewis. He was preceded [in Tel Aviv] by Ambassador Malcolm Toon, for example, who was a disaster. I don't know if you know Toon. He was a very confrontational, very pugnacious sort. He thought that his job out there was to tell the Israelis how to suck eggs. They were having none of this at all. As a result, he may have gone to bed at night, thinking that he had stood up for America and told [the Israelis] where to get off, but as an Ambassador, he was useless. Lewis didn't pound his chest or pound the table, but neither did he simply roll over and act like a lap dog.

Q: I'm told by people who served in Tel Aviv that it is sort of a unique experience because you almost get "consumed." The political and social life is so active. Everything is an argument, but of a fascinating nature. You are intellectually engaged.

KULICK: No question about that. People would ask me, "What's it like to be [in Israel]?" I'd say, "Never a dull moment." They'd say, "Great," and I'd say, "No. I'd like a dull moment once in a while. I was there three years and I never had a dull moment." You need a dull moment. The pace is absolutely relentless. Again, I was there during the period between the Camp David Agreement, on the one end, and the evacuation of the Sinai on the other. This [period] was probably the most intense three years in Israeli political history. I suspect that during the "deep freeze" period, say, between about 1983, when the treaty was negotiated and the autonomy negotiations fizzled out, and about a year ago, when Rabin came in [as Prime Minister], the pace was probably somewhat more moderate. However, I doubt that it ever calmed down to what it would be like in a typical, European capital. You know, it's not for everybody, but I thrived on it. I must say that I had a particular, personal vocation for all of this. I'd lived in Israel as a student, I'd studied at the Hebrew University, I speak Hebrew, and I've had an intense involvement with Israel and with the whole Zionist enterprise since I was a kid. But at no point did it ever, I think, obscure my judgment about where U. S. interests lay, because my view of what needed to be done in Israel was virtually indistinguishable from the view of the U. S. Government. Therefore, I felt that I was doing the Lord's work by pushing the Israelis in the direction that they needed to go. Of course, a very large percentage of the Israeli people felt exactly the same way.

I used to be asked all the time, "What's it like, being a Jew in the [American] Embassy in Israel? Isn't it hard? Don't you find yourself torn by a conflict of interest, an emotional [tension]?" No, absolutely not, not for a minute. The only difficult part of it was watching the Israelis trying to figure out who I was and where I was coming from. But that was more amusing than troublesome, because I speak fluent Hebrew and I was intimately familiar with the situation and the players. I clearly was not dispassionate on the subject but I always had my eye on my mission as a Foreign Service Officer.

Q: Was any effort ever made to... "Compromise" is the wrong way to say it. Perhaps "co-opt" is the right word?

KULICK: Never. I was quite astonished, in fact. I picked up comments from various people, way over on the [Israeli] Right, who would refer to "house Jews" and that kind of stuff. You know, when Secretary of State Kissinger went out [to Israel], he got a lot of abuse from the [Israeli] Far Right. Someone held up a sign at the airport which said, "Jew Boy, Go Home." This was really vicious, defamatory kind of stuff. No, I think that people [in Israel] understood, however much they might disagree with my position on the issues. They knew where I was coming from. I think that, all in all, [being a Jew] was a tremendous asset for me.

I'm pretty sure that I referred to this in the previous segment of this interview, when I described how I happened to be assigned to the Israel desk [in the State Department]. But I described that several months ago and I don't recall exactly how I put it. At that time, when I went to talk about the job [on the Israel desk], it was against the tradition of 30 years. There was [a certain] "understanding" that [American] Jews were not assigned to Israel or even to work on Israeli affairs. I mentioned that that [tradition] was broken, as in the case of Kissinger's service as Secretary of State. In fact, Ambassador Sam Lewis viewed the presence of people who knew the language and were familiar with the country as a tremendous asset. In the eight-person Political Section in which I served at one time seven of the eight were Jews -- or, at least, six persons plus one other whose wife was Jewish. Only the Political Counselor [was not Jewish]. In the case of Charles Hill he might as well [have been Jewish] in terms of his sentiments.

I found that, notwithstanding the puzzlement which my role there elicited, on the whole I was able to "break the ice" and establish relationships with Israelis that would have been hard for anyone else to do. I think that I had far more personal connections than anybody else in the Embassy, except for the Ambassador, who almost literally knew everybody in the country well. They were all his close, personal friends. I think that, in many ways, he thought of them that way. He was an extraordinary person.

In any case, in response to your question, there were absolutely no efforts made to "co-opt" me. I don't think that anybody [in Israel] really felt that that would be necessary. They didn't see me as an enemy, even though, as I say, I had a lot of very acrimonious arguments with Israelis, particularly [those] on the Right.

Q: I think that this [situation happens] quite often in other places. For example, there are the Greek-Americans. For the professionals in the [Foreign Service] it's not a big issue. They're serving in a [given] country where they have [close family connections or ties of sympathy].

They know where their allegiance and interests lie. What often happens is that you have people who come out as "politicians" or people who are "super Greek" or "super Jewish" or something like that back in the United States. They come either for a very short time as political appointees or just as visitors and have a harder time seeing this. There are other countries like this. We are all "hyphenated" Americans.

KULICK: We have had Greek-American Ambassadors to Greece. We've never had a Jewish Ambassador to Israel.

Q: I'm not sure that this has worked very well.

KULICK: I know that we had Ambassador Sotirhos who, according to people who worked for him, was very, very effective, though they couldn't stand him. He was a real son of a bitch in dealing with his staff but apparently he got along famously with the Greeks.

Q: How about visiting delegations? The normal visiting delegation will come with a certain amount of history and "baggage," particularly in the case of a country like Israel -- sort of with "stars in their eyes." They might resent somebody at the Embassy saying, "Yes, but it's not quite that way" or something like that.

KULICK: I didn't have much personal experience with things like that. Mercifully, I was spared dealing with visiting delegations. In fact, the best thing about my job was that I dealt exclusively with Israelis. I didn't deal with the Diplomatic Corps, I didn't deal with CODEL's and I had relatively few dealings with other [U. S. Government] agencies there. I spent my time with Israelis. During a typical work day I didn't get out of the Embassy as much as I would have liked to, because the work load was so heavy. I used to spend most of my time in the Embassy -- about 12 hours a day. We would routinely work 65 hour weeks. But nobody could find time [to do all that he wanted] because it was so absorbing and so exhilarating.

Q: How about spending time with your wife and your family?

KULICK: Well, to their credit, they loved being there [in Israel] so much, too, that they didn't mind my not being around. If [the Embassy in Tel Aviv] had been a place where having Dad at home was the only break from a day full of drudgery, boredom, or conflict with the surroundings, it would have been different. But I'd routinely leave home at 7:30 AM and get home at 7:30-8:00 PM, and work on Saturdays until 3:00-4:00 PM. Rarely did I get any flack. I could never have gotten away with that in Washington.

Q: Going now to your focus on the Knesset and [Israeli] personalities, how did we look at the Likud Party and particularly Begin, Sharon, and other figures -- at least during your time there? What was your view of them?

KULICK: It was clear that these people weren't our "friends." It was clear to me. Ambassador Lewis always maintained a very statesmanlike neutrality. He never revealed his [feelings] on anything having to do with the Israeli Government. To this day I don't know what he thought of Menachem Begin. I'm sure he didn't like Arik Sharon -- nobody could deal with that guy,

without feeling [at least some] distaste for [him]. However, I would say that in my reporting I let [my feelings] "hang out" a bit more than most people did. However, I was not assigned there to indulge my tastes or ideology. I was there to report on what's going on, to analyze it, and to tell Washington what we ought to be doing about it. I would love to have served [in Israel] when there was a Labor Party Government in power, because, by contrast with the Likud Party, it must have felt like "hog heaven." On the other hand, no doubt, when you got down to specifics, before 1977 I'm sure that the Embassy found itself in a situation involving some [conflict]. Dealing with Israelis will always be that way because they will always push you as far as they can. Even your friends will try to push you beyond where you want to go. In a sense it's a little easier dealing with less friendly guys because you feel fewer conflicts about drawing the line.

I spent a lot of time at the Knesset. I had a pass to the Members' Dining room. I was one of only about 10 non-Israelis who had a standing pass. I could go in any time. I'd spend hours there, just gossiping and talking with guys -- picking their brains. A lot of them saw me as a conduit to the Ambassador -- at least the ones who didn't talk directly to him. If they had a direct tie to the Ambassador, they weren't interested in talking to me. But that involved [only] a few people at the top. I dealt primarily with "echelon one and a half," I guess.

Q: How did this work out? You had this contact with a very active Parliament. However, in a practical sense, what did this mean as far as your reporting went? Were you just informing [the Department] or did it mean that you were trying to get something done?

KULICK: I spent a lot of time just arguing with these guys, trying to tell them what our policy was and what it wasn't, and why we took the positions that we did. This did not involve a conflict between Israel and the United States. With some people that's an exercise in utter futility. You can't convince someone who thinks that the United States is out to "do Israel in" -- to destroy [the country] by stages -- that you have anything in common. But for people who are a little more dispassionate, who can recognize that there may be tactical disagreements here within a general, strategic convergence of view, a conversation like that can be a lot of fun. You make some points. At the end of the day you may feel that you have enlightened people, perhaps opened their minds a bit, gotten them to think a little further about their positions. I wouldn't exaggerate this. It was not my principal role or that of anybody else in the Embassy. We were not there to "convert" Israelis. We were there, I think, in large measure, to make sure that they at least understand what our position was.

That's a big job. Views get distorted in the press and by people who don't like us and who exaggerate [these matters] to make them even more unpalatable. But it was a lot of fun, because these are great people.

Q: I would like to serve there because this sounds like fun.

KULICK: It was a political officer's dream. I know that when you serve in places like the former communist world, you spend all of your time, grasping for the most meager crumbs of information. You read "Pravda" and try to figure out why the comma is here [instead of there]. In Israel you were just inundated with information. You cannot possibly absorb all of it. There are six daily newspapers which you have to go through. If you don't speak Hebrew, you rely on the

translation. I'm afraid that my reading knowledge of Hebrew was not so good that I could sit down and read all the newspapers. We had a three-person translation staff in the Political Section which did nothing but translate articles. I supervised them, [in addition to] my other duties.

There are three million [Israelis] whom you can talk to. And they'll all talk to you. They're all more than eager to get their views across [to you]. So there's no problem whatever about getting information. The problem is sorting it out and making sense out of it.

Q: Were there any major issues that you were trying to get across during this three-year period that you were there [in Israel]?

KULICK: The peace process was obviously the focal point of our whole relationship. Equally obviously, we were in it up to our necks. As I was the "point" person for domestic political [activities], I spent a great deal of time explaining why we advocated what we did and trying to get through some of the nuances of [this issue]. For example, explaining why we took the position we did on settlements and why we considered them an obstacle to peace. I wouldn't think that that would require a lot of explanation, but if your definition of "peace" is getting the Palestinians simply to roll over and accept permanent [Israeli] occupation, obviously, [our position] doesn't fit in with that conception.

We also tried to interpret what was going on in the Arab world. I didn't deal with that so much. That wasn't really my "beat," but I'd pick up a lot [of information] in the sense of the real intentions of the Syrians and Egyptians and why [the situation] is not as bad as [our contacts] seemed to think. Without sharing intelligence with them from Embassy reporting and elsewhere, you can pass on an awful lot of information that will fill in gaps in their understanding of what's going on in the Arab world.

Q: Did you find the Israeli media and the politicians well-informed about what really was happening? Did they have -- I won't say "objective," because that's the wrong term. But did they have a relatively realistic idea of the dynamics of, say, Syria, Egypt, [and other Arab states]?

KULICK: There was a significant body of Israelis who were quite expert on the Arab world. They included scholars and journalists who read Arabic, who can listen to broadcasts in Arabic, and who can easily read [these statements with or without] translation. They have a relatively sophisticated understanding. But there were very few Israelis who knew this [situation] from the [point of view] of "understanding the enemy." And if that's your point of view, you have a built-in distortion. It's kind of like the Hubbell [satellite] telescope. If you shave the mirror too thin, it's going to throw the focus off. Obviously, [these Arab countries] were their enemies, but not genetically programmed to be so, not implacably so, and ultimately people that they were going to have to deal with. So you had to "break through" that preconception [that the Arabs were] people implacably opposed to their existence. You can understand the dynamic, but you may believe that their current plan is to destroy you, rather than that they need to reach some kind of reconciliation with you. I'm no expert on the Arab world and that wasn't one of my principal concerns. But, inevitably, I wound up spending a lot of time talking about things like that.

We haven't really talked about internal [Israeli politics], which is what I really concentrated on. I

wasn't there to argue with them or tell them [what to do]. I was there to understand what was going on within the Israeli political structure, which was as fascinating as any internal political process that I can imagine. [Israel] had a full spectrum in its representative parliament that ran from communists to [people who were] practically neo-fascists. Perhaps "fascist" isn't really the right word, but they were an extremely hard-line, conservative faction that advocated, for example, the expulsion of all of the Arabs from the Occupied Territories. They were a fringe, just as the communists were a fringe. In the middle you had divisions along religious versus secular lines and, obviously, Arab versus Jew. And you also had splits within Israeli Jewry, not only between religious and non-religious but between Sephardis, people of North African and Middle Eastern origins, and Ashkenazis, people of European origins.

There was a very significant split, not so much on the major political issues but on domestic, social [matters] concerning the division of the "pie" and so forth. The Likud Party played that very effectively and really came to power, not so much because of its advocacy of a "hard line" toward the Arabs, but because it was able to convince a significant portion of the Sephardic, lower working class that they were being "screwed" by the European, Ashkenazi, oligarchic, upper class [Jews]. There were many efforts to manipulate class consciousness and ethnic [awareness]. It was a significant element in Israeli political life. It had nothing to do with attitudes toward the peace process. The tendency among diplomats and foreigners is to see everything from that point of view, because that was so important to us. Among other things, what I tried to do was to point out that there were a lot of other things going on which had nothing to do with the peace process. They had to do with how economic benefits are distributed, how the economy was organized, and the resentment of secular against religious [Jews] who played a disproportionately powerful role in political life because of the way the system is structured.

The [Israeli] Parliament was [elected under a process of] proportional representation. You needed only one percent [of the votes] to obtain representation in Parliament, so there were 15 [political] parties there at any given time. [As a result, there were] razor thin coalitions which were always dependent on the votes of these small, usually religious parties. They were essentially "for sale," usually to the highest bidder -- the [coalition] that gave the religious [parties] the most influence over domestic life and the most money to run their institutions. They were very corrupt. It was a very corrupt system -- not so much personally corrupt but institutionally corrupt. These were all things that were important for Washington to understand -- how decisions are made there [in Israel]

Q: Did you make any headway in making contacts within the religious parties, or were they a little more difficult [to approach]?

KULICK: They were more difficult because they weren't interested in a lot of the issues that we were interested in. The issues [in which they were concerned] were far more parochial. They had a few, fairly sophisticated spokesmen. Well, they all played the "Knesset game" very well, but not in terms that related particularly to what was on our agenda regarding Israel. They didn't, by and large, care that much about the peace process. They'd go along with whichever party made them the best offer. Until 1977 that was "the Left," the Labor Party. After 1977, when the Likud emerged as the largest single party, the "line" of the religious parties moved sharply to the Right.

That is not to say that that was the only reason. There has been a steady, Rightward drift in Israeli national life since the beginning [of the independence of Israel] in 1948. The parties that today are considered "centrist" were considered "Far Right" 50 years ago. The parties that are now on the "Left" were considered "centrist" parties way back then, when the "Left"...

Q: At the time [they sought] sort of a socialist utopia. How did you find that the Israeli Government worked?

KULICK: A would-be socialist utopia.

Q: Looking at it as an American, how did the [Israeli] Government work? How did they "deliver the goods" when you were there as far as social programs -- food and all the things...

KULICK: You start off with the fact that Israel had a parliamentary, rather than a presidential system, so that the whole process by which decisions are made and goods are distributed is quite different from our system. I think that much more of [this process] went on in Parliament than would be the case here in the United States. The government, in any parliamentary system, is an extension of the majority party or coalition in the Parliament. And politics are much more personal than they are here, in dealing with a country of 3.5 million people. So you need to know the personal histories of a lot of these people to understand their relationships with other members of the government. Menachem Begin's aunt was [Arik] Sharon's "wet nurse," or something like that. There's not a whole lot of intermarriage in the sense you have in a dynastic monarchy. However, it was important to know the personal histories of these people. It took a lot of time to get to know them.

Q: Then you left [Israel] and just moved over a little to the South? You left [Tel Aviv] in 1981?

KULICK: No. I came back to Washington. [Tel Aviv] was my last overseas post [in the Foreign Service].

Q: I thought that you went out to the Sinai.

KULICK: No. I went to the unit [in the State Department] here in Washington that was setting up the multinational observer force, established [under the] Israel-Egypt peace treaty. This was a multinational [operation] outside the UN system because the UN, of course, completely rejected the Camp David Agreement and would not or could not provide a peacekeeping force. However, one of the conditions that the Israelis insisted on was that there be a kind of multinational force out there in the Sinai to monitor Egyptian activities and serve as a "trip wire." So the U. S. took it on itself to organize such a force, which we did. I volunteered to serve in the group that was putting this force together, frankly because I hoped to stay in Israel -- an option which I had failed to exercise at the time that I should have and which I could have done, at the end of my second year [in Tel Aviv].

But at that point my wife was very eager to get back to the United States. We weren't too happy with our son's schooling. However, by the end of the third year [in Tel Aviv] we had changed our minds. But it was really too late to stay on in my Embassy position. I saw this Sinai

possibility as a way of staying there. Anyhow, I did get involved in that group, but all of the work was done back here in Washington.

Q: I know that time is moving on. This is almost a parenthesis to [your assignment to] the Italian desk.

KULICK: I was [on the Sinai planning group] for close to a year. I should say, just to put the cap on the Israeli segment of my career, that in the summer of 1982 I went back out to the Embassy [in Tel Aviv] for about four weeks on TDY [temporary duty]. Again, this was my wife's idea. [She said], why not offer myself to the Embassy as a utility person?. The war in Lebanon had broken out. I knew that the Embassy [in Tel Aviv] would be "stretched," with transitions between assignments and so forth. So I prevailed on Ambassador Sam Lewis to bring me out there. The Embassy gave me an [airline] ticket. I found my own housing. I "house sat" for somebody who was on R&R [Rest and Recreation]. I spent a month at the Embassy, reporting on Lebanon, etc.

Q: What impact did [your period of TDY at the Embassy in Tel Aviv] have?

KULICK: You mean, [because I came back]?

Q: No, not that. I'm talking about dealing with [the war in Lebanon] during the time you were there [on TDY]. What was the feeling in our Embassy [in Tel Aviv] regarding this movement into Lebanon?

KULICK: Very negative. That was one of the points that came out. However, ironically, a lot of people believed -- myself included -- that the only reason that the Israelis invaded Lebanon in 1982 was because they got "a wink and a nod" from [then Secretary of State] Al Haig. He has consistently denied this, and it's not written down anywhere. However, I have no doubt that they [the Israelis] looked at Haig and considered what he had to say and concluded that they could do this.

Q: I had an interview with [Ambassador] Nick Veliotos, who said that they weren't sure -- I mean, that NEA [the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] -- wasn't sure [about Haig's role]. They [got in touch with then Israeli Defense Minister] Sharon and said, "Well, now, listen here." [Veliotos] wasn't sure what Haig had said to him [Sharon] and tried to persuade Sharon that we were not receptive to that type of action [the Israeli move into Lebanon]. Of course, if you're somebody like Sharon, you hear what you want to hear.

KULICK: Absolutely.

Q: I think that Haig had probably, as one military man to another, sort of said, "Well, I can understand..."

KULICK: Yes. I'm not saying that I'm certain that Haig did this with the full cognizance [of President Reagan], but I have no doubt that Sharon, at least, interpreted Haig -- and I personally think that he interpreted him correctly -- as saying, "Boy, you've got a real mess there.

Somebody's got to clean it up."

Q: Yes. Well, anyway, this was not a glorious time for the Embassy [in Tel Aviv].

KULICK: No, it was a period of great tension between Israel and the United States. Well, you know, they [the Israeli Defense Forces] were at the gates of Beirut. I guess that we probably came down on them as hard, at that point, as we had at any time since 1976, when we forced them out of Sinai. However, Ambassador Sam Lewis had the standing and the access and the trust to be able to handle that without any great [damage] to [Israeli-American] relations.

ARTHUR A. HOUGHTON III
Deputy Director, Office of Arab-Israel Affairs
Washington, DC (1977-1978)

Mr. Houghton was born and raised in New York City and educated at Harvard University and the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. After Arabic language study in Lebanon, Mr. Houghton joined the Foreign Service and in 1966 was posted to Amman, Jordan. Specializing in Middle East Affairs, Mr. Houghton served in Cairo, Egypt, as well as in the Department of State and in the National Security Council in Washington. He was a Pearson Fellow on Capitol Hill and served as Special Assistant to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Mr. Houghton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Then you went over in '77 to the Arab-Israeli desk?

HOUGHTON: As deputy director in the Office of Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs.

Q: And you were there from '77 to...?

HOUGHTON: To '78.

Q: Well, this was a pretty exciting time, wasn't it?

HOUGHTON: Yes, it was. There was a lot going on. As number two I really – well, I don't know what number one and number two does in an office. They work it out between themselves. I had an office director who was preoccupied with lots of things including some things in his personal life, but for the most part left me running the office and managing some of the things that I really did feel were up to him, but it was an interesting time. For example, he came up to me and said, "Do you know of the Baltimore Democratic Rabbinical Congress?" or a name very close to that, and I said, "Well, yes. In fact, they're supposed to be here meeting with you in about 10 minutes. In fact, they're probably assembling down the hall in the conference room." He said, "No, wrong. I have an appointment with my psychoanalyst, so you're going to have to take the meeting." Well, I said, "What's the subject of the meeting, Walter?" He said, "They're really pissed off at the Department of State" – my language – "and they think that we're part of the foreign policy establishment in Washington that is somehow filled with Arabists, and they

want to know what the United States is doing for Israel that will ease their concerns and fears, and that's what I was going to talk to them about." I said, "Thank you for letting me know what I'm supposed to say." We had a very good meeting for an hour and a half. It was perfectly fine. But in the end I found myself dealing with weapons transfers and nuclear issues of one kind or the other, the visits of Begin when Begin was elected Prime Minister, and the whole array of things that went on. Walter was there but in the end less there than I was. I felt myself fortunate in this great job. In any case, it was a wonderful job with lots of stuff to do and very, very busy offices, busy as any of the other offices.

Q: Was Begin elected while you were there?

HOUGHTON: Yes.

Q: That must have come as sort of a shock...

HOUGHTON: It did.

Q: ...as far as the whole outlook, because essentially the Likud Party was considered sort of way off in right field.

HOUGHTON: And all of a sudden there they were. Now they were in the center of the Israeli stage and Begin was now Prime Minister and he had a very different outlook from Peres or any of the others on the labor side. There was still an awful lot of business to do with respect to how you got work done both on the ground and in terms of the politics of the Arab-Israeli problem. It was a state-to-state issue. The Palestinians were nowhere in center stage at that point. It was Egypt and Syria principally. During that period I was – let me think about this – I went with a team to Israel to set up some aspect of the US-Israeli military relationship, if I recall correctly. There were Defense people who were there too. I remember being asked by an Israeli colonel if I really thought that Anwar Sadat was going to come to Israel – they had picked up a story – and I said, "I don't think so; it seems very unlikely to me," and of course he arrived the next day.

Q: You know, they keep talking about it in Japanese affairs the Nixon shokku. Well, you were right in the place where you were getting the Begin shokku and then the Sadat shokku. What was the initial reading you were getting on Begin as a new man? Were we seeing, well, there goes all our work; he's a hard-line guy and we're not going to get anywhere?

HOUGHTON: No, I don't think so. I think there was just sort of a sense that it was going to be much more difficult to find in Begin the willingness to make concessions and to reach an agreement with either Sadat or Assad or indeed any Arab than it had been with Peres, who had long experience dealing directly with Arabs. His personal association with Hussein had gone back years, decades, whereas Begin came out of a totally different matrix. He was willfully ignorant of the nature of what Arabs hoped for or expected in a discussion with Israel that might lead to a resolution of the outstanding issues that flowed out of the '67 war, a totally different background. Begin, we all felt, was going to be much more difficult, much more intractable.

Q: Did you feel our embassy in Tel Aviv was having problems switching gears, making contact,

talking, because we'd had such an intimate relationship before? Was there a perceptible...?

HOUGHTON: No, not really. Let me see. My recollection is that very shortly after Begin came in – I'm a little blurred as to when this occurred, but I believe it occurred after Begin came in – Sam Lewis came in, and Sam appeared to have the view that his most important job was to accommodate himself to the needs of communication with Begin and anybody else at the highest level of authority in Israel. He wanted to learn about them, his ears were open, and he appeared to everyone to be sympathetic to what they wanted to say in a manner that allowed him to report intimately and continuously from his own contacts there. He became sort of in a sense the most important source of high-level views from the Israelis and was in their viewpoint a highly effective ambassador as well as from us.

Q: Were you getting at that time the feeling – and I've talked to other people; I had a very long interview with Sam Lewis, by the way – from sort of our embassies in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, maybe Lebanon and all that we were paying too much attention to the Israeli point of view and not enough to...?

HOUGHTON: I'm sorry. Is there a difference in what we had been perceived to be doing...?

Q: No, no, but under Sam Lewis I sense, since he was there for so long, and of course there were early days, but a feeling that the Arab side wasn't getting fair representation, or was it still the same game?

HOUGHTON: Some people felt that Sam, in time, maybe a very short period of time, adopted too quickly a position of advocacy for the views of the Israelis that he saw, but that isn't something that the Arabs knew about. This is not one of those things where it gets into the circuit, diplomatic circuit, that somehow the American ambassador to Israel has developed a bad case of localitis and everybody else is going to suffer as a result of it. That's not what happened. What happened is what normally happens: In a situation where the intimacy and depth of the relationship between the United States and Israel is such that, no matter what Israeli government is in place, somehow the relationship gets dragged along with it. That is, if it's somebody whom the United States feels comfortable with, such as Peres or later Rabin, then everything seems to be working together; and if it's somebody the United States feels uncomfortable with, like Begin or Netanyahu or Sharon, I think, today, the relationship follows, still goes along with it, and in a manner where the degree to which the hardness of negotiating position on the Israelis then spills over into the view that the United States has also adopted that position. That is not untrue. We tend to take our lead from the Israelis.

Q: How about AIPAC, American Israeli...?

HOUGHTON: Public Affairs Committee. Omnipresent, visible, active, highly effective.

Q: Were they sort of monitoring you or working with you all the time?

HOUGHTON: Well, they weren't working with me all the time. They may have been monitoring me, but my visibility was not that high. I didn't go out and give a lot of talks. My job was not to

go up and talk to people in Congress, although I think I was invited up there by Steve Solarz at one point to give a talk. In the end I was not what you would call an important figure within their constellation of targets or friends within the Department of State or the American government.

Q: The visit of Anwar Sadat to Tel Aviv was one of these real major events. How did that come about from your perspective? How did you hear about it?

HOUGHTON: Well, I was in Israel at the time that it was about to occur and on my way out. I think I was leaving on the day immediately before he arrived or the day – I forget which – and so I heard it when I was there in Israel. The Israelis themselves were astounded at the idea that Sadat should come and visit them, and I think it astounded a lot of Egyptians. It certainly astounded a lot of other Arabs. Never did quite understand it. You had to take sort of a long look at it and figure out that here's Anwar Sadat doing the unexpected again and doing it in a manner that he gave very little warning, very little sort of build-up to this particular point. Sadat was a person who tended to take dramatic moves after some period of intense frustration and anxiety about whatever position he happened to be in at the time. That was surely the case with the war, and it was also the case with the political situation, where he felt there was no movement going on, nothing was going to take place, and he had to create new circumstances, which he then did.

Q: When Ford left, you left too, didn't you, more or less?

HOUGHTON: No. Well, let me think about this.

Q: Oh, excuse me. You were there in the Carter period.

HOUGHTON: I was there during the Carter period. Just a second now – that's not true. At the NSC I arrived virtually as Nixon was leaving office in 1974 and stayed at the NSC until 1976. That was the Ford presidency. Then Ford was elected out of office later that year in 1976, but I'd already left the NSC at that time.

Q: So, when you were doing Arab-Israeli Affairs in '77-'78...

HOUGHTON: '77, '77 to early 1978, if I recall correctly.

Q: ...were you aware, was it apparent, that President Carter was taking considerable interest in the Arab-Israeli problem.

HOUGHTON: He did.

Q: I mean right from the beginning.

HOUGHTON: Yes, personally, more so than, I think, Ford had, and I think Nixon had many, many other things on his mind. But, yes, I think Carter definitely saw a role for himself in the Middle East. He wanted to create a new event, and in the end it was he who invited to the two parties, Begin and Sadat, to come up to Camp David, which they did.

Q: But even, say, while you were there, did you find yourself feeding the NSC and [inaudible] to the President information and all?

HOUGHTON: No, I was a mid-level government official within a bureau, and everything got funneled through the head of the bureau. If the White House was interested, if the NSC was interested, they would not come to the desk; they would go to the front office, and the front office would figure out how to service that particular thing. I had no special interface with the NSC or any of my successors even though I knew them and met them from time to time, but there was no particular relationship. I had left that job and gone back to State.

Q: With this job how did you deal with, say, the Syrian or Egyptian or Jordan desk, or were those your desks too?

HOUGHTON: Well, there were other desks within the bureau, and these were colleagues, these friends, some of whom I'd served with. There was no separation between desks. Sure, we were dealing with Israel and the other desks were dealing with the Arab countries, but if we had an issue or problem that involved more than one desk, we would be able to sit down and talk together. We were all professional colleagues. Many of us had come from the same background. It may have helped, for example, that I had gone through Arabic training and so forth and had circuited through the Arab world, so people knew that I was at least exposed to some of the issues that they were involved in. But there was no big deal here. We all worked as part of a team that was sort of harnessed in place by the NEA front office deputies as well as Assistant Secretary.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop. We'll pick this up next time in 1978. You were off to Israel?

HOUGHTON: No, in 1978 I went to the Office of the Secretary of State.

Q: Okay, so we'll pick it up at that point.

SAMUEL F. HART
Economic and Commercial Counselor
Tel Aviv (1977-1980)

Ambassador Samuel Hart was born in Mississippi in 1933. He graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1955 and then spent two years in the United States Army. After attending the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, he joined the Foreign Service in 1958. He subsequently served in Uruguay, Indonesia, Malaysia, Costa Rica, Chile, Israel, and was ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Hart was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: After having gone from one fire to another, you went to a nice, quiet, comfortable post, Tel Aviv. How did this come about, and what were you doing?

HART: I had two objectives. I wanted to get out of Washington, because I didn't like working in Washington. I certainly didn't like the INR job, which had become irrelevant because of the lack of interest of anybody in Kissinger's State Department about economic matters.

And also, I'm an overseas person. You know, people expect, particularly at the senior level, Foreign Service officers to have two different sets of skills, which in some cases are really mutually exclusive.

On the one hand, when you're overseas, you're expected to behave toward the host government, the host country, the host people, as a diplomat, in which you are an interpreter, you are a compromise seeker, you are an honest broker, you are a message carrier. You're a lot of things that involve essentially being warm and fuzzy, keeping your intellectual ethics and integrity and your interpretive and analytical skills going all the time, but being of a personality type that you might call "B."

In Washington, the successful bureaucratic infighter, the successful person who gets things done around Washington, is an entirely different type. You're expected to be an infighter, a nut cutter, a fast maneuverer, a sleight-of-hand artist, and all this stuff, particularly if you're in the State Department, because we frequently come to the battle poorly armed in terms of domestic constituencies and resources, et cetera, if it's a policy battle over, say, trade policy, or something like this. So, in order to get things done in Washington, you're really expected to have, if you're a successful bureaucratic operator, a totally different set of skills.

I was more of an overseas person. I wanted a DCM job. And the Department said to me, "Well, maybe, if there's somebody out there who wants a DCM. But we're not encouraging on this. We would like you to take another job as economic/commercial counselor." By this time, I was an FSO Two, and I thought that I'd done that, really, twice, and I really didn't need to do it again. I wanted a DCM's job! Everybody wants a DCM job. I said, "Look, I'll just stay right here until one comes along. But I'm sure that that ought to be within a reasonable time."

Well, unbeknownst to me, things were happening. Sam Lewis had been appointed to Israel, and he had picked as his DCM Dick Viets, out of Romania, I believe. And they were looking for an economic/commercial counselor. This was in the spring of 1977. They'd both decided that, of the choices available to them in the Personnel system, I was the person they wanted. And Carol Laise had told them they could have anybody they wanted.

Q: She was the director general.

HART: And so one day I get a phone call, and they said, "Good news, guess what, you're going to Tel Aviv."

I said, "In what job?"

"Econ/commercial counselor."

I said, "I don't want to go to Tel Aviv. First of all, I've got no interest in going to Israel. Second, I don't want to be economic/commercial counselor again."

And they said, "Sorry, buddy, but that's what you're going to do. We're not asking you at all."

And I said, "I ain't going to Israel."

So a tug of war started.

I found somebody who wanted me to be his DCM. Somebody I had known for a long time offered me the job as DCM. And I went to Personnel, and I said, "Here, I've got this on my own."

And they said, "You're going nowhere but to Tel Aviv."

That tug of war lasted for about two months. I finally became convinced that they were serious about this, and that if I didn't go to Tel Aviv, I had to stay in Washington. I finally said, "Well, screw it," and I gave up, and I didn't get to be a DCM.

I went to Tel Aviv, where, in rank terms, I was the number-three person in the embassy. I went there under protest. I made it very clear to Sam and Dick that I'd come there under protest, which Dick kind of laughed at. But Sam I don't think ever appreciated the humor of it. One-third of the time I was there, I was supercontrol officer for presidential, vice presidential, and VIP visits. A third of the time, I was economic/commercial counselor and head of the AID operation. And a third of the time, I was acting DCM. That's the way it worked out.

Q: You were there from '77 to '80. What was the situation while you were in Israel?

HART: It was a tumultuous time. You had the whole Camp David thing. You had the first invasion of Lebanon by Israel. And you had the breakdown in the talks with the Palestinians. Those were the three biggest events while I was there.

The lead-up to the Camp David thing? Really, I was always of mixed emotions and of a mixed mind about that. With the full commitment of Jimmy Carter, we were able to persuade the Egyptians that if they would make peace with the Israelis, and thereby remove the major military threat to Israel, they would (a) get back the territory that the Israelis had been occupying since 1973, in the Sinai, and (b) start a process whereby Israel would negotiate, in the West Bank and Gaza, some kind of arrangement which would give the Palestinians at least a measure of self-government, and would perhaps, over time, lead to the removal of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. That was the deal which Carter was able to sell to Sadat. There were lots of negotiations leading up to Camp David, but that was the deal that Sadat bought, with a lot of arm-twisting by Jimmy Carter.

Menachem Begin at Camp David wanted very badly to get the Egyptians out of the military equation, for Israeli security, but in essence balked at the idea that Israel, over time, would in any way be committed to withdrawing from the West Bank and Gaza. He had some problems giving

up the Sinai. There was the hard right-wing faction of his party, led by Yitzhak Shamir and Ariel Sharon, who opposed that. So Begin had to spend some political capital even to give back the Sinai. He in essence said, "That's as much as I can pay." And I think, probably, within party councils, he said, "I will never agree to any meaningful negotiations with the Palestinians about self-rule."

So when the Egyptians made peace with the Israelis and got back the Sinai, and the negotiations with the Egyptians about how the negotiations with the Palestinians were going to take place began, they quickly broke down. Sadat felt betrayed. Begin had no intentions, ever, of seriously negotiating with the Palestinians.

And so the Israelis, I think, got the better part of that bargain. Those of us who were in the embassy watching this, who thought about what was going to happen, feared that this might happen. And we thought that Carter needed to drive a better bargain with Begin about what was going to happen on the Palestinian issue. But he didn't, and so the Israelis got a hell of a good deal out of it.

Now, in retrospect, you can say the Egyptians did, too, because it took them out of a totally awful political and economic situation where they poured most of their national wealth into an armed forces that couldn't fight very well. It got them out of the Palestinian/Arab box, and let them pursue a foreign policy and a domestic policy which made more sense. So it did free-up Egypt to some degree.

But did Egypt accomplish what they really set out to accomplish? No. They got about half of it. And the Palestinian issue was left there for a later date.

Would the world have been better off had Jimmy Carter not done it? I don't know. Idle speculation. We'll never know.

The fact that the Palestinian issue is still as difficult today as it was then says something about how difficult the problem is. But at least there hasn't been another war.

Q: Well, tell me, how did you feel about going to Israel? I'm speaking as a Foreign Service officer who never served there. I served in Saudi Arabia -- had no great love for the Arab world, and got the hell out of it. But at the same time, I've always felt that Israel has been a little bit of a burr in the saddle in our foreign policy. Here is a small country with no particular interest to us in any real strategic terms, yet it sort of jerks us around because it has not only a very vocal Jewish population, but also supporters of Israel from non-Jewish groups.

HART: Well, it is the foreign policy area where there is the largest domestic political constituency. No doubt about it. I guess, probably around the turn of the century, around 1900, you could say that the Irish group was similar. You know, where you could get elected mayor of Chicago forever by keeping the British fleet off of Lake Michigan. Don't you remember the...

Q: Yeah, he said if King George came to Chicago, he'd punch him in the nose.

HART: Well, anyway, it was that kind of issue. And it's a very difficult issue for professional Foreign Service officers, because we don't like to be so constrained by domestic political considerations. And I must say, I probably didn't handle it very well, either, because I was an economist, and what I tried to look out for were the interests of the United States, as I saw it, in the economic field. Practically always, in my Foreign Service experience, economic interests were quickly and readily sacrificed by the State Department leadership and the U.S. government leadership for what they considered to be political interests. Whether it be a trade matter or an aid matter or whatever, political interests dominated economic or commercial interests.

You hear a lot of talk today about how a new day has dawned; things are different now. Well, I'd say, show me. I think that the State Department's culture favoring political interests will still be a while disappearing. It will be quite a long time before that proclivity has been changed, the culture has been changed.

I was looking, in Israel, for some way to change U.S. policy and to make it more rational. And I failed. I don't think I moved U.S. policy a millionth of an inch. I don't think I had any impact on U.S. policy during three years in Israel.

Q: You're talking about economic policy.

HART: *Any kind of policy. Any kind of policy. Ever.* And for that reason, I considered my tour in Israel a waste of time.

It was an interesting waste of time. I never worked as hard in my life, ever, as I worked in Israel - 60 to 80 hours a week for three years, away from home, in Jerusalem, an enormous amount of time. The strain on family, the strain on health, for everybody, was enormous. Even when nothing was happening, the embassy operated as if we were in a crisis.

One of the roles I chose for myself was to try to convince Sam Lewis to lighten up, because that was the kind of atmosphere that prevailed there. Sometimes he'd listen to me, and he would lighten up for a little while, but Sam, constitutionally, wasn't able to lighten up for very long at a time.

Israel was a crisis country, and the embassy was a crisis embassy, even when nothing was happening, and even when the influence that the embassy had on what was going on back in Washington was not very much. I can't speak for Sam, because I don't know what went on in Sam's world, but when I was acting DCM and once when I was the chargé, I never saw anything happen from Embassy Tel Aviv that in the long run made any difference.

Now in certain short-term cases, you might argue that that wasn't true.

I had enormous respect for Dick Viets. And part of that respect occurred when Sam was out of the country, Dick was chargé, and I was acting DCM, and we had an incident called the Haifa Road Massacre. A group of Palestinians came ashore along a beach in Israel, captured a bus on the highway between Haifa and Tel Aviv, took the people hostages, ended up in Tel Aviv, surrounded by the Israeli security forces, and there was a shootout in which all the terrorists

except for one or two were killed, and a fair number of hostages.

The Israelis used this as a pretext to invade South Lebanon, supposedly to punish the people who had been responsible for this raid. But it ended up with the Israelis establishing a South Lebanon so-called security zone, which was really nothing more than Israeli-occupied territory. You can put any kind of parsley you want to around it, but that's what it is: it's Israeli-occupied territory in Lebanon. You can say, ah, well, there are justifications for this, blah, blah, blah, but that's what it is.

When the Israelis first moved into Lebanon, the sounds out of Washington (this was the Carter White House) were, "We fully understand why you'd want to do this."

Dick Viets, who understood what was going on, fired off "Eyes-only" cables back to Washington, to the White House and the secretary of state, saying, "This is an abomination. The Israelis have used this Haifa Road massacre as a pretext to do something they had been planning to do all along. And in the process, many, many innocent people in South Lebanon are being killed by the Israeli defense force." And that was the God's truth. And he said to Washington, "To the extent that the U.S. makes sympathetic noises toward the Israelis on this issue, we are accessories after the fact in what's going on there, which is an abomination."

This took a lot of guts. And it was effective in at least getting Washington to stop making these very sympathetic noises to the Israelis. It didn't get them out of South Lebanon, where they still are today, but at least it was a courageous stand on the part of an officer who knew that he was taking a lot of personal risk.

That's the kind of behavior that I like to encourage, so, unbeknownst to Dick, I nominated him for AFSA's Christian Herter Award, which was for a senior officer showing unusual professional competence and intellectual courage. And he won it that year.

But when he was back in Washington and he found out that I had nominated him, he never forgave me. He always held it against me; I think he felt like I compromised him in the process.

The embassy in Tel Aviv had multiple faces. I personally had my phone tapped. I was followed, et cetera. Sometimes I'd go from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to deliver a message or ask a question of an Israeli official, and when I walked in the office, he already knew what I was going to ask or what I was going to say to him. We were the primary allies and bankroller of a society that spit in our faces. I kept looking for a way to change that, and, of course, I didn't find it. And I left Israel feeling like I'd wasted three years of my time.

Q: What was your impression of Sam Lewis? In my interviews, I've gotten mixed reviews. Obviously, a very strong person. He was in Israel for many years. How would you rate him?

HART: Well, Sam and I were then and still are today (Sam was over at my house for dinner not long ago) like two porcupines circling each other, because Sam has his agenda, and I have mine, and very seldom do they overlap. I admire Sam's skills. Do I think U.S. foreign-policy interests were particularly advanced by his stewardship? In my view, no, because I think Sam is too

apologetic for the Israelis. And I think that while his being more critical of the Israelis, more frank with the Israelis, would probably have shortened his stay in Israel, I don't think that would have been a tragedy, either. I don't know what goes on in Sam's heart of hearts, but it's something different than what goes on in mine.

Q: Well, one of the things that one gets (again, I'm speaking as someone who's never dealt with the country, except sort of through the folklore) is that anything you send back to Washington, or that comes from Washington, ends up on the Israeli Embassy desk, or that there is tremendous leakage of everything. So it's sort of a fishbowl.

HART: Absolutely right. The Israeli Foreign Ministry and the intelligence service keep a dossier on every substantive officer in the embassy. Pretty soon you're put in one of the categories that they classify in; friend of Israel, or not friend of Israel. And not friend of Israel means that you're not actively supporting them on everything that they consider to be important. I was asked many times when I was in Israel, "Well, whose side are you on?" (as being the chief economic officer out there).

I said, "I'm on the side of the United States of America. That's where my allegiances are. I'm neither pro-Israeli, nor anti-Israeli. I'm pro-American."

That is interpreted as being anti-Israeli.

Everything you send back to Washington, no matter how classified, has a very strong chance of finding its way into the Israeli's hands. If you write it, you'll be identified to the Israelis as the author of the piece. And if they don't like it, they go after you, and frequently are successful in having you out of there.

Q: Was this a pervasive atmosphere when you were there?

HART: No, they're really usually only interested in the top two or three people. They don't care that much about junior or middle-grade political or economic officers, but they are concerned about the ambassador and the DCM and maybe one additional.

I had very good relations with the Israeli government and what have you, but they knew where I was coming from. Each year, the Israelis made an aid request. The embassy analyzed their aid request, all the numbers and everything, and sent the analysis back to Washington. Every year, I recommended a reduction in aid to Israel. And every year, it was increased, if not in the White House, in the Congress.

Q: So there was no impact whatsoever.

HART: That's right.

Q: Obviously frustrating.

HART: You ask yourself, "What am I doing this for? Why don't I just forget the exercise?"

In the process, I got to know Israel very well. The Israelis, as individuals, are some of the most stimulating and challenging and interesting people in the world. The Israelis, as groups, are terrible, because the Israeli society is set up in such a way that the most radical element always wins. The most radical element in any Israeli group ends up blackmailing the organization toward their viewpoint. Every Israeli government since the founding of the State of Israel has been a coalition government. And the people who are at the fringes of the coalition and who are brought into it usually are single-issue constituencies, and they can focus single-mindedly on what their single interest is. It might be aid to religious schools, or it might be whether or not you can do certain things on the Sabbath. And these people dominate Israeli society by their leverage in coalition government. You get a group of Israelis together to discuss anything, and you'll get a wide spectrum of opinion, but the ones who are on the right, who are for Israeli security or for orthodoxy or what have you, are the ones, in the end, that force the group toward their way, by various means -- sometimes it's guilt feelings; sometimes it's parliamentary maneuvering. They are very adept.

My three years in Israel were an experience. I can't say that I'm sorry that I did it, but I can say that I couldn't wait to get out. The day my three years were up, I was on a plane out of there.

DAVID I. HITCHCOCK, JR.
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv (1977-1981)

David I. Hitchcock, Jr. was born in Massachusetts in 1928. He graduated from Dartmouth and Columbia and served in the U.S. Army. He joined USIA in 1957, serving in Vietnam, Japan several times, Israel, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1992.

HITCHCOCK: I would like to jump quickly to coming back...well I didn't talk very much about being PAO in Israel, and I ought to talk a little bit more about that, perhaps. It was a critical time -- 1977-81. I arrived there in August 1977. Secretary Cyrus Vance made his first of seven trips in two years about two weeks after I got there. Sadat arrived in November for the great visit to Jerusalem. I was not only PAO, but as PAOs often are, I was the embassy spokesperson with the press attaché working quite closely with me throughout this tumultuous period. Ambassador Sam Lewis had arrived the same year. We became very good friends.

There were things that had to be done for all these visits, but not only that, trying to serve in those first few months as a kind of a bridge between Israeli and Egyptian journalists. When Sadat came to Jerusalem he brought with him a whole plane load of newspaper editors, journalists, who, of course, had never been there before. They met some of their counterparts and struck up some nice relationships. I went in December or maybe January to Cairo and took with me all kinds of messages from these Israeli editors to their counterparts and met with all the Egyptian editors. We were using our USIS office as a message sender to keep and begin to build some connections between...

Q: Where was your office?

HITCHCOCK: Our office in Tel Aviv. ...as a means of keeping the media in Israel and Egypt in touch with each other those first few months. This was still well before any treaty which came much later. The treaty between Israel and Egypt was signed in 1979 after the Camp David talks. But in those first two years -- 1977-79 -- I don't think I had a day off. I had a beeper on my belt and a CB radio in my PAO car if I was going out somewhere on Sunday, because the media in Israel will eat you up. They are fun, dynamic, aggressive, emotional and sometimes their emotions get the better of them.

The Israeli embassy in Washington plays the American press very skillfully. So we had the problem of leaks in all of this negotiation period coming out of Washington with a time frame of seven hours putting us behind the eightball to make a correction before the afternoon papers, which were the two biggest, Yediot Aharanot and Maariv, came out -- first editions were on the news stands at 10:00 in the morning. If I could get a correction to those two by 6:30 in the morning there could be a box with a statement saying "such and such wasn't so, etc." So I had a deal with those two papers that they could call me anytime after 6:00 AM, and that happened. I had to be awfully careful. I did all this on background or deep background. Rarely did I want to be quoted in the papers.

Sam Lewis and I developed a whole series of backgrounders with the Israeli press and with the American press. Sam became very adept at playing the game of negotiating through the media. A dangerous game. We got burnt a couple of times in those first two years, but on the whole we survived and learned how to do it. I focused a lot of my attention in those years, I had to, on the media and one on one luncheons. I had luncheons three times a week with journalists. I would spend Wednesday, every week, in Jerusalem without fail. I would plan the week so that there would be a whole schedule in Jerusalem on Wednesdays. At that point it was about an hour's ride back and forth. After each of these luncheons with journalists, I would tape a memcon. I often would not know what particular piece of information I was given would be particularly important in fitting the puzzle of other information the embassy was trying to come up with in terms of Israeli intentions.

That the PAO was doing that kind of work at that particular time was probably as important as the Political Counselor at the political end of these negotiations, simply because the network of some of these Israeli journalists was so good within the Israeli government. If the Political Counselor had had these luncheons they would not have been so open, but when the PAO goes, and he is talking about everything from American studies to book translations to the political talks that were going on, they were willing to open up. I have always found that USIA had better contacts across society, except with the Foreign Ministry, than the State Department did, for that reason. It was really critical at that time.

Public diplomacy has come into great play nowadays, but those days in Israel saw public diplomacy in the raw, trying to deal with the press in a volatile situation involving national security of both countries, Israel and the U.S.

I started one thing which I think was also terribly important. Israelis, even to this day, have a deep, almost pathological interest in what is going on in the United States. It comes out in their sense of dependence on us, not necessarily affection. I felt we were missing a bet in not providing the influential Israeli leaders with a good cross-section of American media opinion. The Wireless file always put in the staff-use-only side key articles in columns, editorials, but they would be from the Times, the Post, the LA Times, and possibly the Chicago Tribune, and the Christian Science Monitor, and that was about it. I wanted more than that, I wanted a cross section. I wanted the Cleveland Plain Dealer. I wanted the Detroit News. I wanted the Houston Post. I wanted the Atlanta Constitution. I wanted a cross-section of editorials on US-Israeli or Middle Eastern relations every two weeks. Well, everybody said I couldn't do that, it would be too expensive and there wasn't time. We leaned hard. I used an old friendship with Director John Reinhardt to demonstrate how important this was. We got it.

We put it out saying the following are excerpts from a cross section of American newspapers during the last two weeks commenting on US-Israeli relations and the Middle East peace process. Now to make it credible, I asked Washington to give me -- to use Ed Murrow's phrase -- the warts and all. I wanted the criticism of our side as well as their side. I made sure that there was a balance in these, because I knew there would come a day when some Israeli journalist would attack our bulletin because it was so effective. It was immediately an important thing that leaders, media people, the Foreign Ministry and Defense Ministry wanted. This is where the Israelis are so good. They have their hands out there trying to find out what American public opinion is, because they have to try to deal with it. It was one thing for the U.S. Government to criticize the Israelis in public. We didn't want to do that very often because it would play into Arab hands. We were reassuring the Israelis constantly that the United States support was there, would always be there when needed. At the same time, we were trying to press the Israelis to show more flexibility. Menachem Begin was the Prime Minister, a very stubborn man, indeed. We let the American press make the critical points for us and that was much better than having me say it or Sam Lewis say it all the time.

So there is another aspect of public diplomacy where I think USIS played a critical role. One never can measure the results, however.

We also watched the polls. We were doing, with the help of USIA's research office, which USIA paid for, a public opinion rider poll in Israel every six weeks. There wasn't any country in the world that USIA polled that often. And you better believe that the results of those polls were well read in Washington ...they were a hot item. They went in classified form with my comments, cleared by the political section of the embassy. Occasionally we might change the wording now and then to fit the local psychology of the Israelis, but we left the structure of the poll essentially to the professionals in Washington. These polls were enormously helpful in seeing where the Israeli public was going, what their anxieties were.

The organization in Israel doing the polling for us had a contract with Haaretz, which was sort of the New York Times of Israel, and therefore the results of the polls, without naming us, would get into the Israeli press. Usually the polls were showing that the Israeli public favored a more flexible stance in these peace talks. That was obviously another way of getting leverage in the negotiations.

I don't know how USIS could have been more effective in trying to use its resources, both in the polling sense and personal contact sense, in getting American media opinion to the right people in Israel at that time.

Q: Did you have a separate press officer?

HITCHCOCK: I did. It was a small post -- PAO, IO, CAO and A CAO in Tel Aviv and a branch PAO running a center in West Jerusalem. In East Jerusalem under the Consulate General there was another USIS officer dealing with the West Bank. So, it was pretty small. We had seven visits from Cy Vance in less than two years. Phil Habib, Robert Strauss and Al Atherton as well. All required USIS support. We would move the whole press section up to the King David Hotel for the Vance visits. The media reaction cable that we sent twice a day was so important that the Ambassador, himself, cleared off on it whenever he could, or else relied on me to have enough sense when something might not...it wasn't a question of shielding Washington from what the Israeli press was saying, but if they were saying certain things about U.S. policy, then we would put a paragraph, "septel follows" or comment saying "The embassy has already denied this charge, see septel" or something like that. We wanted to coordinate because the sensitivities in Washington towards what was going on Israel were enormous, and if this media cable came in naively reporting something that was going on in the Israeli press, all kinds of hell could break loose if the way hadn't been paved for it.

So when we went up to the King David Hotel, the very talented local staffer who did this press summary would get up really early and start working on it. He would put a raw version of it under the doors of Vance, Hodding Carter, Hal Saunders, etc. before they had breakfast. So, again, the enormously valuable role that USIS played in all this...

Again, transcribing, that has become a big thing now with Secretary Baker, but we would transcribe everything...we had a photographer/media guy who had all the badges and passes, a very aggressive Israeli, but charming, with tape recorder. I had a tape recorder with me all the time. We would whip out the tape recorder and get everything that anybody said and immediately get it transcribed and into a cable. For example, when Kamal, the Foreign Minister of Egypt, came to Israel -- this was after the Sadat visit and they had set up this political committee, US, Israel and Egypt. At the first banquet at the King David Hotel, Begin insulted Kamal and made references to the Sudetenland, one of Begin's favorite parallels he tried to draw with Egypt similarly eating up Israeli land. I guess he was also referring to the fact that Egypt remained sort of neutral during the war, and if anything, was pro-German to some extent.

The next day Kamal left. Whether it was simply because of the insults at the banquet dinner or whether it was other things, I don't know. We were the only ones who had gotten a few comments as he rushed out of the lobby of the Hilton Hotel in Jerusalem, because we had somebody with a tape recorder watching his door.

You may listen to me talk about American Studies and think that I gave all my time to the long term cultural side of USIA, but we were hot on the public affairs side in those years in Israel. And later on, certainly, with Alan Carter, when I was in Tokyo, we were hot on the public affairs

side as well.

RICHARD N. VIETS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tel Aviv (1977-1979)

Ambassador
Jordan (1981-1984)

Ambassador Richard N. Viets was born in 1930 in Vermont, served in the U.S. Army and went to Georgetown University. He joined USIA in 1955 and served in Afghanistan, Tunisia and after a break reentered the Foreign Service in 1962 serving in Japan, India, Romania, Israel and was ambassador to Tanzania and Jordan. He was interviewed by C.S. Kennedy 1990-1992

Q: You left Bucharest in 1977 and went from there to another hot spot, Tel Aviv, again as Deputy Chief of Mission. How did this assignment come about?

VIETS: That is an interesting story. I was back in Washington for a consultation three or four months before I was scheduled to finish my three year assignment and Carol Laise, who was then Director General, called me in for a meeting. She announced to me that she was very unhappy with the situation in our Embassy in India at that particular time and thought it needed a very different hand. I was her handpicked person to go out as political counselor. Happy as I would have been to return to India, I was not happy with the thought of returning as political counselor having been for three years a DCM in Romania. I thought it was a step backwards. Carol didn't see it that way. Her interest in India was supreme and anyone who had an opportunity to serve in India, regardless of the level, was obviously...

I was a good soldier and said, "Okay. I would rather have another DCMship, but if this is what you think must be done, I will do it." I returned to the India desk and there was a phone message for me from a man named Sam Lewis, who I had met once or twice before socially, but had never worked with him. Sam had just been nominated as our Ambassador to Tel Aviv. The phone message asked me if I would have lunch with him that very day. I agreed and we had a terrible cafeteria lunch.

It became clear to me in the first 30 seconds of the conversation that Sam was taking a look at me as a potential DCM. At the end of it I was pretty certain that I was going to get the job, although he was shrewd enough not to say so. Indeed, a couple of days later he called me and formally offered it. So we had to go to Carol and untangle the India web.

Sam was very anxious to have me there immediately after his arrival. He was being held back in Washington until the day after the Israeli elections when Prime Minister Begin was elected. He flew out the next day and two weeks later I stepped on an airplane in Bucharest bound for Israel. Half an hour later I was sitting at my desk hard at work and never stopped.

Q: Let's compare and contrast how Harry Barnes used you as his DCM and Sam Lewis used you as DCM?

VIETS: Well, again, the same traditional ambassadorial words of, "I don't want anything to go on here that you are not aware of, etc." Sam was true to his word. Especially in Israel you had to be because it was such a hot spot. This was the period that led up to the Camp David negotiations and then the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. The US was right in the middle of all of that from day one, setting up everything and acting as intermediary for months and months between the Egyptians and Israelis who wouldn't speak directly to each other. We set up all kinds of secret contacts, etc. There were periods when more than half the time Sam was in Washington. So one really became almost a permanent Chargé and it was necessary that we worked very closely, and we did.

The only area that Sam reserved for himself, and he insisted that it was for protection purposes for me, was relationships with the American-Jewish organization leadership. He felt that that was the exclusive responsibility of the Ambassador to manage that and very rarely did I get involved in it. It would only be when I was Chargé and a group came in and I would have to meet with them.

Q: In the period you were there...you were there from 1977-1979...how did you and the Embassy view the Israeli political situation? Here was a real change in the political orientation domestically in Israel.

VIETS: There was very deep concern over the political changes that took place under Begin. We spent an enormous amount of energy and time trying to modify some of Begin's views and policies. A great deal of time during my first year was spent in trying to effectively contain Israeli attacks into the Lebanon. You had on the one hand, very, very active intelligence, Mossad, and Israeli Army and Air Force operations in Lebanon, and at the same time you were carrying on these very sensitive negotiations between the Israelis and the Egyptians, in which we were the exclusive conveyor belt. All messages went through us...to Cairo and came back from Cairo to us. We were the principal interlocutors for a very long time.

I remember after months of this finally one day getting a call from Prime Minister Begin's Chef de Cabinet, asking me immediately to get on the line to Cairo to pass along a message which he dictated to me over the phone. I said, "For Christ's sake, Eli, why don't you pick up the phone and do it yourself." A week before a direct line had been established. He said, "Do you think they would answer the phone?" I said, "Why don't you try." He did and it worked. That is how we began to get out of the business.

Q: What was your impression of how the Begin government worked?

VIETS: Well, that is about a week of conversation. Begin was a most remarkable figure. An old world Polish Jew who had lost all of his family in the holocaust under dreadful, dreadful circumstances. Truly a great patriot in his own right. He was a lawyer to the tips of his toes, very legalistic in everything. A man with enormous innate politeness. Even in the most dreadful

moments of antagonism, and disagreement, conversations would always have to start out with, "How is your wife and your daughters?" etc. All the niceties of civilized conduct were carried on and then once you got beyond that he was one tough cookie to deal with.

But there were other tough cookies who worked with him. Moshe Dayan was a brilliant man. The most fertile, creative mind of any of Begin's advisers. Ezer Weizman, who in those years was an unbridled hawk and has now become a great dove. He was quite a remarkable figure. There were some very tough chiefs of staff in the army that one had to deal with regularly. It is difficult to characterize and describe the nature and quality of our Embassy relationship in Israel during those days. Again, I think, it has changed substantially since then. We were simply in all their pockets as they were here.

Q: I have been interviewing Nicholas Veliotis who mentioned, this was in the early seventies, that they always had to work on Friday because the cabinet met. I asked why they had to schedule the Embassy meeting because of a foreign government's cabinet? Well, apparently the relationship is so close that one is moving in accordance with their political life.

VIETS: And you had this enormous community in Washington interested in everything that was going on. You had a huge press corps there that was spewing tens of thousands of words of reporting back here seven days a week. So you were in competition all the time with even the wire services in getting stuff back. We were just constantly, 24 hours a day running that relationship. It was, and remains, deeply complicated by the fact that our Chancery is in Tel Aviv and everything except the Ministry of Defense and Mossad Headquarters were in Jerusalem. So you were everyday winding up and down those Judean hills to Jerusalem to do your business and then dictating all the way back into a little portable recorder your cables and memcons.

As time went on and the negotiations leading up to Camp David became so critical, we often would move over from meetings with the Prime Minister or other cabinet ministers and dictate our reports at our consulate general in Jerusalem and send them from there, simply because of time purposes, or we would get on the secure phone in Jerusalem. There were days that one would make three round-trip trips to Jerusalem. The last one perhaps getting home at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Q: You were sort of an outsider to this. You had served in India and Romania. Did you sometimes stand back and say, "Why the hell are we getting so involved in this country and what really is our real interest here?"

VIETS: Well, I think that one of the reasons Sam took me as his DCM was that conversation over lunch in the State Department cafeteria in which I expressed considerable skepticism about the nature of the US-Israeli relationship, one that I did not know a great deal about but what I did know I was skeptical about it. I think that Sam may have felt that perhaps it was not a bad idea to have somebody at his side with this quality. Indeed, to his great credit a few weeks after I arrived, we brought out an extraordinarily talented older officer named Bill Brubeck, who had served as DCM in Amman some years earlier. He had become really a great authority on the Middle East and was an iconoclast of the first order. We brought him out because we wanted somebody sitting off, out of the line of daily operational fire, to nitpick, to push us, to examine

and re-examine from every perspective what we were up to.

All of this in the light of what subsequently happened in the relationship may sound like pretty thin gruel, but I, at least, to the day I left, liked to think that I maintained my integrity in handling that relationship when things...I would call a spade a spade. I still have some marvelous notes from Jimmy Carter and Brzezinski and Cy Vance on things I did, especially when I was Chargé and brought the Israelis up short.

Q: There has been this accusation that you get in the Near Eastern Bureau that I am sure everyone is aware of, that somehow our Embassy in Israel becomes completely co-opted by the Jewish movement politically in the United States. Here is a small country of several million people putting us at odds with this huge Arab world out there and it is not in America's interest. Somehow the feeling gets focused on the Embassy. When I mention Sam Lewis to hands who have dealt in the Arab world steam begins to come out of their ears. I wonder, is this endemic or is there a problem of co-optation?

VIETS: I believe in general terms there are problems of co-optation in almost any society you can name for a diplomat operating in that environment if he gets deeply involved in it. But I think there is nothing that approaches the danger of co-optation in Israel because here is a society that never lets up. It has enormous influence and impact in Washington and has no qualms about using it. For them the game is their security, their livelihood, their lives. That is their argument. It is very tough to buck it. I think that it is a major mistake to leave anybody in Israel for an extended period of time. And I include, needless to say, ambassadors in that.

Q: In dealing with upper level Israelis...let's say a directive comes out from Washington to press them hard on a point...they look at you and say, "Okay fellows, this is nice and you have made your point, but if you press it too hard we are going back to the Israeli lobby in the United States and they are going to wipe you out."

VIETS: I don't remember anybody being quite that blunt. They didn't have to be. There is language within language in this arena. But I can assure you that we all had our hours at bat when we were brutal in our directness. I certainly include Sam in this. Whatever Sam's reputation is, and remember I was only there for a little over two years with him, and he stayed on for seven or eight years, and clearly as time went on his views were modified and shaped by the pressures that were on him so I won't speak to that. But during the period I was there the United States was very lucky to have a guy as smart and tough as he was. When the chips were down there was never any question in my mind as to what he was representing in those days. It perhaps changed.

Q: Well, you were there at a time when there was really a very crucial shift going on, when Israel was becoming more and more dependent on the United States. Was there disquiet on the side of the Israelis who were looking on this thing and knowing the underside of American politics, etc.?

VIETS: I think there were very few thoughtful Israelis who worried a great deal about the liabilities of becoming so dependent on the United States. In part because I think no one in those

years understood how dependent Israel ultimately was going to become. And secondly, because I think there is an inbred, perhaps arrogance is too strong a term, but I will use it, that at the end of the day they knew what they were doing and could manage the relationship in a fashion that would always keep their interests protected.

On the American side there certainly were many people who were concerned about the changing nature of the relationship, but the domestic politics of the relationship became so paramount in policy decisions with the Congress pressing the administration unmercifully to give more and more aid, military assistance, economic assistance, trade advantages, intelligence exchanges, etc. You had people like Jimmy Carter who suddenly found himself running for his life. In his re-election campaign he turned 180 degrees concerning his views on how to handle the Israelis.

Q: But initially you were there when Carter was first coming in. So the period you were there you felt that there was really a certain amount of firm control?

VIETS: No, I wouldn't say that. I think the moment of major change, the fault line, took place during the Johnson administration. Up to that time, I think the relationship had been one that was best characterized by the figure of speech...the Israelis were kept on a quite short leash. Johnson, for purely domestic political reasons, changed that policy. He suddenly opened up a cornucopia of arms to Israel. We became the principal military suppliers and remain so to this day. Economic assistance began markedly to increase under Johnson. By the time Carter arrived in office it was already in the billions. I can remember arguing until blue in the face on maintaining lower levels and ultimately we found ourselves faced with a relationship that had gone out of control in many important respects.

But lets be fair, I am sitting here running on about a relationship that is so complicated and so nuanced that one risks doing a great injustice to it with the kinds of superficial responses that time constraints dictate in responding to your questions.

Q: The idea is to at least pick up some of the feeling here. What were your impression of our congressman coming to Israel? Was this sort of a political situation that they would come to? Were they completely the creatures of the Jewish lobby in the United States?

VIETS: I think with rare exception one would have to characterize them as being craven in their deportment and behavior, each trying to out do the other in their public utterances, in their fealty and loyalty to the State of Israel and its people. They had very little time for any conversation that contained criticism or analysis of what was going on. These were PR visits for use in fund-raising and election winning. One very often was physically disgusted by it.

Let me add out of fairness to the Israelis, I think in the dark of the night they were equally disgusted.

Q: Well, it is almost impossible not to be by this peculiar relationship that has developed. What about our consul general in Jerusalem? This has always been a fascinating post. I have written a history of the consular service and at one point the consul general in Jerusalem, in the 1970s up through World War I, served as a protectorate of the Jews. This was unofficially, but interceded

often with the Ottomans, etc. But then the role almost switch. It was the same role but the Ottoman Empire no longer posed a threat, the Israelis were the occupying power. How did you view their operation, what were they doing there?

VIETS: I think Sam and I agreed that we would not fall into the trap that some of our predecessors had in viewing the consulate general as the enemy. As you know I think it remains the only consulate anywhere in the world whose reporting goes directly to Washington.

Q: I think Hong Kong is another one.

VIETS: Oh, yes. So both of us worked very hard in insuring that our personal relationships with the Consul General and staff...

Q: Who was the Consul General?

VIETS: Well, Mike Newlin was there for all of the period that I was there. Mike felt the same way. I, in particular, spent a lot of time insuring that Mike was kept fully apprized of all but a tiny fraction of sensitive elements of our negotiations leading up to the Camp David and the peace treaty, etc. Although a lot of the traffic was so highly compartmentalized we couldn't send it to Jerusalem, he would come down one day a week and lock himself in my office and I would show it to him. So he knew what was happening.

For his part, he insured that all of his reporting was repeated to Tel Aviv. Our staffs would meet regularly and compare notes. Occasionally there would be an eruption of differences, but on the whole it was very well managed and productively managed on both sides. The one major problem area I recall was at the staff level. A vice consul became very, very incensed over her perception of some human rights abuses on the part of the Israelis.

Q: I think that she was really one of the first eruptions of this. It got on the front pages...

VIETS: She documented a number of cases of maltreatment and abuse of Arab prisoners in jails, etc. She was very concerned that the Embassy was undercutting her and went public at one point on this. In the end, I think she was relatively satisfied. She had her day in court and her information in no way shape or form was censored.

Q: This is an area on both sides of the track. Some of the same people ended up in the Executive Secretariat where the action is. You can turn a young officer loose and they are going out doing some reporting. This is Jimmy Carter and human rights time. There is a very controversial relationship, at least in the Foreign Service, with Israel. Were there things coming out of the West Bank where Israeli occupation authorities were that were embarrassing to the Israelis and which they didn't want reported?

VIETS: Absolutely.

Q: How did you deal with these?

VIETS: They were reported. I am sad to observe that the censorship of these reports took place in Washington, not in the field.

Q: Let's talk a little about Washington. My only time in the Middle East was a short time as a vice consul in Saudi Arabia. I had nothing to do with any of this and am not a Middle East hand, but I have watched this with a certain amount of fascinated disinterest. It has always seemed that in Washington our relationship with Israel is so political that you really can't report as you would from another post. It would immediately leak into the press, one's career could be jeopardized, etc. How did you feel about this? You were new to it too.

VIETS: My career, I guess, is marked by a reputation of being excessively outspoken and I never really worried about it. It seemed to me that one calls a spade a spade as accurately as one can. That is on reporting. When it comes to policy formulation, obviously one has to be careful to insure that you are embracing the spectrum of agreement and disagreement. So it is two quite different issues that one is talking about.

I felt, as Sam did, that careers could be badly bruised, if not destroyed, out there, so one made very sure that one took responsibility for those messages that we knew would cause heartburn in Washington. But one encouraged the younger officers on the staff to dig and dig hard and there was no...I think it would be an interesting case study to go around to officers in that mission who have left and ask them if they felt any kind of constraints being put on them. I doubt very much during that period you would find...My concern today, if we can move this interview to 1990...by virtue of one of the things I am doing in retirement is political advisor to King Hussein, so I stayed very actively engaged in US-Israeli relationships and US-Arab relationships, such as they are. I am deeply concerned that almost all of the Foreign Service officers that I now see and deal with, I feel have become politicized by this issue and all too often are pulling their punches in their reporting, their analysis, their recommendations to their superiors. It is something that I could quite easily document. It is very sad to see what is happening. They are scared of their careers on this particular issue.

Q: Probably Central America was another one.

VIETS: I think it probably was. I think this is much less true in our...

Q: Were you getting instructions from Washington saying to knock off this talk about what the police are doing within Israel, itself?

VIETS: No.

Q: Were there times when you would give a candid report and the next thing you knew it was in Evans and Novak?

VIETS: Yes.

Q: Where was this coming from? You must have thought about who was leaking this material? Was it political opportunists; were they Jewish-Americans who felt so strongly for the cause of

Israel that they would do this; or was it somebody who was wanting to make a name for themselves?

VIETS: All of the above.

Q: Would you sometimes lash out and say, "Who the hell leaked that?" Or would you just sort of shrug and get on with your business?

VIETS: There would be a lot of discussion over telephones, I don't recall cables discussing it. We had a very active secure line between Tel Aviv and Washington.

Q: If somebody was to look at the official record today... just by the fact that there were leaks if you put something down on paper you always had to look at that and ask how it would look in the editorial op-ed section of the Washington Post.

VIETS: Point well taken. More than in any post I had served in you were aware of the fact that what you were sending back in one form or another, bits and pieces of it could appear in the public domain. We had some very special category arrangements on distribution for that stuff so few people saw that and I don't recall any difficulties there. But once you got below that, it was fair game to the Xerox machine.

Q: So the telephone was often...

VIETS: Alas, the historians are going to be up the creek because so much of this was done by secure line, even though I think both Sam and I were perhaps more aware than many that it was important to keep a historical record. Files were full of memcons, telephone memcons, etc. But in the pace of events you just never got them all down.

I am going to have to break off.

Q: What was your view and the Embassy's view of the Arabs within Israel itself at that time?

VIETS: I must say in retrospect I am not at all certain that this Embassy nor I as the Deputy Chief of Mission put as much focus on the issues of the Arabs within the so-called green line, Israel proper, as we should have. I believe in an earlier interview, we may have got into the tensions that existed between the Embassy and our Consul General in Jerusalem, which, of course, is responsible directly to Washington for reporting what was going on in the occupied territories. The Arabs within the green line were by definition the responsibility of the Embassy.

During that period, as a community, my recollection is that they were a quiescent lot. I don't recall, frankly, with enough vivid detail, what at the time I felt was the reason for this quiescence. Whether it was that they simply had been beaten down by the general weight of the Israeli state, or whether they had simply made their peace with themselves and with the Israelis and were going about their lives. There was very little, as I recall, formal contact between the two Arab Palestinian communities...those within the green line with those in the occupied territories. This wasn't terribly easy to accomplish because of the security apparatus and the

military apparatus which was omnipresent. I think any green line Arab seen spending a lot of time on the West Bank would immediately have come to the attention of the Israeli authorities and probably would have to shortly respond to somebody to what he was doing there. So it was not a period when a great deal of contact was taking place.

We had in the Embassy a political officer who, along with a number of other things, added it to his portfolio and did sporadic reporting on it. We certainly kept in touch with the Arab delegation in the Knesset and members of the parliament. But I don't know in retrospect whether perhaps we should have put more emphasis on that community than we did.

Q: It sounds like at the time they knew their place and the Israeli apparatus was keeping them knowing their place.

VIETS: That is certainly my recollection.

Q: Coming to the events...you were there probably at the most dramatic time one can imagine, other than just a war going on which is dramatic, but not necessarily moving ahead. What was our view of Sadat before he came? Were you getting from Egypt a feeling that something was happening?

VIETS: Yes, quite a lot. To begin with, we knew, although it took us some weeks to extract the full facts out of the Israelis, we knew that there had been contact between Dayan, the then Foreign Minister, and an Egyptian in the President's office. I recall vividly Dayan's anecdote about this gentleman, who he had met on one or more occasions secretly in Morocco. I recall Dayan telling the story that at one of their meetings this man suddenly went very silent and wouldn't respond or anything. When his silence was finally broken he announced that he was very fond of clocks, he collected clocks and he apparently at that moment heard a lot of clocks ringing in his brain and he had to listen to them and he couldn't talk to anybody. There was some very strong feeling on Dayan's part and I think on others who knew this gentleman, that he was slightly tetchéd.

In any case, Dayan eventually succumbed to Sam Lewis' beguiling efforts and gave us the details of those meetings of which we had had bits and pieces of through various intelligence means, but we didn't know everything.

From that point onward our Embassy in Tel Aviv became the conduit for all of the messages going back and forth between Cairo and Jerusalem. The bulk of that became my responsibility. Clearly this was a very sensitive, highly classified operation. I can recall spending a great deal of my time in the weeks leading up to the Sadat announcement of his impending visit handling these contacts. There were, I think a few direct Israeli-Egyptian contacts outside the area, but basically the two sides used the Americans to pass messages and views back and forth.

I do recall a very secret visit that we arranged shortly before the Sadat visit for Ezer Weizman, who at that time was the Minister of Defense in Israel. We flew into Tel Aviv in the dark of the night a US Air Force aircraft from Germany and I can remember picking up Ezer before dawn in an Embassy carryall and hiding him under blankets and driving out to the far end of the Tel Aviv

airport runway and Ezer appearing from beneath these blankets and being hustled on board before any of his own people could see him. I remember even the pilot and crew on the plane had no idea who the passenger was or where they were going until he was on board and they were in the air. He went to Cairo and met with Sadat and his counterpart. Ezer, I am sure, is still dining out on that story and elaborating on it. And it was rather amusing...

Q: While this was going on, were you concerned that there were elements within the Jewish political system who would love to torpedo this sort of thing?

VIETS: No. I think that is a fair question, but I think the Israelis at that point were desperate to get talks going with any Arab state. After all, remember no offers had been laid out by anybody on what the price of a peace agreement with the Israelis was going to be. That all came later.

The Israelis could read the handwriting on the wall, I suppose, but remember that the Israeli public didn't know that this was going on. That, in it self, is a remarkable moment in the history of the State of Israel. If we think of Washington as a big piece of Swiss cheese where no secrets can be kept, I must say Tel Aviv puts Washington in most respects to shame. There are a few core secrets in Israel, for example, issues relating to their nuclear capability, on which indeed their lips are sealed, but almost everything else within minutes, hours or days of the event or conversation taking place gets into the most active media world I have ever served in.

Q: Well you and obviously our Embassy in Egypt, Hermann Eilts was Ambassador, knew what was going on since you were acting as communicators. Were you also acting as advisers in suggesting the next move?

VIETS: Yes, we did both. I think both Embassies were very, very conscious of the need to insure that neither party was getting a skewed view of what the other side was trying to say. We didn't shade messages, but we might interpret them. We might say, "If you responded in this fashion this is probably the response you will get." That kind of role.

Q: That is quite a different thing.

VIETS: We passed the stuff back and forth without putting any input...

Q: What about the role of Washington? Here is something that is going on and the policy makers in Washington must have been itching to get heavily involved in this type of thing. Did you have a feeling that this was being tightly controlled?

VIETS: Obviously Washington by its very nature wants to be the mother hen on everything that is both unimportant and important. We, I think, were punctilious and professional in keeping Washington informed about what was going on. We were repeating, where there was cable traffic, all of the cable traffic. I would several times a day have conversations over secure voice telephone with people in Washington about what was going on. And certainly Sam would have very lengthy conversations, sometimes daily.

No, I feel confident that they were kept apprized of everything that was important. There were,

by definition, all kinds of telephone calls back and forth between our Embassy in Tel Aviv and our Embassy in Cairo, that Washington wasn't monitoring. It was up to both Embassies to insure in the course of the day that they reported to their respective Desk what had gone on.

I should add that the point was reached in which I felt that the moment had arrived for the Egyptians and the Israelis to begin to deal with some of these issues directly. I vividly recall one day getting a telephone call from Prime Minister Begin's office, a man named Ben Eliezar who at that time was his principal chief of staff. He asked me to pass what was a very anodyne administrative type message to the Egyptians through our Embassy. I think I must have been up all night the night before or something was wrong because I was quite testy with him. I remember saying, "For God sake Eli, I think it is time that you guys just pick up the phone and contact the guy who is going to be receiving this on the other end and say this to them directly. This is ridiculous for us to be acting in this role. We will be happy to continue doing whatever we can to facilitate things, but this is getting silly." I remember him saying, "I agree. Do you think the Egyptians will answer the phone?" I said, "Well, here is the phone number, try it." And he did. From that point onward, the Israelis and the Egyptians both started their direct bilateral contacts. I am sure that somebody in American intelligence has never forgiven me, but there were other ways of keeping track of this.

Q: Did you find as you were watching these messages going back and forth that there was a difference in approach between the Egyptians and Israelis?

VIETS: Absolutely. I should preface this by saying that this was a period of intense high pressure on all of us at the Embassy. Looking back on it it has just become a jet speed kaleidoscope of events and I wish that my memory were better so that I could answer these questions with greater acuity. But we were all totally exhausted. I was probably getting on average about 3-4 hours of sleep a night for weeks on end. In those circumstances, that part of your brain that stores things sometimes doesn't do very well. But my general response to your question is yes. I think you could see always in at least the more important substantive messages the omnipresent Israeli toughness. The Israeli view on negotiations, understandably, and perhaps quite rightly, is to reach way beyond the possible, assuming that by the end of the negotiation you may be back about where you want to be. On the other hand, I think the Egyptians generally took the attitude that you should start out with a fairly sensible proposition and take it from there. It took them quite a while to realize the Israelis would always whittle away at it, shape and form it to their requirements.

That is not to suggest that the Egyptians were always sensible. They weren't. They can be excruciatingly exasperating when they want to be. And they can be as bureaucratic as the best of them and certainly they can be as fuzzy if not more fuzzy than anybody I ever worked with when they wanted to be.

But as time went on both sides, I think, pretty much got the measure of each other and began to calibrate their messages, responses and reactions.

Q: We are talking about this heavy load of work. I take it for a good part of the time...this was before Sadat made the announcement...that the heavy load was going on in that period too. Is

that correct?

VIETS: That is correct.

Q: Obviously your wife was noticing, but everybody else must have been noticing the Ambassador, the DCM and a few other people...I mean, here it is a bright sunny day outside and they are walking around looking harassed and there is nothing on the horizon that looks particularly menacing or something like that.

VIETS: Well, by definition Tel Aviv is a screwy Embassy to work in and I don't think it took long for anybody who was there to figure out that there was a good bit that went on in the US-Israeli relationship that was handled by the Ambassador exclusively or by the Ambassador and the DCM. Occasionally bits and pieces of this floated down to other senior officers. But it wasn't one of those wide open missions where everybody knows exactly what the Ambassador and the DCM have done all day long because they would tell everybody about it in the next day's staff meeting.

People were accustomed to seeing a lot of closed doors and a lot of cars coming back in the dark of the night. The poor communicators were accustomed to knowing that at 2 or 3 in the morning they were going to be asked to send a NIACT IMMEDIATE or FLASH message on what was going on. It was just the nature of that installation at that particular period. It may still be the same, but I doubt it.

Q: This whole thing was opened up when Sadat made the announcement. Was this agreed upon, because certainly it would make it much stronger if Sadat made the statement rather than a joint declaration?

VIETS: No, my recollection is that this was a unilateral decision on his part and "bang" there it was. We may have had a little bit of advance notice, but I don't think very much.

Q: Did it hit the Israelis the same way?

VIETS: Oh, yes. It blew that country right off the map.

Q: What was the Embassy's and Washington's reaction? How did we see the Israeli's response and how did we play with that?

VIETS: Well, it would have been better to tape this at the moment because you surely would have received a more accurate answer to that question. I don't think that either Sam or I were at all surprised. You could see this symphony being created, if that is the right metaphor, and one knew ultimately that either there was going to be bilateral talks or the thing would blow up, one or the other. It came very close to blowing up any number of times. Here's where I think Hermann Eilts and Sam Lewis and perhaps one or two of the rest of us made the difference. We kept it going in those moments when it started veering off.

Q: This is where we are talking about not shading the answers but working on the formulation of

the answers.

VIETS: That is correct. Or simply sitting down with people and saying, "God damn it, don't pay any attention to that, this is what you ought to have your eye on, and this is what ought to be your goal. Here are some ideas of how to go after it." Sam, for example, spent many, many hours almost every day with people like Moshe Dayan, either during the day or late at night. Dayan lived outside of Tel Aviv, not in Jerusalem, so it was easy to spend evenings with him. And Sam certainly spent hours and hours with Begin. And when he wasn't in Tel Aviv I was doing the same routine.

So, as I said, I don't think either one of us was at all surprised, but because this had been so carefully controlled by Begin and Sadat, it did come as a bomb shell in Israel. My recollection is that there was literally dancing in the streets and all the rest. It was a nation that suddenly after all those years of having been a pariah, somebody recognized that you existed and spoke to you. In the ensuing emotional outburst it unleashed a great deal of unrealistic hope on the part of the Israelis that this meant perhaps the beginning of the end of Israel's isolation throughout the Arab world. After all, the Egyptians were the center of the Arab world and if the Egyptians did this it would be so much easier for everybody else, etc.

I think in a sense those unrealistic views have for some Israelis perhaps existed to this day. I haven't ever quite understood how the Egyptians could do this and why it didn't open the way for others.

I recall after the visit itself there was a great rash of naming children, twins, Begin and Sadat. One little personal anecdote, I remember a dinner that Moshe Dayan and Ezer Weizman gave at the Jerusalem Hilton for Secretary of State Vance, who was there for a visit trying to keep the game alive. Students of this era will remember that after the initial euphoria of Sadat's visit, both the Egyptians and Israelis began to tighten their positions and things slowed down in a hurry for a while. Again, that is where, I think the Americans won their equivalent of the diplomatic Nobel Peace Prize by really being basically responsible for keeping it going.

In any case, I recall at this dinner, half way through, Vance, who was sitting with Mr. Begin, crooked a finger at me. I left my table and went over. He wanted me to deliver a message to somebody in Washington. While I was standing behind his chair talking to him, Begin reached over and in his usual punctilious fashion, greeted me warmly and asked, as he always did, after my wife and children. I always tried to have a semi-jocular relationship with Begin and I said, "Mr. Prime Minister, I have something to report to you in this post-Sadat era of naming children after you and Mr. Sadat. My middle daughter Kasha, has bought two fish. One is named Begin and one is named Sadat." He smiled and laughed and said, "This is going on all over, isn't it." I said, "Well, I am reluctant to tell you, but one of them the night before last killed the other one." He immediately in his quick witted fashion said, "Did Begin kill Sadat or Sadat Begin?"

In a sense that little story is a metaphor of what was going on at that very moment. Tensions were rising. Begin was beginning his very hard line approach in reaction to Sadat's demands for a total pull out in Sinai, resolution of Palestinian issue, etc., and he was beginning very carefully to lay out his markers about what Israel would and would not accept. Sadat, I think, was perhaps

somewhat confused and frustrated over the fact that he had made, in his eyes, and I think most Israelis would agree, a great personal gamble and taken a very courageous step, and it wasn't being accepted in the same fashion and manner in which he had made it. It had immediately become kind of a bizarre negotiation. And that caused some bitterness, to put it mildly, within the Egyptian policy community and Sadat's entourage. This is where Hermann Eilts earned his keep and Sam Lewis earned his.

Q: Were we trying to let the Israelis know that Sadat had done something that was really very dangerous politically and physically for him? People in the Arab world would be out gunning for him and not to waste this moment because he might not be around.

VIETS: Certainly we were taking a line similar to that. But the Israelis in their own fashion had their own reactions. I think that, again I don't want to turn into a psychiatrist, but it does seem to me that when you have a society that has been a pariah, and that really is the right word for many, many years...a whole generation of Israelis had grown up in an environment in which essentially nobody in the region in which they lived had recognized them, spoken to them, indeed at various times tried to do them in...it is perhaps too much to expect that society overnight to trust what the first person to come down the pipe offers is a peace initiative. This is asking a great deal of any society.

Again, this is 1992 and we are still seeing those delayed reactions. Remember, this is a society that has been shaped and formed by an adversarial relationship and has not known any relationship in which one is treated as an equal or one is treated as something other than an enemy.

Q: Just to get a little personal thing on this, how did you see anything you did that might be worth mentioning during the Sadat visit in 1977?

VIETS: I am probably the last person to ask that question of because literally on the day of the visit we had essentially all of our Embassy out on the street in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and God knows where else, in order to pull together the appropriate reporting messages. Dick Viets played the role of DCM by staying home and minding the fires. So I watched it on a television set in my office. But I had no role, whatsoever, that day. I only heard all the wonderful stories from my wife and my colleagues who were there. I wasn't present.

Q: After the Sadat visit it moved into a period of joint negotiations. Were our Embassies in Cairo and Tel Aviv still playing somewhat the same role, or had the play moved more to being directed from Washington?

VIETS: I think at that point Washington certainly became the senior partner in all of this and we were subsidiary, because at that point you were talking about policies that required very top echelons in this government to make decisions on. I think one of the professional thrills of that period was knowing that whatever you were drafting was being read by the President personally, by the National Security Adviser and the Secretary of State. I still have somewhere in my personal archives in the Department a variety of copies of telegrams that I had done as Chargé with writings on the margin from the President, Brzezinski and Secretary Vance, etc. There aren't

too many times in any Foreign Service officer's career when you know you are talking directly to the boss. That in itself is a sufficient inducement to survive on four hours less sleep a night than normal.

Q: At that point was your main purpose to interpret how the Israelis were reacting?

VIETS: Again, I have trouble remembering the details of that period precisely. It really is a blur to me. The fact that Camp David was held, I think in itself is part of an answer to your question. A few weeks later things really were not going very well and the I think the feeling on the part of the President and his senior advisers was that the moment had arrived for the United States simply to lock people up in a room and hammer out an agreement; that it was drifting and it was always a risk that one or the other would simply say, "Enough of this."

As I am talking I am constantly comparing in my mind the environment then with the environment today in peace talks that are starting up again this very morning that we are talking. I remember the frustrations that began to develop in the region when nothing seemed to be happening as a result of this wonderful Sadat visit when emotions and hopes ran so high. It just seemed to tail off into endless volleys of diplomatic exchanges and sharp off-the-record comments, leaks, etc., by both sides. The constituency always needed in any prolonged negotiation of this nature, began to erode. There was no tangible evidence, either for the Israelis or the Egyptians, that the game was necessarily worth the price. The same thing is true today, I think. But fortunately wisdom prevailed. There was a political and policy leadership in this city who saw this as a moment in history that should be grasped irrespective of the dangers that it would blow up in your face. And they grasped it and forced it through.

Q: Were you getting from your Israeli contacts as the negotiations seemed to be drifting that the United States should come in get the thing back on track?

VIETS: There were people like Ezer Weizman who were saying precisely that, who were growing frustrated over the actions of their own government. Ezer was one who was extremely critical of elements of his own government's policies. I can't speak for what was going on in Cairo. The Israelis had then, and still have, thank God, a very free press which meant that the media was full of analysis and as always advice to the government over what to do. So it wasn't a depressed public debate at all, it was a very lively one. But frustration was there.

Q: Was it a sense of relief from your point of view when President Carter called the Camp David meeting?

VIETS: Oh yes, very much. You may remember during Camp David, itself, the press was miles away and it was a very tightly controlled negotiation. I really didn't know many of the details of what was going on because there were no daily reporting cables coming out of Thurmont, Maryland. I didn't learn many of the details until Sam flew back to Tel Aviv. I can remember the morning after he arrived going to his residence, sitting down by the swimming pool in the hot Mediterranean sun, while he went through several hours of notes that he had taken. He knew what he was doing during Camp David and took very extensive notes, which unfortunately have never seen a book, but someday may.

Q: I will tell you in a way what is happening to those notes, he has been doing a series of Oral Histories with us which has been going on for a few years. Peter Jessup is doing the interviewing. I think he was Station Chief or something like that. Anyway, Peter is a professional oral historian and Sam has been basically dictating his memoirs.

VIETS: Just to continue this parenthesis, when he retired he started work on a book which was really to be a political memoir of that period couched in the greater context of the US-Israeli relationship. He worked on it for several months, maybe a little longer, and I think got half way through or so and decided there were other ways he wanted to spend his time.

Q: You left shortly after the Camp David thing?

VIETS: I left there in August, 1979. There is one anecdote that has come to mind. Again I can't place precisely when it took place, but you will recall that the negotiations on a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel began to flounder very badly. President Carter who was in the midst of gearing up for his re-election campaign clearly saw not only the historical importance of getting a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt accomplished, but also that this would be a major accomplishment of his administration. He also realized that things had probably reached the point where he, the President, would have to reinsert himself between Begin and Sadat. So he flew to the area.

I remember clearly the first meeting that took place after his arrival in the cabinet room of the Israeli Prime Minister's office. The room was full of people around this very long cabinet table, as well as in the row of chairs along the wall...both Israelis and Americans. Obviously everybody wanted to be there. The Israelis are exactly like the Americans, the second and third echelon people wanted to be seen as part of this. Carter took a look around the table and said, "Prime Minister Begin, I really feel that we aren't going to be able to conduct the kind of conversations I want with all these people here. So I am asking everybody in my delegation to politely depart this room. The only people I want to stay behind are Secretary Vance, Sam Lewis, Ham Jordan, Jody Powell and Brzezinski [I think that was it]." So we all started to get up. Begin quickly said, "Well, I agree." And he asked his people to depart. As I walked by Begin's chair, he turned to me and said, "Dick, you are not leaving, you can't leave." To have a Prime Minister of a country to which you are accredited say something like that obviously raises certain questions as to where you come from. He turned to the President and said words to the effect, "Mr. Viets has played a very important role in all of this and really deserves to stay and I would like to have him stay." So the President said, "Well, Dick, you are staying."

So I had the pleasure of sitting in that meeting which went on and on and on. It reached just a dreadful deadlock. The President finally said, "Prime Minister, I suggest that we take a break and consult with our colleagues because we are going nowhere and we really need to break this off for a bit and take a rest." So Begin and his team got up and left the cabinet room. I will always remember this moment. The President of the United States took his shoes off and put his stocking feet on the cabinet table and put his head in his hands and began to rock back and forth, almost like a child in pain. And then a very strange thing happened. Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell walked up and sat down on either side of the President and began to speak to him in some

of the crudest language I have ever heard any man address to a superior. The essence of their words was, "For God's sake, Mr. President, put something up your derriere and get on with it. Stop whimpering and feeling sorry for yourself. You can crack this nut, you can win this, etc., etc. You can win this but you have to get with it." The language was very earthy, Southern lingo.

Q: They were both Georgia loyalists who had been with the President right from the beginning.

VIETS: That is right and you could see they were probably the only people in the world who could talk to the President of the United States in this fashion. I found it most fascinating and terribly embarrassing to be present at a moment when the President of the United States was being addressed in this fashion by two, albeit old, friends, but who were nevertheless subordinates. And in front of a group of people who shouldn't have been there!

In any case, the President responded positively to this dressing down by his two old friends and took charge of things. We very quickly decided what we were going to do when the Israelis came back. The President made it very clear he would leave if the renewed session again devolved into endless bickering. He asked me to go outside and telephone somebody on the staff and tell them to get the aircrew of Air Force One ready, that the session might bust up at any moment and he would want to get out of Israel in a big hurry.

So Begin and company came back into the room. Against all rules of the game I wrote a note to Ezer Weizman, who was one of the few Israelis that Begin trusted...

Q: He was Minister of Defense?

VIETS: He was still Minister of Defense at that time.

I said in the note, "Ezer, you should know that the President has ordered Air Force One ready to take off. This thing is just going over the cliff unless you guys get your act together." I passed it across the table to Weizman. He read it; looked at me; got up and showed the note to the Foreign Minister, Moshe Dayan. Dayan read it and looked across the table at me and I nodded. Dayan, who was sitting next to Begin, showed the note to him and there was a kind of silence among the Israelis. Dayan then said, "You know I have perhaps an idea that might work us out of this box we are in," and proceeded to develop his idea. Carter chimed in that he thought the proposal was great and he could work with it. Within 15 minutes things were on the way to being resolved and it was agreed that the President and Begin would meet again that evening and settle it.

So again one never knows in life what the results of even the smallest actions are. That meeting may well have ended in great success in any case, but this certainly gave some impetus to resolution of the immediate crisis.

Q: Sort of nailing down the obvious, sometimes there is the idea that everything can be done from Washington and a foreign capital and you don't need people on the ground, but there are times that it is absolutely essential that you have built up trust. In the first place somebody from Washington couldn't have passed that note because they wouldn't have known that person or cared. If nothing else, this is one of those instances that shows what embassies do. They build up

trust, confidence so that in times of crisis they know somebody is talking straight.

VIETS: Well, it is also I think that you know every day of this life people serving Presidents and Prime Ministers and others are constantly doing this sort of thing and very little of this ever gets into anybody's memoirs. But that is what history is made of. It has always intrigued me, these little tiny episodes that take on such historical significance.

Q: Well, this is, of course, as we develop this oral history what we are trying to do. It is not to highlight but to show that there are a bunch of people running around carrying spears, etc. who keep the machinery going. Before we leave Israeli, what was your view of Sharon at the time you left in 1977, because he before and particularly later led Israel down a disastrous road into invading Lebanon in which he pretty much controlled things and did it without any real direction?

VIETS: Sharon during that period was under a much tighter leash than he subsequently was. He was Minister of Agriculture and while there was no doubt in anybody's mind what his political views were...he never tried to mask it. On the contrary I can remember going any number of times to see him at his office in Jerusalem and he would lay out on a big table his maps of the West Bank and show me the roads he was planning to build or were already being constructed. For every Congressional delegation that came he would have military helicopters and fly them up to some of the higher points in the West Bank and show them the famous narrow salient. So he was very open and aggressive in a more controlled fashion than he subsequently became over espousing his views.

My recollection is that he became Minister of Defense about the time I was leaving because I do remember a ship visit where the visiting admiral gave a dinner on board the fantail of his cruiser and I recall going up with Sharon for that dinner with our wives. But the bulk of my time he was Minister of Agriculture and was, therefore, essentially cut out of all the diplomatic toing and froing that took place between Israel and Egypt and Washington. He really wasn't that much of a factor. Begin was supreme during that period. Nobody could take him on politically and survive. Even Moshe Dayan was very careful in the way in which he handled Mr. Begin.

Q: Therefore an American President could go in and deal with an Israeli Prime Minister at that point, when other times that an American President might go, a Prime Minister of almost any country might have to have almost the whole cabinet there because of shared power.

VIETS: That's right. It was a combination of factors. Begin had a very powerful personality. He was a very shrewd, tough politician who knew how to run a cabinet. While I don't think he will ever go down in the history of Israel as one of the great prime ministers in terms of the type of government he gave Israel, he is certainly firmly ensconced in the history books for what he did on the Egyptian peace treaty. And that was clearly his major goal. He had a great sense of history and he damn well wanted to insure that he had a place in history, and he did.

Q: One last question on the Israeli thing, looking at our Embassy, how did you view Israeli specialists? It is always very difficult to recruit people because it is somewhat limited to one country and makes them a little bit suspect in the Arab countries. How useful were they and how

did you feel about them?

VIETS: This is unfortunately a very sensitive subject and I am going to address it frontally because it is a subject that is generally avoided. People prefer to sidestep it. During the period I served in Israel, 1977-79, we were blessed with a group of a half dozen or so FSOs of Jewish origin who were bilingual in Hebrew, who were exceedingly talented young officers whose contribution to the United States Government's understanding, and most particularly to Sam Lewis' and Dick Viets' understanding of what was going on in Israel, is hard to overstate.

That said, everyone serving in Embassy Tel Aviv was on the receiving end of unremitting pressure by Israelis in and out of government [or an intensity I never experienced anywhere else in the world] to be sympathetic to Israeli policies and points of view. All of us at one time or another found it very tough to handle these pressures. Our Jewish colleagues were special targets, of course. Without going into any personal details, there were moments when some of them did not handle these pressures very well. The emotional weight layed on them simply was too great.

I have always felt, and nothing has happened in my life since then to moderate my views one iota, that there are times and situations when special heed must be given to ethnic and religious roots in making personnel assignments. Not to do so risks potentially difficult problems for both the individual and the Foreign Service. However imprudent this view may be in our outrageously (at times) politically correct society, I feel it must be said.

Q: We have this including Irish-American, Serbian-Americans, Chinese-Americans, the whole thing.

VIETS: I know some people reading this transcript will immediately feel that what they are reading is a closely disguised anti-Semitic smite by Dick Viets. Quite the contrary. I think anyone who knows my record in Israel would not find that to be true. But I am now speaking as someone who has had some responsibility in the Foreign Service for managing people in such situations. I am appalled when I read, for example, that we are sending to country X an officer I worked with for several years, who was born and raised in that country and is now going back as ambassador. I think he is being put in a most difficult personal and professional position. No matter how hard he works to maintain his balance, the moment will surely come when his emotions will overcome his professional self-discipline. In this instance because he will be the Chief of Mission there will be no one above him to save him from himself. I truly feel sorry for my friend. The Republic has done neither him nor itself a favor in making this assignment.

Q: It has been sort of traditional that we do it to the immigrant who makes significant political contributions. But now a lot of new countries are opening up and sort of reaching out for one thing or another. Particularly what was part of the Soviet Union. We have been sending some people who come from those areas.

VIETS: This is the area of the world that I was just referring to.

Q: I think this is something we are all aware of.

VIETS: Well, not, apparently, some of the people who make these personnel decisions. The defense offered always is that these are fine Americans. And they are fine Americans. But I had been seduced over the years in any number of societies I have worked in and I have no roots in those societies whatsoever. I can only imagine how much faster I would have been seduced if I were Irish and in Ireland, or Jewish and in Israel or Chinese and in China. This is human nature and has nothing to do with one's Americanism or patriotism, or professionalism. It is human nature.

Q: Speaking of Israeli. Did the Israeli lobby get in touch with you before you went out? Jordan seems to be the one maneuvering ground.

VIETS: My recollection is that it worked both ways. A lot of these people I had known for a number of years and worked with and I called on them. Others contacted me. I think there was a strong sense that because I had recently spent two years plus in Israel, separated only by what I call my sabbatical of a year and a half, I was still fairly fresh off the griddle and knew a good many Israelis and knew a great many members of the leadership of the "American-Jewish Community." So it was a natural thing to do.

Q: As you go out to Jordan, you are looking at it with an experienced but fresh eye. What did you see as American interests in Jordan and what did you see as your check list of things you would like to do?

VIETS: There was only one overwhelming objective that I had. That was to do whatever I could to relieve some of the pressures of the Arab-Israeli confrontation and ultimately, of course, to help move the parties into negotiations. I do recall getting ready for this assignment. We had a new Secretary of State, General Haig, and I remember that Al Haig did not have time to meet his new ambassador to Jordan. This is perhaps understandable, although I took it as not a particularly good omen.

Haig already brought to his new role a pronounced bias favoring the state of Israel. I remember within NEA there was growing apprehension as the weeks went by and he was seen to be staffing his office with a number of people who were very pro-Israeli. He would see every key Israeli who would flow into town, but he did not make the same effort with the Arabs. So I remember worrying at the time that this was going to be a problem of getting through to the Secretary. I had been rather spoiled when I was in Israel because, of course, almost everything you sent got on the Secretary's desk and the National Security Advisor's desk and ultimately to the President's desk. And there were lots of phone calls and visits. So you got to know these people personally very well. Suddenly one found himself back to addressing the same issues, but from "across the river" and yet unable to get to see the gentleman in charge. This didn't bode well.

Q: Was there a feeling in NEA at that time that we had just come from Secretary Vance and Secretary Muskie and moving to Secretary Haig, that there was a difference in the way these Secretaries did this? Was the perception that Haig was more inclined to listen to the Israeli side more than either Vance or Muskie?

VIETS: That was the perception. How fair it was I am in no position to say. Nick Veliotes would be in a much better position than I am to make that judgment because he had to deal with Haig day in and day out.

I finally did get to see Haig because I had gone up to some eighth floor reception with Nick and there was Haig talking to a group of people. Nick, in his best tradition, just grabbed me by the shoulder and propelled me forward and pushed right through the crowd around Haig and said, "Mr. Secretary, we have been trying to get to see you for days and here is Dick Viets who will be leaving in three days for Amman and you damn well ought to talk to him." Haig, who I knew, but not well, said, "Oh, Dick, nobody told me." We walked over to a corner and talked for about five or six minutes. So I did have my brief moment with the great man.

I recall the night the news was flashed to Amman, and I guess I was listening to the BBC 11 o'clock newscast and was all alone in my residence, my family were away on a trip, and I heard that Secretary Haig had resigned or been fired. I distinctly recall going out to the kitchen, pulling out a bottle of champagne and uncorking it and consuming the entire bottle. I was greatly relieved.

Q: I heard from someone else that when the news came out in the State Department that Veliotes ran down the hall saying, "Don't anyone dare cheer. Keep at work." It sounds like tremendous disloyalty, but it is not. Attitude and the perception of attitude is important. It is very disheartening to be in a post where you feel you are not going to get a fair hearing.

Now, what was the situation in Jordan when you arrived?

VIETS: My timing couldn't have been worse because I arrived there two or three days, I can't remember precisely, after the Israelis had bombed the famous Iraqi nuclear reactor. The Middle East, as usual, was full of conspiracy theories, all of which sooner or later connected the United States to the Israelis attack. I arrived to find the Embassy in a state of siege, psychological siege. Nobody was moving out to see anybody, talk to anybody. People were just hovering in their offices feeling sorry for themselves. I remember realizing my first task was to get this Embassy to get on it's bicycle and get on down to the bazaar and to ministries, etc., and to begin to do its job. I think all of this was exacerbated by the fact there had been a Chargé for about ten months. A long, long haul for a Chargé. He had taken the view that the Chargé's job is essentially to maintain the status quo so far as the internal operation in the Embassy is concerned. And that is a perfectly defensible thing to do. Perhaps he would have taken a different view had he realized he was going to be running things for ten months. But he didn't know that. He felt that the new Ambassador ought to be able to change things as he wished. So I had the sense the first day or so that I was in Amman that I was in kind of a haunted house or a summer house that had been closed up all winter. But there was a group of very, very good people at the Embassy who responded with alacrity to a little leadership and we soon had the place humming with activity. I had great fun working with this wonderful staff.

Q: What was the reaction to this Israeli bombing? I find myself most of the time personally sort of annoyed or angry at what the Israelis do, but this one I can't fault because subsequent events

certainly proved you had a real nasty person, Saddam Hussein, who might have used a nuclear bomb.

VIETS: You have just reflected, of course, 20/20 hindsight. I think at the time, not only in the Middle East but even here in Washington, even Al Haig, was very concerned about the precedent that had been set where a national air force crosses two sets of borders and bombs a strategic objective which it is concerned about and returns home and expects the rest of the world to applaud. The fact that it was a nuclear reactor didn't appreciably change the concern that this was setting one hell of a bad precedent that needed to be responded to in an appropriate fashion in the Security Council, which we did.

Of course, in hindsight, as you just said, the history of the Middle East was changed more than we realized at the time by that mission. The Arabs and I think the Jordanians in particular were deeply concerned because they all felt, "Oh my god, if they can do it to the Iraqis, they can do it to us."

Going back to my time in Israel, every three weeks or so the Israelis would fly reconnaissance missions deep into Jordan and Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. They were doing this essentially at will. Partly I think for psychological purposes and partly to monitor air defenses, tracking capabilities, etc. in order to draw a profile of the type of reaction you would get if you ever had to attack that country.

We would regularly go into the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel and warning against this practice.

My first meeting with the King was the day after I arrived in Jordan when I presented my credentials. That was, I think, a sign of the importance the King placed on the Jordan-US relationship...within twenty-four hours of arrival you present your credentials to the chief of state. It was probably also a reflection of the tension of the moment. It was a good thing to get an American Ambassador in place because people were damn well heated up over this incursion.

In my first conversation with the King he confided that in fact he personally had spotted the Israeli aircraft on their way into Iraq. He had been up in an aircraft of his own in southern Jordan, down near the Gulf of Aqaba, and had spotted some miles away part of the squadron of Israeli F-16s on the way in. He had a copilot with him and had said to him, "My God, I think they are on a mission into Iraq." He may have even said "after a reactor" because there had been some concern this might happen.

In any event he radioed the ground control staff to advise the air control center in Amman that he had spotted X number of Israeli fighters at very low level, which was part of the signal that this wasn't a reconnaissance mission. And he instructed them to inform immediately the Iraqi Minister of Defense of the sighting. Somehow there was confusion and the message never got to Amman air control and thus was never passed to the Iraqis. So that is one of those little ironic footnotes of history.

Q: Did King Hussein ever imply to you or say to you that he thought the United States was

implicated in this, or was he savvy enough to understand what this relationship between the United States and Israel was, which was not a client/patron relationship by any means?

VIETS: He was much too sophisticated to make that allegation. He knew very well Israeli concerns regarding Iraqi nuclear ambitions and he also knew Iraqi concerns about Israeli nuclear capacity. But the street, the bazaar, I think, saw it quite differently, and believed there had to have been collusion. And I think to this day there are many people who believe that the US knowingly provided the Israelis with satellite photos, etc, of this Iraqi target. My recollection is that Mr. Pollard, the famous Israeli spy, did indeed provide them with quite a bit of information relating to that Iraqi enterprise, but I don't know the details of that.

Q: Well, you said your arrival couldn't have been more inopportune for opening up a dialogue. This mess must have set you back some in attempts to sew a few seeds.

VIETS: In the Middle East one can almost use the metaphor for the sea...the tide comes in, the tide goes out. You simply know that every X number of weeks or months or days or hours there is going to be a crisis. You just move from one crisis to another. And you know these things heat up and become very passionate and tense and then subside to be replaced by something new. So I understood that this was today's crisis and one had to keep it in check...

Q: In your conversations with these people, I am sure they were asking your evaluation of Begin, and in particular, Sharon. How did you feel about them at this time? We had gone through this security zone business which the Israelis had grabbed...by the way I had an interview with Sam Hart who talks very highly about you being the one person around who was willing to raise his voice in saying that this was a land grab at the time that the Israelis moved into the security zone. What were you imparting to the Jordanians about this? It turned out to be a rather lethal combination of Sharon or a weakening Begin or something.

VIETS: Yes, there was a weakening of Begin's position at that time and Sharon was certainly on the ascendancy. I felt, even while I was in Israel, that Sharon was frankly a very dangerous figure. Dangerous for Israel and dangerous for his neighbors, and perhaps even dangerous for the world. I felt even stronger as time went on in Jordan and I watched Sharon's maneuvering as Defense Minister and as I received intelligence information of what he was up to, I became very, very concerned. I certainly imparted that sense of concern without imparting the gory details to the King and to his immediate colleagues.

Q: Sam Lewis was still in Tel Aviv. Did you feel you understood what the action was in Israel, or because Alexander Haig was in Washington and Sam Lewis had much more a direct line and you had this affinity towards Israeli...?

VIETS: Well, remember Haig was gone within the year.

Q: But the year was a very important year.

VIETS: Yeah. I am afraid my memory is a little dim on the specifics of what we were going through at that time. My memory becomes sharper at the time George Shultz picks up his role as

Secretary and then ultimately launches the famous Reagan plan in September, 1982. I will go to my grave thinking it is one of the greater diplomatic triumphs of the post war era of American diplomacy. Unfortunately, it foundered, but it was a triumph because it got through a very biased bureaucracy and the President got behind it. We simply didn't follow through on it as well as we might have for reasons we can discuss as we go along. But it was a tremendously well-constructed diplomatic effort which had great promise.

Q: My dates are getting hazy here. The really major event, of course, was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. That took place on Haig's watch. In fact allegedly there was a wink or a nod when Sharon...When did that happen?

VIETS: That was in the early summer of 1982 because the peace initiative came in September.

Q: Were you...?

VIETS: I was absolutely devastated by that invasion.

Q: We were having an Israel which was saying that if anybody does anything they will take threats. In other words it looked like this was something, in hindsight, that was obviously a trumped up event...an attempted assassination in London of the ambassador started this thing. There was no cause and effect.

VIETS: Sharon decided it was time.

Q: Had our Embassy in Tel Aviv, in your analysis and everybody else's who were looking at this thing, felt, "Oh my God, here is a gun that is loaded and cocked and is going to go off?"

VIETS: I think there was no great secret that Sharon had been promoting the idea, the concept, for quite some time. That sooner or later, preferably sooner from his point of view, the Israelis had to go into Lebanon and once and for all take care of the problem of the PLO operating inside Lebanon. And along the way to remind the Syrians that the Israelis remained the boss of that part of the world. I don't recall that there were any major intelligence indicators that the invasion was going to take place up until immediately after the assassination attempt, and then you began to see reports. The Israel military is as good or better than anybody else at having contingency plans filed away in the safes of their headquarters, and I am sure the Sharon plan in various incarnations had been developed over the years and was ready and waiting. Sharon decided and persuaded the Prime Minister and the cabinet that this was the excuse (the abortive assassination) they needed.

In fact, you may recall the principal argument for launching it was that Israel had to neutralize the border; that the PLO would continue to threaten Israeli border settlements with rocket attacks and the odd infiltration effort by guerrillas. Over the years this had resulted in the deaths of innocent people and children.

In fact, Phil Habib had negotiated a year earlier, in Lebanon, a cease-fire along that border and my recollection is that it had held to the letter. So Sharon's "excuse" for launching the invasion

because it was necessary to purge that border of all these dangerous people who were throwing bombs over the wire fences is pure baloney. The record simply doesn't sustain it.

And secondly, as we now know, Sharon sold the Prime Minister and the cabinet on the fact that this would be a very limited operation. He insisted he had no intention of coming in contact with the Syrians and certainly had no intention of going all the way to Beirut. In fact, he did. They did precisely that.

I think for those of us who were out there it was a very, very bad moment of our lives. God knows it was much worse for the people in Lebanon who were the victims.

Q: Could you talk about how you felt when you got this news?

VIETS: The first recollection that I have is a midnight phone call from the Queen of Jordan, daughter of Najeeb Halaby, a distinguished American citizen. She just stripped my skin off..."How can I serve a government which is doing anything to stop this carnage and this terrible war?" I remember giving it right back to her. Firstly, I thought she had no right personally to castigate me in this form. And secondly, she was speaking from total ignorance about what I was doing in trying to stop it.

The King called me the next morning and asked that I come up to see him. He closed the door and started laughing. He said he had been listening in on an extension phone and had heard the whole conversation. I guess I should not go into what he said about it. But it was not an easy time. There were demonstrations against our Embassy and threats against our people.

Q: It was sort of salami tactics in that...I have just finished a long series of interviews with Bob Dillon where he notes that Sharon and the Israelis were saying they were going up to such and such a line and stop and actually we saw them 20 miles beyond that line. This went on and on. Did this unfold gradually or did you immediately realize they were going the whole way?

VIETS: My recollection is that it was happening so fast that one was stunned by the blatancy of the whole thing. It was as if there were no constraints, no restrictions whatsoever, placed on that army. I can still recall those terrible moments when the Israeli artillery units sat up on the hills overlooking Beirut and 24 hours a day just lobbed shells and rockets into that city of totally unprotected people.

I think from a personal perspective it was even worse for me because I realized what we were seeing at that point was in fact the first time that the most modern technology of war, those horrible weapons of war that were not available to the third world, were being used against defenseless populations. I was just horrified by what I saw on television. It seemed to me that as these terrible weapons became available to more and more armies and irresponsible governments the world would be witness to carnage and devastation of heretofore unknown dimension.

This is a slight aside, but at this time I got into terrible difficulties on Capitol Hill. I came home shortly after the end of the war. I was going back and forth between Amman and Washington with considerable frequency in those days, and whenever I did I always made a point, as many

ambassadors do, of spending a certain amount of time on Capitol Hill going around seeing key senators and representatives and staffers, to brief them on what was going on, offer my own views, etc.

One of the people who I often went to see was Senator Rudy Boschwitz, now defeated Senator from Minnesota, a Jewish member of the Senate who had a very strong interest in the Middle East. While he was very pro-Israeli, he also understood there certain aspects of our interests in the Middle East that even transcended our/his affections of the state of Israel. I remember sitting in his office, this was right at the end of the war, and saying to him that I thought it was going to be a long, long time before those of us who had been witness to all of this could forget the inhumanity of the Israeli army's attack on the city of Beirut itself, which had absolutely no military significance whatsoever. I remember Rudy Boschwitz rising out of his seat and putting his finger under my nose saying, "You get out of this office. And you never cross the threshold of this office again. I will never tolerate hearing any American Ambassador or any representative of the United States government ever using the word "inhumane" in connection with the state of Israel. Get out of here."

Well, I sat there and gave him back exactly what he had given me with a little chapter and verse on the number of innocent casualties, men, women, children, grandparents, etc., who had been killed and maimed, and then got up and left. I have not seen him again to this day, but I know from others on the Hill that he went around really doing a job on me concerning my perceived lack of loyalty to Israel.

Q: The two camps of Palestinians, Shatila and Sabra, men and women were left and with the collusion of the Israelis, Christian militia were allowed to go in there and it turned into a massacre. How did that play in Jordan and what was our Embassy's reaction in Israel to this?

VIETS: The press reports led to a feeling of abhorrence that this could happen and led to all kinds of contrasts with Nazi atrocities during World War II, etc. I'm being a little hesitant as I am responding to your question because my recollection is that all we really had in the first days after this were press reports. We really didn't have any inside information on exactly what had happened. We knew something terrible had happened and while there might not have been any doubt in the minds of people "in the streets" in the Arab world that this was a direct result of Israeli collusion with Christian elements in Beirut, I think most of us were a little reluctant to jump to that conclusion without further evidence to support the fact. We simply didn't have it at that point.

My own view is that the total story of what went wrong has not yet been made public to this day. I was told shortly thereafter that we had intercepted some communications between Israeli units and the Phalange, which we deep sixed because we felt it would make the Israelis even more culpable than the Israelis' own investigation suggested. But I have never heard the tapes and have never seen them.

Q: Just to get a feel for the times, was this whole war on daily TV in Jordan?

VIETS: Yes. It was the first war to use modern weaponry and to be covered with such intense

press interest. You remember, for its size the city of Jerusalem has more journalists from all over the world than any other city in the world. Wars attract journalists like flies. So there was tremendous coverage of that war and nothing has seen its equivalent since.

Q: Dick let's talk a little about the Shultz plan.

VIETS: I first became aware of what we call the Reagan Initiative in August of 1982. In fact, George Shultz was its principal architect, and I will always believe this effort was one of George Shultz' finest hours, if not his finest hour. Despite the fact that the plan never went anywhere, it had all the elements that seemed to me at the time, and still does, to provide a fair and durable end to the confrontation between the Arab world and the state of Israel.

I first heard of it when I was on holiday in England with my family. I had taken a house for a month in the Cotswolds. We no sooner got settled in and had taken our first amble through the Cotswold hills when I was informed by our governess Mary Luke that our Embassy in London was trying urgently to reach me. I called in and was told to come into London immediately because there was a secure line call I had to make to Assistant Secretary Veliotos. Well, I sensed immediately that that was the end of my holiday.

I drove to the train station and went into London and got Nick on the phone. He said, "I am going to make a very secret visit to Amman this weekend. I will be arriving in London Saturday morning and the King is sending a special airplane to pick me up and I want you to go with me. I will explain it all when I see you. No one is to know we are in Amman except the King and the Prime Minister. So do not advise your Embassy of this. We will not be staying at your residence, etc., etc."

Q: This was when?

VIETS: This would have been in August, 1983. I think the plan was announced in September.

At the appointed hour I showed up at Heathrow. I remember taking a taxi to Terminal 3 where we were to meet. I got out of the taxi and, my God, who was the first person I should bump into but the administrative counselor of our Embassy in Amman. He saw me with baggage and wanted to know right away whether I was going back to Amman. I said, "No, no, I am going on a hot weekend to the south of France." I could just see the look on his face..."This son of a gun Viets has some tootsie he is secretly meeting." And, sure enough, he went back to Amman with a big story that he had seen the Ambassador on his way to a weekend in the south of France. So, it took some time to live that down.

In any case, Nick and I joined forces at Heathrow and were flown out on a very plush private jet belonging to His Majesty, and over champagne and smoked salmon Nick first briefed me on the plan. That literally was the first I had heard of it. I knew something had been going on that required certain people in NEA to work very long hours, but I really did not know what was afoot.

Nick's job, as Assistant Secretary, and as ex-Ambassador to Jordan, led the Secretary to ask him

to personally brief the King on the plan and to attempt to secure the King's support of the plan. We had several sessions with the King...we had a couple of days in Amman. On the whole the King subscribed to the plan with alacrity. There were one or two questions he had.

Q: In essence, what was the initial plan proposing?

VIETS: In essence it involved the US calling a conference of the confrontation states with Israel based on the famous UN Resolutions 242 and 338 requiring Israel to withdraw from the bulk of the occupied territories. It involved a series of telescoped time steps leading to Israeli withdrawal and to elections, etc. The final status of the territory that the Israelis withdrew from was to be decided in negotiations to be concluded within 5 years. In the interim the Palestinians were to establish and implement a self-governing authority.

We took the stand that while the United States was against an independent state, it would support whatever the parties themselves agreed to. In recent years we have backed away from that second part. Now we are solidly against an independent state -- period. We no longer say that we will support whatever others agree to. This is only one of many erosions of the Shultz policy that has taken place in the last two administrations.

In any case, Nick flew back to Washington and I flew back to England to pick up my family and take them back to Amman. Obviously I had to be in Amman to follow up those initial consultations with the King. The plan was announced and our Ambassador in Israel, Sam Lewis, forecast very accurately when he learned of it, that it would go nowhere with the Israelis because they had not been apprized beforehand of it. They were not informed until just before the announcement of the plan. They had no hand in developing the plan. For the Israelis this was the first time in some years that they had not received notice over everybody else of a U.S. policy initiative in the region. They had almost always managed, as a result of having advance notice, to shape, to form and modify whatever the policy the moment was to accommodate their own needs -- or perceived needs.

Begin immediately said no way to the Reagan initiative. He could see the handwriting on the wall. This would mean ultimately getting out of most of his beloved Judea and Samaria, and he wanted nothing to do with it. The Israelis put up a tremendous public relations campaign against the initiative. They pulled out all the stops in Israel and with their friends here in the halls of Congress and with the American Jewish community. I think it is fair to say they plain buffaloed the Reagan administration. The Administration got scared and in consequence walked away from its own plan -- a plan many of us considered to be by all odds the fairest and most comprehensive, most balanced, most creative diplomatic framework thus far conceived to resolve this long festering confrontation. Those of us out in the field were left pretending that we still backed it, but in fact there was no muscle put behind it. It just died almost stillborn. It lived for a very short period of time.

I believe in retrospect that this failure was a great shame. Look at what has happened in the interim in the region in terms of the costs to human life in Israel and amongst the Palestinians. The toll has been terrible, to say nothing of the instability that continues to exist in the region because of the absence of a settlement.

Before we go any further, Stuart, I want to get on the record one of those bizarre instances that rarely become a matter of public record, but in fact have a very important bearing on relationships. In this instance I want to talk a little about the personal relationship between Secretary of State Shultz and King Hussein.

About two or three months before Secretary Haig resigned and George Shultz was appointed Secretary of State, George Shultz came to Amman with his wife on a brief visit. He was at that time head of Bechtel. I remember he came with one of the senior Bechtel vice presidents. He had known King Hussein in the past, I think through Bechtel, which had done some work in Jordan over the years, perhaps he had also known him in one of his earlier government positions. He considered the King a friend.

As I mentioned in one of our earlier taping sessions, George Shultz was number one on my personal list of potential Secretaries of State. I recall he was allegedly very disappointed when he wasn't named in the first Reagan cabinet in place of General Haig. I had never met Mr. Shultz. When I heard he was in town I immediately called him at his hotel and arranged to go over and to pay my respects on him and to invite him to lunch. I spent quite a lot of time with him and his wife. Of course the first thing I did was to inquire if there was anything I could do to expedite his meeting with the King. He let me know politely but firmly that he didn't need any help from me or anybody else. The King knew he was in town and he was sure the phone was going to ring. His office had sent advance word to the Palace of his impending visit.

A couple of days went by and I was wining and dining the Shultzes and still no word. I think he stayed in town three days and the phone never rang. He left Amman in a major huff. He never heard from the King or from the royal palace. On two or three occasions I said, "I am certain the King doesn't know you are here because he is an enormously polite man and if he knew you were here I am sure you would hear from him. Let me just call and find out." Well, he didn't want me to make any calls.

As soon as he left I happened to see the King, who had been down during this entire period at his palace in Aqaba for a long weekend with his family. I said to him, "I think somebody has made a bad mistake. George Shultz was here and spent three or four days waiting for word from the palace to call on you and he never got any word. He left in a hell of a huff and his nose was really out of joint. What happened?" He said, "George Shultz was here? Why in the hell didn't anybody tell me?" Well, once again it was one of those dreadful instances when staffs decide that the lord and master shouldn't be bothered with some businessman.

I always felt that this perceived slight negatively affected George Shultz' future relationship with King Hussein. I honestly am trying to remember as I am talking whether I ever told Shultz later when he became Secretary of State that the King had never been told he was there. I must have, but I can't recall the conversation. I do know that the relationship never was very warm. Shultz is a man of great personal pride and dignity and ego and does not like to be slighted, even by a king.

I don't want to use this particular tape to cite chapter and verse as to why I feel as strongly as I do

on this, but it affected their relationship, that I am convinced of. And that in turn affected some policy decisions with respect to Jordan. As I said at the outset, this is one of those rinky dink things that forms little pieces of history.

Q: It is an interesting thing, you said this about Shultz. I don't know the man and have never dealt with him and there hasn't been a great deal of psychoanalysis of Shultz ...Alexander Haig gets all the psychoanalysis of that period, but I have never heard this strong sense of self with Shultz.

VIETS: Very, very much so. In my view, and I am probably almost alone in this, George Shultz in the first years as his time as Secretary State harbored, I believe, ...and again I do not want to cite why, because it is and enormously personal insight which affects somebody else...I think he harbored the hope that somehow he might find himself as a presidential nominee at the end of the Reagan administration. I believe he strongly felt there was no one else in the government at that time who had the vast experience at cabinet level that he had. And, of course, he was absolutely right. Treasury, Labor, OMB, Chairman of a huge international contracting firm...he had done it all. A man of considerable gifts. But a very substantial ego would be required, I guess, to survive in the fast lane and do as well as he did. He also was a man of considerable temper. You wanted to be very careful when you saw the color begin to rise in his neck. He knew how to sound off.

Q: Back to the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. When would this be?

VIETS: The date would be summer of 1983.

Q: And it was essentially over in the fall of 1983?

VIETS: Yes, I think so. I should have brushed up on the chronology of this.

Q: Well, the exact chronology is not all that important. It had happened, the Israelis were withdrawing, the Palestinians were getting out...

VIETS: Well, you remember they didn't get out for a long time and this was part of the problem. As time went on the Israelis began to suffer increasing casualties from truck bombs, car bombs, assassinations, etc. and life became intolerable for the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) in Lebanon. They finally decided they had had enough and got out. Of course it was about that time George Shultz got on his horse and decided that he would negotiate the famous Israeli-Lebanese peace treaty.

I have one major recollection of that period. The Secretary flew out to Cairo immediately prior to launching his shuttle diplomacy between Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Beirut to negotiate the treaty. Immediately prior to that he went to Cairo where he summoned seven or eight of his ambassadors in the region, and I was one of them. The reason for summons was he wanted our collective judgment on what was needed in the treaty -- and what was possible to attain. With the exception of Sam Lewis, who was still our ambassador in Israel, the rest of us to a greater or lesser extent told the Secretary -- either very bluntly or very diplomatically -- that he was

embarking on a useless and dangerous venture. We all already knew essentially the dimensions of what he wanted in the treaty. His primary goal was to normalize relationships between Lebanon and Israel. Most of us believed it would be a big, big mistake to abandon what had been US policy for many, many years, of seeking a comprehensive agreement. To negotiate treaties piecemeal with Israel would surely guarantee an imbalance in the final result -- or so we thought. As we went around the table with these warnings, as I say, one ambassador in particular, our ambassador to Syria, spoke to the Secretary about as bluntly as anyone I have ever heard.

Q: This was Bob Paganelli.

VIETS: Yes, Bob Paganelli, who if he has not been interviewed, should be.

Q: Yes, I want to get a hold of him.

VIETS: Bob almost was fired on the spot, I think. But in any case I could see the color rising in the Secretary's neck and face as more of us spoke our pieces. He didn't like it at all. At the end he just stood up and slapped his papers together and abruptly observed that he guessed he had heard all he wanted from us and stalked out of the room. I was subsequently told by a very close friend who was working on the Secretary's staff that later that day Mr. Shultz had told him he should have fired us all on the spot. In his view, all of us had been bought out by the Arabs or we couldn't see the forest for the trees.

Alas, the treaty that he ultimately negotiated was an appalling invasion of Lebanese sovereignty. It included permitting the Israelis to build and maintain monitoring stations on Mt. Hermon and to conduct over flights of Lebanon -- and many other kinds of fundamental infringements of Lebanese sovereignty. The Lebanese ran for cover -- the Syrians provided a good deal of that cover -- and the treaty blew up in George Shultz' face. Although none of us ever had the effrontery to remind him, I think he got some pretty sound advise on that famous day in Cairo.

SAMUEL W. LEWIS
Ambassador
Israel (1977-1984)

Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis was born in Texas on October 1, 1930. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University and a master's degree in international relations from the Johns Hopkins University. His career included positions in Naples, Florence, Rio de Janeiro, Kabul, and an ambassadorship to Israel. Ambassador Lewis was interviewed by Peter Jessup on August 9, 1988.

LEWIS: That period, as you will recall, was also the time of Kissinger's high profile shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. So I was writing and supervising production of a number of policy papers on Middle East negotiations that we were working on with the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs, where Hal [Harold] Saunders and Roy Atherton were key players. At an earlier time, Joe [Joseph John] Sisco was still there. I wasn't

directly involved in any of Kissinger's shuttles. I didn't go out with him on any of those trips, but I was very much involved in the papers back in Washington, in preparation for the trips and the ideas.

For example, I remember one occasion in the spring of 1975. Kissinger had already succeeded in negotiating the first withdrawal agreement with Egypt, the disengagement agreement of 1974, and a disengagement agreement with Syria for some withdrawal on the Syrian front. Then he went back to the question of a second step with Egypt in the spring of '75, and he carried on a long shuttle which deadlocked, and deadlocked, in Henry's mind, largely because of Israeli intransigence over further concessions. He was furious at the end of that shuttle, coming back to Washington empty handed, after having spent a couple of weeks, at least, perhaps longer, in the Middle East on that shuttle.

He was furious with the Israelis, felt that they were missing a great opportunity to secure another step in the direction of peace and get their own security solidified, and that Sadat was ready for much more than they were prepared to do. They were hung up not only over the issues themselves, but also internal arguments within the Israeli Government, which is pretty characteristic of the way the Israeli negotiators are generally hung up in these matters. So Henry came back to Washington fuming, and he announced on the airplane to the traveling press, that there would have to be a comprehensive reassessment of the situation, which was immediately interpreted by the Israelis and by the press as meaning we were going to exert a lot of pressure and leverage on Israel to give in. In fact, we did conduct, when he got back, a thorough reassessment of all of the negotiating options within the government, and the policy planning staff played an important role in that review.

Basically, the key question was whether you continue to work for partial settlements or whether you, at this point, go ahead and try to work out a comprehensive settlement for all of the occupied territories and no more small steps. Kissinger had about come to the conclusion that it was so difficult to get the Israelis to give concessions in the small-step mode, that it would be better to make a major effort and use whatever leverage we could muster, to try to settle the whole range of outstanding issues.

There had been no decision reached as to whether to go for a comprehensive approach or go back and have another try at completing another staged withdrawal, but before he had really gotten to the decision point formally, word of this "reassessment" had spread widely around Washington through leaks from the press and elsewhere. That stimulated a lot of concern by the many friends of Israel in Congress and, of course, by the Israeli Government, then headed by Prime Minister Rabin of the Labor Party. So 76 senators wrote a letter to President Ford, essentially warning him not to try to use political, military, and economic aid leverage to force the Israelis to do something which they would see as jeopardizing their security. This was such a massive warning shot across Kissinger's bow that he never went ahead with the idea of trying for a comprehensive settlement. I think he might have tried it had it not been for that, though he really hadn't come to a final decision.

It's interesting, because later on in the Carter Administration, when Carter came in, he started out on that comprehensive approach which Kissinger had been about to conclude he needed to do

himself five years earlier.

Q: You say Kissinger was warned off. He was rather contemptuous of Congress on occasion, wasn't he? But this was a strong number, the 76.

LEWIS: Seventy-six senators is an overwhelming number of senators and carries a lot of political weight. That letter which, of course, had been drafted and circulated by friends of Israel on the Hill was very effective in warning Ford and Kissinger that if it were necessary to threaten to reduce aid, to cut off aid in order to get Israeli agreement on very large withdrawals on various fronts to reach a comprehensive settlement, it was very likely that Congress would balk and you'd have a donnybrook within the U.S. Government, which would undercut totally the effectiveness of Kissinger's diplomacy. It's not the only time that such letters have been written, but that, I think, was the largest number of senators that had been gotten on such letters to that point. But down through the years, there have been several other occasions when the administration has been about to do something or thinking of doing something, and a number of senators or congressmen or both have gotten disturbed and written collective letters to the administration to warn them off pursuing that course.

That was, as I said, a fascinating period for me, because I was in on a lot of high policy stuff, not just about the Middle East, but really most areas of the world. Because of Lord's relationship with Kissinger, I was in a lot of sensitive meetings and materials that I might not have been in otherwise.

LEWIS: I'd never even thought about going as ambassador to Israel. I'd been there once. I'd stopped off there on the way back to Afghanistan when I came back in 1974 to be interviewed by Win Lord, spent three days and visited Nick and Patty Veliotis, who was then DCM, during one of the Kissinger shuttles. I saw Tel Aviv, never even got to Jerusalem. That was my exposure. Herzliyya Pituach was my prior exposure, really, to Israel. But as I said, over the past 15 months in IO and earlier in the policy planning staff, I'd been working on Arab-Israeli issues a great deal of the time, and I'd gotten very much into the diplomatic side of the problem. Interestingly enough, I think I mentioned that in graduate school, I majored in Middle East studies, but never had been assigned there, except to Afghanistan. So I'd always had an interest in the Arab-Israeli problem, knew almost nothing about Israel as a country, and really knew less, I guess, about the history of Zionism and all of the intricacies and the background of the state. But the minute it was mentioned, a light bulb came on, and I really thought it was a tremendously exciting idea. Sallie had the same reaction.

So I said, "I'd be delighted to go to India, but I'd really much prefer Israel. It's a unique and extraordinary kind of challenge and has a political dimension that would intrigue me. I would like to avoid South Africa if possible." And that's how it came out.

Shortly thereafter, we got back from Yucatan, and Cy Vance asked me to go to Israel.

Q: Who was there, Malcolm Toon?

LEWIS: Toon had already left. Toon had been the ambassador for only about 18 months. Toward the end of the Ford Administration, Moscow had come open. Toon, of course, was a Soviet specialist who had served all his life in Europe until this one tour in Israel, and he wasn't all that wild about Israel, in fact, nor were the Israelis wild about him either. I suppose it was mutual. But he always wanted to be ambassador to Moscow, and though it was at the end of an administration and therefore, your chances of being appointed and staying on in a new administration were not great, Mac took the chance and accepted the post as ambassador to Moscow, and hoped that the new administration would keep him there. In fact, that had happened. He had left in December, so by the time I got there in May of '77, it had been empty for six months.

Q: *Who was Chargé?*

LEWIS: Tom Dunnigan was Chargé, a good, solid, low-key professional. Unofficially, it was announced in the usual newspaper stories early in March that I was going, and it took, as usual, a couple of months to get all the papers filled out and the congressional hearing, and get confirmed. So I was sworn in and ready to go in early May.

By that time, however, the Israelis were having an election, and the election was scheduled for the 17th of May of '77. The Labor Party was in a turmoil. Prime Minister Rabin had suddenly withdrawn from being the candidate for re-election because his wife's bank account had been discovered here in Washington. She had kept a small bank account when they left, after he was ambassador, and that was technically against the currency regulations. That came out in the middle of the campaign, and he took responsibility for it and withdrew from the race. [Shimon] Peres, who was then defense minister, had moved over to be the candidate for prime minister in the middle of the campaign. Labor was in great disarray anyway over a lot of other matters, scandals, corruption, tired blood, had been in office too long. Menachem Begin, who was the perennial challenger, happened to be in the hospital with a heart attack, and no one much thought that he would do any better than his previous five or six losses. But there was a good deal more ferment, and the polls showed the Likud very strong.

One of the issues in the campaign, which Labor was being berated about by the Likud, had to do with their loss of confidence of the American administration. Carter had already had a meeting with Rabin in Washington shortly after he took office, along with a series of other meetings with Middle East leaders. It had gone very badly, so Carter had gotten off with the Israeli prime minister on a very cold and formal kind of footing. This was being used by Likud against the Labor Party in the campaign to show that they had no particular ability to deal with this new American administration who seemed determined to make peace in the Middle East all in one fell swoop. There were lots of predictions of splits and confrontations with the U.S. in the air, and the election was a quite delicate balance in the polls.

So I figured that with all the spotlight of attention that the American ambassador apparently would have on him in Israel, from what I could already tell, it would be wiser for me not to be in the country in the days just prior to the election. I might inadvertently say something which could be used in the election campaign by one party or the other and get myself burned at the

very beginning for interfering. I was dead tired anyway from the crash preparations of trying to learn about Israel, meet every Jewish leader in the United States before I went out, meet with the "Presidents Conference," the U.S. Senate, and the rest of it. So I was in need of a few days' rest.

Sallie needed to stay on here with the kids until school was out in any case, and I was going out by myself initially. I stopped in Taormina for five or six days, just reading and sleeping and brooding and thinking about the coming whirlwinds. Then I arrived in Israel on May 18, 1977, the day after the election, so as not to be accusable of having intervened.

Actually, I should go back on one point. During all my briefings in the State Department and the Agency and everywhere, though Labor was viewed as being in trouble, no one predicted that Begin could possibly win, and very little was said about Begin to me personally, because he obviously wasn't going to be prime minister. I had endless briefings about Peres and Rabin, and, in fact, I did a lot of digging around to find people who knew Peres, who could tell me about how to deal with him, Henry Kissinger being one. I asked INR to arrange a seminar for me, an all-day seminar of academic experts on Israel and the Middle East, but particularly Israel. They got a very good group together, some Israeli scholars who were here in the States, some Americans. There were about a dozen of them. Only one of those 12 predicted flatly that Begin would win the election, and gave a very good analysis as to why.

Q: *Who was that?*

LEWIS: It was Amos Perlmutter from American University.

Q: *Who used to be in California.*

LEWIS: He's kind of a funny stormy petrel in the business, but he was so correct in his analysis of the trends of Israeli politics, and so much more correct than all these other experts, that I've had a soft spot in my heart for him ever since, and I've found him over the years to be extremely wise about the way in which Israeli political currents are running.

In any case, I was resting up in Taormina, assuming that Labor was going to win. I couldn't get any news that morning, the morning after the election. Then en route to Tel Aviv I flew to Rome and met there an old friend who lived in Rome, who was a political analyst for American Field Services staff and who had covered Israel as well as Italy for many years, Ned Baine, who died about two years ago. Ned met me at the airport between planes, and brought me the election results from the radio. Lo and behold, Begin had won a crashing victory. So we sat in the airport a little while, trying to figure out what that meant. Then I got on the plane and flew off to Israel, and arrived in the afternoon after the election.

Q: *Did the Israelis not know much about you? Had they hoped that X, Y, or Z would be ambassador?*

LEWIS: What I understood later was that, as had been the practice most times our ambassadors to Israel changed, a very delicate probe had been launched by the Carter team to find out how the Israelis would react to certain kinds of ambassadors, quite unofficial, and through someone in

Congress who was close to the Israelis as well as to the administration. In this case, I think it was done through Abe Ribicoff, who was then in the Senate. The question posed was, "Would you, all things being equal, rather see a career officer or someone from outside the career as ambassador?" There were a number of non-career candidates. Marvin Kalb, the TV personality, was one. There were a number of others who wanted the job, and I guess that's been true most times, though we'd had career officers continuously ever since 1961, except for the brief period of Ken Keating's ambassadorship, which was only about 18 months. He died in office.

Q: MacDonald and Ogden Reid.

LEWIS: In the early days, yes. But since 1961, you had Wally Barbour for 12 years, Keating for 18 months, and then Mac Toon for 18 months. Anyway, the word that had come back was that the Israelis would rather see a career officer. In later years, I've understood why, and I've verified that that is generally their view whenever they're asked. I think it's pretty smart. They believe that they have lots of political channels to the administration and the Congress, and that the State Department has always been the big problem for Israel; the so-called "Arabists" in the State Department have been their problem. So that if they have a career officer in Israel to deal with who is respected and has some credibility within the career system, and if they succeed in making their arguments to him with some effectiveness, that will add to their influence, rather than add nothing, which is the way they view the potential influence of a political appointee as ambassador. I think that that advice may have had something to do with my selection. I don't know.

Q: They would not have been very sympathetic to having an American Jew such as Marvin Kalb, regardless of whatever his name was, representing the United States, and the Department wouldn't have been so terribly comfortable, would they?

LEWIS: I have a feeling that the Israelis also think it's wiser for a non-Jew to be there. I think, frankly, it is better for everybody concerned that our ambassador not be Jewish. I'm sure there's some Jewish ambassadors who could do the job very well and would handle the pressures very well, but the Israelis are past masters at putting all sorts of psychological pressures on foreigners who they're trying to influence. It's hard enough to remain objective and not to be overly influenced by "localitis," let's say, if you're non-Jewish. I think if you're Jewish, it just adds one more dimension of potential conflict, emotional conflict.

We had some very good Jewish officers in our embassy, some of whom I deliberately recruited, and nearly all of them handled this problem very well. They leaned over backwards, really, to be objective and critical of Israeli actions when they deserved criticism. In fact, one of them, I think, leaned over too far backwards, probably because he was Jewish. He overcompensated. But the ambassador is in the toughest spot. The emotional spotlight of the public and the government is on you just continuously, and you are so much a public figure there, that I think the strain of being Jewish, especially if you were openly Jewish, practicing Jewish, Orthodox, or just "religious," subject to all of the emotional tensions that conflicts between Washington and Jerusalem inevitably produce, argue that the U.S. shouldn't put people into that situation if you can avoid it. I'm sure some could handle it very well, but I think on the balance, it's probably wiser not to. [Note: When editing this page in 1995, I realize that I strongly supported the

sending of Martin Indyk, a practicing Jew, as Ambassador earlier this year. He is remarkably well qualified and is doing a fine job. But I had concluded he was the best person because: there was sadly no well qualified career officer available after Ambassador Djerejian abruptly and prematurely retired from the post, and the Clinton White House was ready to turn to a much less qualified Jewish politico.]

Q: For instance, if Marvin Kalb had been nominated, possibly Israel would have said, "We love him, but don't send him."

LEWIS: No, I don't think so. The Israelis would never say, "Don't send somebody." They're very careful about that. But if asked or when asked discreetly, that's been their answer historically. But if Kalb had been nominated, or any other Jewish ambassador, I'm sure they would have welcomed him. Probably a lot of Israelis would have been quite pleased and would have assumed that this gives us an extra friend we can work on, and they would certainly have tried to make him feel guilty whenever he said something critical about Israel. It would have been harder on him than anyone else, (him or her!).

Q: Good afternoon, again, Mr. Lewis. We're going to begin our third interview and it was on the eve of your arrival in Israel.

LEWIS: Those first weeks were extraordinarily exciting and demanding to say the least. In retrospect, two things happened the first three or four days that were to me highly significant. I think it was the night after I arrived, the Canadian ambassador, who turned out to be a very good friend, Ted Lee, invited me to come to a party. He called me up the first morning I was in the embassy. He said, "Look, I've planned a party, an election celebration party, for whomever won the election and a lot of Israelis are going to be there tonight. It'd be a good time for you to meet some of the political cast of characters. Why don't you come?"

So I went, and it was an extraordinary event. The whole country was in a state of shock about Begin's victory. After all, this was the first time in Israeli history that power was going to change democratically from one major party to another. And Begin had been the perennial loser over five or six or seven national elections by that time, and was regarded as an extremist and generally a war monger, by many Israelis and by most Americans.

Q: Were there any people in the American embassy or American friends that you had who knew Begin at all?

LEWIS: Yes, there were. I want to get to that in just a second. This party that evening was a very good insight into what I was going to be getting into because you had there most of the leading political figures from both Labor and Likud there. The Labor people like Peres, very down in the dumps. The Likud people, like Ezer Weizman, who was then in Likud and had been the campaign manager for Begin, in a state of high euphoria. And the banter and the political cross fire was a very good introduction into the unique kind of political social life that goes on in Israel, cutting across party lines, very uninhibited and pretty raucous but extraordinarily fascinating for a foreign ambassador. And I got to meet a number of cabinet ministers and future cabinet ministers on that occasion.

But the most important thing that happened in those days was that a day or two after I arrived, my public affairs officer, Stan Moss, came in to see me and said, "Mr. Ambassador, I've got an opportunity for you and I hope you will accept."

He said, "A long time ago, months ago, I'd invited Menachem Begin to lunch this coming Sunday and I'd like you to join us. It'd be a good chance for you to get to meet him informally before he gets into office."

It turned out that Stan Moss was perhaps the only one in the embassy staff who knew Begin at all well. He had seen him from time to time over the years and they got along very well. Begin, who was not a very prominent player until suddenly he became Prime Minister, was really rather ignored by the diplomatic corps in general and by the rest of the embassy by and large, though my predecessor, Mac Toon, told me later that he used to see Begin on occasion and had liked him.

I was very anxious to get this chance to meet this unknown quantity but I was a little bit wary because I hadn't yet presented my credentials. Under diplomatic practice, as you know, ambassadors are suppose to keep a very low profile and not do any business until they get formally received by the government. The credential ceremony was being scheduled for a few days hence with the President in Jerusalem.

I mulled this thing over and I finally decided to consult with Eppy Evron, who was then the deputy director general of the foreign ministry, (later Ambassador in Washington) who I had gotten to know already in Washington a little bit. I called and asked his advice, telling him frankly what my dilemma was and get his advice. He advised me strongly not to do it.

Q: Really?

LEWIS: He said he knew that given the very frayed nerves around the foreign ministry and the government, who were all very bitter about the loss and some of them tending to blame the United States for it, that I would really set Foreign Minister Allon's teeth on edge even before I met him formally and that I would get off on a very bad foot with the government. So I thought about his advice.

Q: I'm surprised that Eppy Evron would say that.

LEWIS: Well, that's what he said. I decided on the basis of that, maybe I better take his advice. I told Stan and he said, "I really wish you would think hard about this further. This is a unique kind of opportunity. This group is going to be leaving. A new group is coming. They may be angry but I think basically they wouldn't misunderstand. You ought to take the risk."

Q: Was this just to be Begin, Moss, and Lewis or...

LEWIS: No, it was just Begin, Moss and Lewis. It was just the three of us. Sallie didn't come out until about a month later. It was just a very informal lunch around the kitchen table at Stan's

house there in Herzliyya. So I thought about it a little further and I decided, "Stan is right. I really shouldn't miss this chance." So I did it and I've never regretted it. In fact, I think it was the perhaps the most important decision I made in certainly the first year or two I was in Israel.

I went to Stan's house, and Begin showed up promptly on schedule and was very cordial, friendly, and obviously anxious to meet me. We spent about two and a half or three hours together, the three of us. And much of it was my trying to get to know him and understand him. I asked him a lot of questions about his life and his very complicated and dramatic life. In the course of that conversation, I got quite a different sense of him than I'd gotten through the rather sparse briefings and stuff I'd read about him up to that point. And I did come away with a conviction that he was determined to do two things at least. One, he was certainly a great admirer of the United States and he had every hope of being on good terms with us, and dispelling the impression that he was going to be hostile, which was the general sense in the press at the time. More importantly, that he was determined not to lead Israel into war, which is what his image would have suggested, but that he really wanted to go down in history, if he possibly could, as a peacemaker and that he thought there was a chance to achieve peace at least with Egypt, and he was going to work hard at it.

We found outside Stan's modest little house, when we came out, a couple of dozen journalists waiting, laying in wait, to interview us. Somebody, presumably Begin, had tipped them off that he was going to be meeting with me. And, we had a light exchange.

But I went back to the embassy and sent the first first-person cable since I'd been there to try to size up my initial impressions of Begin and where he would lead us and Israel. I remember the title of the cable was rather dramatic, I guess. I entitled it, "Menachem Begin: Moses or Samson?" I went back and read it recently, and it stands up fairly well in light of history. It was certainly not clear at that point which he would prove to be, and in a sense he proved to be both in different stages in his prime ministership.

That first month or two was filled with trying to understand the way the complicated Israeli political scene works, meeting as many politicians as I could possibly encounter. There were lots of occasions, presenting my credentials to the President Katzir, calling on Foreign Minister Allon formally. He was still in office at that time, and he was still in a very grungy mood about the elections. He was blaming Jimmy Carter for not having been more cooperative on some arms sales issues to Israel during the period of the campaign and undermining Labor's traditional argument that the Labor Party knew how to work with the United States and that Begin would destroy U.S.-Israeli relations. He was really quite upset. He lectured me for about an hour on the topic of the United States and all of the mistakes that Carter had made and how dreadful the outcome of the election would be for the U.S. and Israel both.

Some months later, after he had long since cooled down, in a reflective moment he admitted to me that Labor had beaten itself. It certainly wasn't the Americans that had done them in. But he still contended that the U.S. policies during that spring, the first months of the Carter Administration had cost Labor two or three or four seats maybe. But since they lost overwhelmingly by ten or fifteen seats, it was clear that Labor's downfall was the final act in a long, slow decline that they'd been going through ever since the end of the Yom Kippur war,

corruption, the resignation of Rabin, and a general sense of tired blood that the party demonstrated by that time in dealing with Israel's problems.

Q: How do you explain the surge and enormous Sephardic Jewish support for the Ashkenazi Begin? Was it just along political lines? How did that magic occur that gave them such great support?

LEWIS: Begin's appeal for the Sephardic population is an interesting phenomenon. He was the epitome of the Ashkenazi, Polish, lower-middle class aspirant to gentility. And I've always explained it this way. Begin had been for decades almost a pariah in Israeli politics, an outsider, never part of the political establishment. He is a very proper, dignified person, polite, extremely polite and a man who, certainly after he became Prime Minister, was very careful about the symbols of Jewish concern, not that he was particularly orthodox himself, he was just mildly observant, but he never offended the religious sentiments of the Sephardic or the Ashkenazi population for that matter. The Sephardics, the Moroccans, the Tunisians, the Iraqis, and so on, while not particularly orthodox, are traditional in their view of religion. They were -- and are -- uncomfortable with the militant secularism and anti-religious slogans in the labor movement, and particularly the left wing of the labor movement. So Begin was very comfortable for and with them from the point of view of his Jewishness. He was also, I think someone maybe a lot of Sephardics identify with as not part of the establishment, but an outsider because their great sense of alienation has been rejection by the Ashkenazi establishment, the labor establishment. In a very paternalistic way Labor had tried to integrate them into the society, provide them with jobs and language training and the rest, but in a most paternal way and left them with the impression that the Labor Party always felt like it was too good for the Sephardics. Correct or not, that's the impression that many of them had and still have to this day.

So Begin, as an outsider, was able to identify with their sense of being outside the system. Then, I think, also, the Oriental population in Israel reflects some of the cultural attributes of the Arab cultures in which they lived for so many years, centuries, a great love for rhetoric, a great sense of symbols and emotional oratory are very effective in those cultures and Begin was a terrific orator, the best certainly in Israel at the time, and was able to touch in his speeches kinds of symbolic cords that really, really moved the masses.

So for all those reasons, they became extremely loyal to him. Likud had had a good deal of Sephardic support all along, but then it grew in the next couple of elections after Begin really hit his stride as Prime Minister to the point where they were, they were calling Begin "King of Israel" when he would appear in the squares and they really did respond to his oratorical flourishes and his great enthusiasm.

Q: From being a reticent, somewhat reclusive, man for many years, as you've said, somewhat of a pariah, when he became Prime Minister, did he expand enormously to his full talents or did he still remain a rather illusive figure?

LEWIS: Well, in public he expanded. Certainly he really loved the job of Prime Minister. I never saw anybody who was happier with a job than Begin was. All of his life he thought about it, worked for it, probably had long since given up any thought he would ever make it. And, I think,

as a matter of fact, that the election returns came as a real surprise to him. And he was a bit overwhelmed initially. I remember visiting him the first time shortly after this lunch in his little apartment down in Tel Aviv where he lived for so many years with Ala, his wife, a two- or three-room apartment and down a few steps below the street, about as modest as anything could be, surrounded by all these hangers-on who suddenly were all over him and the international press and Jewish leaders from the United States descending. He handled it all with great dignity and considerable aplomb, but I think it was almost bewildering for him in the first weeks. But as he moved into the prime ministry late in June after about a month of putting his coalition together and beginning to demonstrate the sort of political skills that he had in such abundance, he did seem almost to swell. He loved the role of Prime Minister. He was very formal in his office procedures and yet friendly at the same time. He didn't go out a great deal to the public in that period. But he loved presiding over Cabinet meetings and did it with real style. He was a parliamentarian of great skill and a great admirer of parliamentary tradition, the British Parliament in particular. He fancied himself, correctly, as quite a good debater and really enjoyed the parliamentary give and take in the Knesset. He really showed that very much in the way he controlled the flow of events in the Knesset, particularly in those early months after he was elected and was riding very high.

I got very much mixed up inadvertently that first month in the process of coalition building. The big surprise of that election, in addition to Begin's win, was that the new large center party, the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC), headed by Retired General Yigal Yadin, Israel's foremost archeologist, was really the big winner in that election. They came away with 15 seats, most of which they got at the expense of Labor. And that party had been formed as a reformist, middle-class, middle-of-the-road alternative after this era of labor's discontent and corruption and tarnished reputation. But it was a party assembled from the Shinul or "change" party which had been in existence before, headed by Professor Amnon Rubenstein, plus defectors from both Labor and Likud of different kinds with a couple of generals and some professional politicians like Shmuel Tamir from the old Free Center group of Likud. It was a heterogeneous group, none of whom had really ever thought that they would be in a position to enter a government with Menachem Begin.

Their whole idea of forming that party was to acquire enough weight and then to join in a Labor-led coalition which they assumed was going to be constructed. They hoped to be strong enough as a coalition partner to force Labor to clean up its act, if you will, carry through an election reform which was one of their major planks in their platform and a lot of other things.

Well, lo and behold, because they ended up getting most of their seats at Labor's expense, the only chance of forming a sixty-one vote majority was if they joined with Likud! Labor plus the DMC would not have been able to mount a majority. So then they began trying to rethink what they should do and whether under the circumstances they should enter into a government with a party that had very different ideas on the future of the occupied territories and a lot of other things and with whom they had very little in common.

Begin was busy negotiating with the religious parties, meanwhile, which had been traditional Labor allies in previous governments. And he very skillfully lined up support from the religious parties first, enough so that he was in a position to form a government without the DMC. Then

he turned to them and offered them the chance to enter his government. They were in a real dilemma. And because a number of them were very oriented toward the United States and toward the U.S.-Israeli connection, they wanted our advice. What should they do?

I was rather surprised one afternoon. I was anxious to meet everybody, so when someone told me that a group of the leaders of the DMC would like to meet with me, I said, "Fine, come on over and have a drink or some coffee at the residence." The seven leaders of the party all showed up in my sun porch one afternoon. What I thought was going to be a get-acquainted session to find out about their program and their plans, soon turned out to be a not-very-delicately-veiled probing from them as to whether the U.S. Government thought they should enter Begin's coalition or not. I parried that the best I could without stubbing my toe badly on the question of "improper intervention." I evaded giving any direct advice, though I did think they could be more effective if they joined Begin after bargaining hard for commitments on key issues in their platform.

Q: Did they have one spokesman or they all spoke?

LEWIS: They all spoke (naturally) and they all disagreed with each other and they all argued about the issues with me, wanted my reactions. This was not uncommon with that party in particular. Ultimately, they decided not to enter the government at that stage. The argument in favor of joining Begin was to moderate his believed to be very bellicose views on peace and war issues, and to make sure that he didn't lead Israel down into some apocalyptic outcome.

The argument against entering was that they wouldn't have the balance of power because their votes, although desirable, were not technically essential for Begin to form his coalition and they were shrewd enough to be wary as to how much they'd really be able to condition the Likud policies. That later argument won out initially. But Begin was very skillful. He left, I think it was, four portfolios vacant when he formed his Cabinet without them, had acting ministers, let it be understood that he would give them awhile to think it over and if they decided to join a little later on, their jobs in the Cabinet would be there.

Indeed, by the end of the summer they had debated and debated and debated and the longer they stalled, the less bargaining power they had to influence Begin's coalition policies. But eventually they did join his government. In fact, I think the fact that they joined was ultimately quite helpful to the cause of peace, at least. While they weren't essential to this coalition, they had some impressive people in their group and General Yadin did end up with a deputy prime ministership out of it, though not any great power. But he was a respected voice, especially in the early months and Begin listened to him somewhat. He and others in the Cabinet were moderating influences.

You also remember that Begin's great coup at that early period was persuading Moshe Dayan from the Labor Party, one of Labor's great heroes but who had been for the last two or three years somewhat in the wilderness as far as Labor was concerned -- he was not in the previous Rabin government -- persuaded Dayan to jump ship and leave the Labor Party, join his Cabinet as Foreign Minister. This was a great coup because it gave Begin enormous personal satisfaction and, indeed, a certain amount of heightened respectability vis-a-vis the Israeli public. Also, it

gave his government a certain legitimacy and respectability overseas where Dayan was a very widely admired national hero. It, of course, drove the Labor Party nuts to have Dayan jump ship on them. But Dayan's influence was large in that first Begin Cabinet, along with Yadin and Ezer Weizman, who was Defense Minister, and moved rather rapidly over the first year from a very hawkish extremist position to a real advocate of peace with Egypt. Those, together with a few other ministers, made that first Begin Cabinet a more balanced group ideologically than his later second Cabinet. Basically, in his second Cabinet after the election in 1981, those moderate voices were all gone. But that's getting ahead of the story.

During late May and early June while Begin was putting his coalition and cabinet together, I was trying to get to know personally those who were clearly going to be key players. I hosted Ezer Weizman, for example, at a private Saturday lunch on our terrace. He was then a hawk among hawks, tough, outspoken, and overbearing -- but totally charming, direct, and attractive. At that lunch he told me he could promise me "95% of the full story" -- whenever I needed it. As probable Defense Minister, that sounded pretty good to me. I saw him in a less attractive mode the night after Sallie and the kids arrived. We were included in a small dinner in Moshe Dayan's garden of their home -- and met Rheuma Weizman (and Ezer) along with Yitzhak and Leah Rabin, Yael Dayan and her husband Dov, and a few others -- Joe Sisco, visiting, was the guest of honor. Ezer was insufferable -- taunting the Rabins about Labor's defeat loudly and often. Rabin took it with great dignity, Leah of course did not! We learned that some of the evening's tension came from the fact that this was the first visit by Rheuma to the Dayan house since Dayan had divorced her sister, Ruth, (Yael's mother). For Sallie and me, it was quite an introduction to the entwined nature of Israel's political elite -- Sallie later became close friends with both Ruth Dayan and Dayan's second wife, Rahel! (A real diplomatic achievement.)

I also hosted Leon Dulzin of the Liberal Party (Begin's alleged "Foreign Policy advisor"), later head of the Jewish Agency, for a Saturday swim-lunch. He became a good friend and an excellent source on Likud politics. And numerous others -- like Moshe Arens (later Ambassador to Washington and Shamir's Foreign and Defense Minister.)

The big thing I was doing in that first month, in addition to trying to get familiar with the players and meet as many of them and spend as much time with them as I could and psych out this strange and weird political culture that I was suddenly immersed in, was to prepare Washington for the first Begin visit to Washington as Prime Minister. In Washington, everyone assumed that Begin was just very difficult, a total extremist, based on his history. The files in the State Department and Archives of Time magazine and others were replete with old clippings about what a horror Begin was. Remember there was a famous article, I think a week after the election, in Time magazine about the election: the headline was "Begin (Rhymes with Fagin) Wins." This reference to Begin and Oliver Twist, Begin viewed as a good example of anti-Semitism which, indeed, I suppose in a sense it was, though the Time editors always insisted it was purely by change that they chose that heading.

Q: Instead of Shylock.

LEWIS: Instead of Shylock, yes. But Begin was so livid about this that he and his press secretary, Dan Pattir, who had been the press spokesman for Rabin and had stayed on as it turned

out with Begin...

Q: *The one with a hand disabled.*

LEWIS: Yes. Very smooth and able guy. A bit of a snake but, nonetheless, very able. They ostracized Time for months, demanded apologies, would never give Time correspondent any interviews, they cut him out completely. And Time had to work awfully hard to get back to the starting gate of its coverage of the Begin era as a result.

In that period, I was trying to send back assessments on how the government was likely to look, and most important what Begin would be saying when he came to Washington. He was anxious to meet with Carter. Carter had been embarked on this Middle East diplomatic push to reconvene the Geneva Conference from almost the first day in his administration. And had already gotten crossways with Rabin during Rabin's visit back in February. They had gotten on very badly. Carter was very impatient. He didn't want to wait, or couldn't see why you had to wait, until the Israeli election was over to get his diplomacy going. He didn't understand that no one in Israel was going to make any change of policies or commitments about the occupied territories in the middle of an election campaign. But eventually, after Begin was elected, Carter and his team back here were trying to prepare to deal with this extremist when he came to Washington. Their instinct was, "We're going to lay down the law to him." This was Brzezinski's advice which Carter very much shared, I think, initially.

Q: *Who was the sounding board in the Department?*

LEWIS: The sounding board?

Q: *I meant NSC, Brzezinski, and who at State?*

LEWIS: Well, Cy Vance was Secretary at the time. Roy Atherton, I guess, was still Assistant Secretary for the Near East at that period. And Phil Habib was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. And you have Brzezinski and Bill Quandt as his chief Middle East guy in the White House staff. I guess Hal Saunders was at that point Director of Intelligence and Research at State working closely with Atherton.

I was, I'd become convinced from my dealings with Begin -- I saw him quite a lot in this period. In fact, I saw him quite a lot throughout the years. We hit it off at that first lunch and I found him somebody I could admire while disagreeing with about his music, the need to keep the territories permanently under Israeli control. But I admired a lot of his personal qualities. He was very anxious to establish a good relationship with the United States and saw me as a good vehicle to do that. But beyond that, we really got on very well on a personal basis. But I'd heard enough from him directly about the prickly nature of his character and the way in which he would flair up and resist anything that he characterized as pressure and his stubbornness at maintaining his positions when he adopted them.

I concluded early on that Begin was going to be very hard to handle for Carter, and very hard to get to go along with Carter's peace diplomacy in any case. He had a fundamentally different view

of the permanent right of Israel to those territories and no intention of giving them up, though he was more flexible about the Sinai. But I sensed that Begin also had a great need to be accepted as Prime Minister of Israel and to be treated properly as Prime Minister of Israel, and that he was susceptible to some extent to flattery or to careful handling. I urged the Department and the White House to approach this meeting not with the intention of laying down the law to him, but trying to co-opt him, if you will, establish a real working relationship with him and try to persuade him over little by little to being someone we could work with in the peace diplomacy. And I said to everybody that with Begin, honey would get us a lot farther than vinegar. And I still believe to this day that was the right advice.

Q: Is this a fair question that Begin was aware of Brzezinski and Brzezinski was aware of Begin, would there be an innate hostility bridge there? Maybe they came from 400 miles apart, but . . .

LEWIS: No, I think at this period there wasn't any real personal connection. By the time of Camp David, a year and a half later, they had developed a very interesting relationship and Brzezinski was very critical of Begin: at the same time, as a fellow Pole, there was a certain cultural bond, and also Brzezinski had a respect for Begin's toughness and determination to stick up for his point of view.

I heard recently that Brzezinski had a private meeting with Begin at the time of one of Begin's visits to Washington, (it was several months later, not this first one in July, when our relations were very, very tense) prior to a scheduled meeting at the White House. Apparently Begin called Brzezinski and invited him to come for breakfast at the Blair House. Brzezinski assumed that he wanted to talk to him about the meeting to try to kind of soften up Carter via Brzezinski before the meeting, which was a typical maneuver usually used by both sides during these visits. But in fact, what Begin had was something he wanted to give Brzezinski which was some correspondence and some other things out of an Israeli archive about Brzezinski's father. This gesture apparently made a great impact on Brzezinski in a personal sense. It was also typical of Begin, though. I'm not sure that it was so politically calculated. Probably was to some extent. But Begin had a very personal dimension to him of sympathy and understanding for human problems of people, children, families and so on. And he also responded to people who would express solidarity at moments of grief or human tragedy in his own life. I came to realize that it was very important for me to be in touch with Begin on a personal basis at moments of tragedy, national tragedy, personal tragedy. It was important in your relationship to him that he felt you understood the depth of his connection with the tragedy of Jewish history and individual events in modern times that recall that history.

For example, we had a bad terrorist bombing incident. Begin really took that personally, not just politically. Some expression from me that I understood how he felt about that, helped to strengthen our own relationship. Anyway, I think Brzezinski and Begin are an interesting story and it's not exactly a one-way story. Their famous chess matches at Camp David and the rest of it. There's a grudging respect there on both sides, though their political views certainly diverged, and as time went on Begin got pretty upset with Brzezinski on a lot of grounds, and vice versa.

That first visit to Washington in early mid-July, 1977, really set the stage then for the next several months in the relationship. Because I was getting over the phone and by cable indications

that we were preparing back here for the visit in a very confrontational way, I was afraid it was going to be a real disaster. I came back to Washington twice during June, the first time shortly after I'd been there just to give a quick briefing on the situation and on my initial impressions of Begin. Then I came back prior to the visit and also to bring my family out to Israel. Then I came back, as is customary, a few days prior to the visit itself and I worked very hard with the State Department colleagues and with the White House staff to try to convince people to reshape their preparations for this visit, to prepare for it in a different psychological context. I eventually convinced Carter and Brzezinski and Vance to handle Begin the way I thought he should be handled, though Brzezinski was always very skeptical.

Q: You were saying that Brzezinski was being very...

LEWIS: I was saying Brzezinski always thought that we should have been tougher with Begin at those first meetings. Carter decided to adopt my policy of trying to co-opt, and convince and bring along Begin. And he didn't really confront him sharply in any of those meetings about Begin's views. He tried to listen to Begin's views, and he made some mild argument, but he didn't really engage sharply. We were trying to get all of the parties to a Geneva conference at that point and Begin was being pressed by our side to tell Carter what he could accept, what were his conditions.

Begin always took the position that it was not proper to ask Israel to set out its negotiation position in advance, that when the time came when the bargaining started, when you had Arabs to talk to across the table, that was the time. But to make concessions on the Israeli position before you ever got to negotiation was unfair on our part to ask and unwise on Israel's part. He resisted that very much. So he would always answer in very formalistic terms and kind of give the outlines of the procedures that Israel thought should be followed, but never really engaging on the issue of what's the ultimate future of these territories that you can live with.

Begin, of course, had no intention ever of getting out of the West Bank or Gaza. He believed that they were not only historically important to Israel's legacy as the Jewish nation, but also the security risks were overwhelming.

Q: Who did he bring on his first visit?

LEWIS: In typical fashion, as I recall, he didn't bring Dayan, but I can't be quite sure about that. I may be wrong. Israeli prime ministers have a funny tradition of when they go to the United States or when they travel abroad they almost never travel with the foreign minister. He travels and they travel, at different times, and see the same people. I don't think Dayan was on that trip for that reason, but I'm not absolutely positive. Begin had with him a strange cast of characters. He had a couple of old former underground Irgun sidekicks who were not formally in the government, but he had made them kind of unofficial advisers. Shmuel Katz was one.

Shmuel Katz had, in fact, during the interregnum after the election but before Begin took office, had come as an emissary of Begin's to Washington and to the U.S. to scout out the landscape and let people know in the Jewish community, informally, and the government, what Begin's policies were going to be like. He had described them in such chilling form that the Katz mission had

been one of the reasons why Brzezinski and others thought that they should lay the law down to Begin early on. But now Katz was there with Begin in the Cabinet Room, and at one point in one of the early meetings Carter gave the floor to Begin.

Begin responded on whatever the subject was and then he turned to Katz and said, "I'd like my friend and old comrade Dr. Katz to describe for you the way we see these territories." Shmuel then launched into about a half-an-hour fire-and-brimstone lecture on the centrality of Judea and Samaria to the Israeli soul. Carter was furious, but listened politely, and patiently.

He also had with him Dr. Reuben Hecht, another old Irgun supporter, a very wealthy businessman from Haifa who was a sidekick of Begin's politically and had been one of the chief financiers of the Herut party for years. There were foreign ministry people, a couple, along. Simcha Dinitz was the ambassador here, a holdover from the previous Labor era. He was there. Begin had one of his personal assistants, Yehuda Avnir, now the Israeli ambassador in London, who was in Begin's office, again as a holdover from Rabin's period. In fact there were a number of staff people, two or three of them at least, that were kept on by Begin. Rather unusual, if you stop to think about it. They served him very loyally and he did not penalize them for what would be presumed to be their Labor political affiliations.

Q: Did he have Dan Pattir along?

LEWIS: Dan Pattir was there, of course. There were others. It was a big crowd. Israelis always travel with large delegations.

One of the inevitable fights we had every time any Israeli dignitary came to Washington was the struggle over how many Israelis would be allowed into the meetings at the White House or at the State Department, and they always wanted to bring more than our side wanted to have brought and this was a rather tedious negotiation as to who would be admitted. Usually you would reach agreement on a number, and then they would show up with three or four additional at the last minute anyway. And somehow they would usually get in.

LEWIS: We were talking about Begin's first visit to Washington in July, 1977. I have already described the setting for the visit and described some of the people who attended and the style that Carter adopted. At the end of the meeting, there was an anodyne agreed statement about pursuing the peace process. Carter and his colleagues wanted Begin to commit himself formally to formulations about UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and international conferences which Carter was busily trying to put together. But Begin eluded all of those efforts and therefore the final statement was quite general. It was amiable. Carter was unsuccessful in getting Begin to tell him either privately or publicly what his eventual negotiating position would be. Begin kept returning, as he often did, to the formulation of "everything is open for negotiation", but that it was not correct to negotiate until you reached the bargaining table. He wanted American assistance to get the negotiations put together, but he would not define his positions. Carter was somewhat more favorably impressed in the initial meetings with Begin than he had expected to be. He realized that he was meeting a tough negotiator. He was attracted and

moved to some degree by some of Begin's history and eloquence about the age-old dilemmas of the Jewish people, which occupied a fair amount of attention during the discussions -- certainly during the informal parts.

Q: Was he as persuasive in personal conversation as was as a parliamentarian?

LEWIS: He was very eloquent in personal conversation, but whether he was persuasive or not, depended a lot to whom he was talking to. He was extremely persuasive with American Jewish personalities. One of the things that occurred on the visit -- which was subsequently repeated every time Begin came to Washington and he came ten or eleven times during his Prime Ministership -- was that after he finished the formal meetings at the White House and State Department, he would go to Capitol Hill and hold meetings with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and usually with the House Foreign Affairs Committee. They would invite any House or Senate members to join those sessions. Then he would meet with small groups with sympathetic Congressmen and Senators privately in the course of his stay in Washington. He would always have one large meeting at least and some smaller meetings often with the general public and the press. During his early visits, he was extremely effective with the Congress in dispelling the image that he was just a war-monger and a bomb-thrower. He convinced them that he was genuinely interested in seeking peace. He would always have a little triumph when he would meet with the assembled leaders of the Jewish community in a banquet room in one of the hotels here in Washington. He would receive standing ovations. His oratory on those occasions was very effective. As far as his persuasiveness with Vance or Brzezinski or Carter, that was mixed. He didn't give much ground in those conversations since he would repeat almost endlessly the familiar themes he had stated on previous visits. He kept his cards very close to his chest and he did not always make particularly effective impact on the officials he was dealing with. He tended to talk quite rhetorically in private conversations, not just in public. If Carter wanted to get down to brass tacks and to a franker and more informal level, he found it very difficult because Begin was very wary of being coopted.

After he returned to Israel, his reports to the Knesset and the Cabinet were very positive. He put a gloss on his reports which minimized differences with the United States and maximized the polite expressions of support that he heard from Carter and the more enthusiastic expressions he heard on Capitol Hill and from the Jewish community. Since a good many Israelis feared that this first encounter would turn out very badly for Israel, they were naturally relieved. The Labor Party people may have been secretly quite disappointed that Begin didn't have a big confrontation with Carter on that first trip. That set a pattern that continued throughout the whole eight years I was in Israel. Whenever Likud leaders -- Begin or later Shamir or their colleagues -- would come to Washington at moments of tension, there were many in the opposition who were either secretly or fairly openly hoping that a big crisis would ensue because they always believed that this would be an effective weapon in Israeli domestic politics. Any government has to be able to demonstrate to the electorate that it can get along with the United States even though at times it may have to be very confrontational. There is a political price to be paid by Prime Ministers who get into public fights with U.S. Presidents. Begin avoided that on almost all of his trips and certainly on the first one.

During the month of August, 1977 the U.S. was very actively involved in attempting to push the

process towards an international conference. It is ironic how many of the things that happen that year were repeated in 1988 and early 1989, although with different participants.

Secretary Vance made another tour of the region and there was an effort made behind the scenes and very carefully kept from Israel in the formal sense -- although they probably had a good deal of intelligence about it -- through intermediaries to try to persuade the PLO to accept 242 and 338 and to say something about Israel's right to exist in a form which would make it easier for the PLO to be brought into an international conference. This was the scenario that was repeated in 1988 very actively. Finally, there was apparently a text which was worked on and passed to the PLO through the Saudis in this case. But there were some others involved -- e.g. John Maroz, who was a scholar in New York and subsequently the President of a private non-profit organization that deals with East-West security issues. John Maroz was an important intermediary to the PLO in that year and I think subsequently on other occasions. There were others as well. The Saudis were in the month of August, 1977 convinced that they had a formula which Arafat assured them he would accept. It was a formula that was acceptable to us. When Vance got to Riyadh on this trip, he found that much to his chagrin and to the Saudis chagrin, that Arafat was not willing to accept the formula. This really set back Carter's effort to pull together all the strands necessary to convene a conference.

The month of September and early October was a period of high drama because the Soviet Union was very much interested in participating in the international conference -- the Administration had concluded that it was important and necessary to include them as co-conveners as had been the case of the first Geneva Conference in 1973. Vance had negotiated very secretly with the Russians about a statement of principles upon which the conference would be convened. The statement was general enough so that all parties could accept as a basis for the conference. It had been Carter's original thought that he would be able to get Begin's and others' agreement to such a statement. It didn't happen during the Begin visit, but Vance went ahead and ultimately did achieve an agreement with the Soviets on a joint USSR-US declaration in September, 1977. Then suddenly it became known by the Israelis that this agreement had been reached. They were outraged and particularly Begin. There was a great deal of boiling up of emotions in Jerusalem. The statement became public in Washington through a leak. It was the season when various leaders go to New York for the UN General Assembly meeting -- that is when Secretaries of State spend long periods of time in New York meeting all the foreign visitors. Dayan was coming to the General Assembly to represent Israel in the general political debate. He was very concerned by the impact on Begin that the joint US-Soviet declaration made and the implications that the we and the Russians were conspiring behind Israel's back to sell them out. That is the way Begin and many Israelis interpreted our efforts. They had never been informed about our negotiations with the Russians though we were in daily contact with Israel both in Jerusalem and in Washington.

Q: Didn't you comment that they were aware of the events?

LEWIS: We now know in retrospect that they were pretty well informed about the PLO negotiations, which aborted. But as far as I know, they didn't have any warning about the US-USSR talks. Anyway, it certainly seemed to come as a shock to them. Dayan, who was highly regarded by Vance and Carter and who was viewed as a moderating influence on Begin and

someone with whom we could work in a diplomatic fashion more easily than Begin (because of the latter's rhetorical and legalistic style) had some long meetings in New York with Vance and eventually got Vance to agree to something that was to become known as "the US-Israeli working paper". This was a sort of modification of the joint US-USSR statement -- it was an agreed interpretation by the US and Israel of the meaning of that statement. It was reassuring to the Israelis. Of course, this "working paper" immediately also became public.

Q: Not on purpose?

LEWIS: Not officially, anyway. But I think the leaks were certainly deliberate. Actually, I believe that when Dayan informed Begin of the agreement he had reached with Vance, Begin was quite upset with him. He felt that Dayan had not been tough enough and had not gone far enough. He wanted the US-USSR agreement canceled. But Dayan stood by his guns and ultimately Begin acquiesced, but this episode did cause a fair amount of bad blood between them. This was the first of a number of situations that developed in the next two years in which Dayan, determined to avoid collapse of the negotiation, would on his own go work out some arrangement or some formulation which he would then insist Begin accept. Begin didn't like that; he would have preferred to keep the strings in his own hands. Yet he needed Dayan very badly and perhaps in his heart-of-hearts, he wanted the results that Dayan was trying to achieve. But these situations created an increasing distrust of Dayan's free wheeling and independence. Ultimately, this was one of the issues that led to Dayan's resignation in 1979.

The public release of that "working paper" apparently had a very negative effect on a number of other Arab states, which had been pleased with the US-USSR statement, and particularly on Sadat. There is real disagreement on Sadat's view of this period. Hermann Eilts, then Ambassador to Egypt, gives one well informed view. Some of the Israelis have a very different view based on things Sadat said to them after he came to Jerusalem and they were in direct touch. A number of the Israeli participants in these events -- Dayan, Weizman, Begin -- became convinced, after they finally met Sadat months later and they had discussed what had occurred during this period and what led him to make his decision, that it was the signing of the US-USSR agreement that became the most important trigger to Sadat's decision to take a new direction towards dealing directly with the Israelis. Sadat felt that having kicked the Russians out of Egypt and having put a lot of confidence in Carter, he was suddenly confronted by having the Russians back in the middle of the diplomatic equation. He did not relish that. Hermann Eilts says that he does not think this version of history is correct. He thinks that, in fact, initially the Egyptians' reaction to the joint statement was quite favorable. They thought it would set a good framework for the international conference, but it was the issue of the "working paper" two or three days later which brought Sadat up short, for he interpreted that paper to signify that Israel's weight in Washington was so strong that they would be able to turn Carter around rather readily. This left the Egyptians believing that relying on the US and the Soviet Union to achieve Egypt's objectives was not such a wise move. In view of the demonstration of Israel's diplomatic strength in Washington, Sadat decided to deal directly with the Israelis and to get to the heart of the argument. I don't know which of these theories are right, but most experts and historians who have written about this period agree with Eilts on his view of events. But there is some evidence to support the Israeli theory. Sadat did not relish the idea of having the Russians play a central role for he knew that they were close to the Syrians and the PLO and they didn't care much for

him after he had thrown them out of the country. To have them as a central player may have been disadvantageous to Egypt's interest as contrasted to the interests of other Arab states.

In any case, Carter continued during September and October, 1977 to try to put together an international conference which would be attended by all parties -- we and the Soviets would preside. It is clear that the chance of achieving that had pretty well evaporated by the end of September. This was not only due to the fact that Egypt was getting quite nervous about the idea of having all the other Arab states present -- enabling them to veto an agreement that Egypt might be able to reach about the Sinai -- but also because the Syrians and Jordanians in particular had very different views on how the Arab side should be represented at the conference. The issue was whether there would be one large Arab delegation -- this was the Syrian view and would have effectively tied Sadat's hands in negotiating his own interests -- or whether there would be separate delegations in which each Arab part would speak independently and negotiate separately under the conference's umbrella. That issue was never resolved. Hussein later said many times that we were on the point of having a conference if only Sadat had not gone to Jerusalem. Hussein was trying to play the broker on the Arab side. He has said that he had the issue of the delegation almost worked out and that the conference would have proceeded, but that Sadat undermined the whole process by going to Jerusalem. I don't think that view is factually accurate. Our judgement at the time based on all the contacts we were having with all parties concerned was that the Arabs weren't getting anywhere in sorting out their side of the negotiating table. There were lots of problems with the Israelis as well. The question of the PLO was still unresolved because Arafat had not been able to swallow a formulation which would have made him, putatively at least, a legitimated participant in the conference. In any case, by the end of October, Carter was getting very upset. He had invested many months of intense White House energy in this Middle East peace conference. A lot of his other priorities in this first year were not getting the attention they deserved; he was spread too thin diplomatically -- the Panama Canal negotiations process had used up a lot of political credit in the Spring of 1977. He was watching his game plan for Middle East peace stalled completely, partly because Begin was not more forthcoming, although there was blame for all sides. It was in the middle of October that it is reported that Carter wrote a hand-written letter to Sadat, appealing to him to help break the impasse. Seemingly, what Carter meant by that was not what Sadat interpreted it to mean. Carter wanted Sadat to be more flexible on some formulation that was then at issue, but Sadat interpreted it apparently as meaning that Carter was quite weak and could not pull the conference off without a good deal of help from other quarters. He began then to think very seriously to try to go directly to the Israelis. In the meanwhile, he had some conversations in Bucharest with Nicolae Ceausescu. Begin had visited Bucharest previously. Ceausescu told Sadat that Begin was a tough, strong man and someone who once he had made his mind up, could deliver. Sadat had also been given some similar advice by the Shah of Iran, which is an interesting dimension of the equation. Most important, we now know that there had been two secret meetings between Dayan and General Tuhami in Morocco. Tuhami was one of Sadat's oldest colleagues. He had been an original member of the Revolutionary Committee with Sadat and Nasser. He is a very strange man, a mystic. He headed Egyptian intelligence for a while -- a very shadowy, strange figure. But Sadat had great confidence in him. With the mediation of the King of Morocco, Begin and Dayan probed to see whether they could get to Sadat without going through the international conference route. A first meeting had been arranged and then a second -- both incognito -- with Tuhami in Rabat under the King's aegis. In those meetings, there are a lot of informal

explorations of what might happen, what the results might be if there were to be negotiations about the Sinai. There is a dispute in Israel still today as to whether, as is alleged by the Labor Party, Dayan promised Sadat that if there were a peace or something like it, the whole Sinai would be returned. Dayan's personal records and those of an aide who was with him attest a much more elusive Israeli position, although there may have been suggestions of such possibility. I can't be sure which version is correct. I am inclined to think it was the latter. I knew Dayan well enough to know that he was extremely careful about committing himself to things that he was not certain he could deliver. He himself wasn't in favor of giving back all of the Sinai. He believed at that time that the bases at Sharm el Sheik should be kept even if the rest were of the area was returned. I am sure that Begin would not have authorized Dayan to make any such secret commitments. So Tuhami may well have reported back to Sadat a more categorical assumption about Egypt being able to have all the Sinai returned if it bit the bullet; that doesn't mean that was what was said by Dayan. The conversation was undoubtedly elusive in nature.

But these Dayan-Tuhami meetings were held. It was clear by October both to Begin and Sadat that there was a real possibility at least that if they could negotiate directly with each other, without the Syrians interfering for their own benefit and the Americans messing around too much -- without Carter may have been an unspoken assumption -- that there was a reasonable chance that they might come to some agreement over the Sinai. In any case, a combination of all the factors I have mentioned led Sadat to make the decision to make the very dramatic speech that he made in early November before the Parliament. He stuck in a couple of lines that shocked his own Foreign Minister -- how he would be willing even to go to Jerusalem in his search for peace. The journalists picked up on it and Walter Cronkite and Barbara Walters asked him on television whether he really meant it. He said "Of course, I really meant it". Begin then picked up very wisely and quickly and extended a formal invitation, which he handed to me to deliver to Cairo in a very public, flamboyant, dramatic ceremony in Begin's office at the Knesset. Matters evolved from there.

Those months of August, September and October and into the first week of November, 1977 cast a terribly long shadow because first of all, they put aside the US-USSR co-direction of the process, took the focus off the international conference and on Egypt and Israel and left Carter a little bit out in left field. All of this was going on in October while Carter and Vance and the rest of us were going through the diplomatic process of putting an international conference together. But the steam had gone out of the idea. After Begin extended a very gracious invitation to Sadat -- the tone of which in light of the history of five wars and the rest was important in these circumstances -- and after Sadat had flown to Damascus to try to convince Assad to go along with him and had failed in his efforts, and after Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmi had resigned in opposition to Sadat's policy, the die was pretty well cast for a bilateral rather than the multi-lateral diplomacy that we had spent a whole year on under Carter's direction.

My own involvement was in and out of all of these events. I was in New York and took part in some of the Dayan-Vance negotiations on "the working paper". I had returned to the U.S. with Dayan. I had not been in Washington earlier at the time the US-USSR statement was being developed and negotiated. In fact, I didn't find out about it until I returned to the US after the public "angst" had already begun to develop. Washington had not kept me fully informed about

events for fear of leaks from cables or whatever. By and large, that was an unusual situation. During the rest of my tour in Israel, there were very few cases when I was not involved or consulted and given a chance to comment on even the most secret, ticklish, high level negotiations. We made very extensive use throughout those years of the secure telephone which had fortunately been installed at my insistence early in 1977. When I got to Israel and realized how active the diplomacy was going to be and how tremendous -- but understandable -- the fear of leaks really was in Washington. Any cable that was sent, regardless of its classification, was likely to end in The New York Times or The Washington Post if it concerned a matter of interest. So we tended to make a great deal of use of the secure telephone for informal conversations to keep Washington informed on matters that I didn't want to commit to cable and to keep me informed on the thinking that was going on in Washington before it crystallized. That way I was able often to send a message pushing in a certain direction, based on what I had learned informally over the phone about the state of debate in the bureaucracy. That had some influence on the determination of the issue.

Q: Were the secure telephone conversations taped?

LEWIS: As far as I know, they were not and that was one very unfortunate aspect of this kind of communications. If they were taped, I don't know where they would be. We all took notes. I would take notes of important conversations and the parties at the other end -- the desk officer sometimes, sometimes the Assistant Secretary, sometimes a special assistant in Vance's office, sometime it was the White House and the NSC staff -- would take notes. As far as I know, there was no orderly record kept of any of the telephone conversations that took place during my eight years in Israel. I am sure the same process went on at lots of other posts. We used that secure telephone several times each day, six or seven days each week. I have always thought that future historians will be in bad shape because so much of the dialogue is not reflected in cables. The formal outcome is reflected in cables, but a lot of the background discussion and debate that led to the cable is not available. There was one period later during the Lebanon War when a systematic effort was made for a brief period. This was because we had a task force set up in the operations center throughout the Summer of 1982. Phil Habib, who was the chief American negotiator during this period was traveling back and forth between Beirut and Jerusalem, but he was spending a lot of time in Beirut and as he was trying to negotiate with the PLO to get them to leave Lebanon during that summer, he would hole up in our Embassy in Beirut -- with all the shelling not too far away -- he had to have a special communications kit -- an easier one to use than previous (furnished by the Agency) -- which required a regulated system. He pretty much always talked to the same one or two people -- Charlie Hill, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Near East and Asia Bureau for Arab-Israeli affairs -- being a key interlocutor. He was the point man for the task force. He held lengthy-one, two and three hour -- conversations with Habib. Those conversations were taped and formal records were kept. But that was the only period that I know of that any formal record keeping was maintained.

Q: Before the emphasis on the secure telephone, did the Department use multiple addressees for the highest classified cable traffic? Could you send a message "For Vance Only"?

LEWIS: The Department did have multiaddressed traffic and did distribute incoming material within the Department. You were never quite sure where the messages went. The highest

restrictions -- NODIS cables designated by super sensitive marking -- could only be sent to the Department from the field post. The Department could send messages to several posts at the same time. It was up to the Executive Secretariat or the Department's hierarchy to repeat field messages to other key posts if it wished. During much of the peace diplomacy and the Lebanon War there was a fairly standard short re-distribution list. Anything I would send, for example, on Israel-Egyptian negotiations would automatically be sent by the Department to Cairo. There was also a period when we were given authorization to repeat directly to certain key posts on certain key subjects, peace process messages that we were sending to Washington. There were a great number of messages exchanged around the region that were designated below the NODIS level.

Q: Do you support the logic of that kind of information management?

LEWIS: I think it is very important. There were times when it would raise some anger in one post when it read what another post was reporting and commenting. We had some rather testy exchanges between John Dean, who was at the time in Beirut, and me in Tel Aviv. I was pretty unhappy about some of the things he was saying to the Lebanese and perhaps vice versa. But by and large, I think the system is indispensable. We had a pretty good team of professionals in place in all of the interested Embassies and knowing a great deal of which we were all sending made it possible for one to make a more useful contribution to the policy development process. There were many times through the years when one post would send in a thoughtful think piece about what to do next and two or three other posts would send their reactions to the proposal and then there would more exchanges back and forth. The end result was almost always as good as meeting face-to-face at a conference. We were all frustrated at not being able to meet very often. We had several places that were centrally involved in a lot of these issues. Certainly Cairo and Tel Aviv were involved in almost everything that had to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Often Damascus was involved and frequently Beirut. Saudi Arabia a great deal of the time. Those were the key posts for Arab-Israeli diplomacy. We never had any meetings or got together face-to-face, because through that period of 1977-83, there were so many crises in the region, diplomatic and military, that the Department was always very reluctant to have its Ambassadors away from their posts for any length of time and certainly not four or five or six of them at the same time. The practice of having Chiefs of Missions meeting even in the region much less back in Washington -- which was standard in other regional bureaus -- lapsed. We had at most one regular COM meeting during my eight years. That was in Washington during the Presidential transition period at the end of the Carter Administration. By that time we were in an interregnum and the meeting wasn't terribly useful since we couldn't tell what would come from the next Administration. But we did manage once or twice to get together quickly in Cairo in connection with visits to the area by Vance or later by Shultz. Cairo was the easiest place for all of us to meet. I couldn't get to some of the Arab countries easily. Our Ambassadors there felt they couldn't come to Israel easily. So Cairo was the best place. We met once in Cyprus. The exchange of messages had become such a custom that it helped to some extent to alleviate the absence of face-to-face meetings.

We never did manage something that I think would have been useful. Perhaps the technology would now permit it more easily. We would have been greatly helped if we could have had secure telephone conferences between several posts and Washington. But we didn't have that capability. The use of the secure phone in those days were pretty frustrating. It would go out a

lot; often you couldn't use it when you wanted to.

Q: Tell us a little bit of the participation of King Hussan of Morocco in the meetings between Dayan and Tuhami. Did he make other efforts?

LEWIS: This was basically his only involvement at least for a long time. Later on, a couple of years ago, when Peres was still Prime Minister, the King invited Peres for a formal visit. Under that cover, he may have arranged to have Peres meet other leaders. But the Dayan-Tuhami meetings were pretty much one shot affairs. It is possible that the Moroccans were more involved than I am aware of. The King was always very anxious to try to promote some kind of peace process. He had, for reasons that are somewhat murky, a very good view of the Israeli Labor Party and its leaders. He had prided himself on being the protector of the Jewish population in Morocco. He had high level Jewish advisors in his court who were in close touch and frequently came to Israel. There was a lot of back-and-forth. Also there was a large Moroccan population in Israel. But I don't think Hassan was really central except for that one negotiation when he provided a location for the Dayan-Tuhami meetings.

Q: Did General Tuhami participate in later negotiations?

LEWIS: He was at the Camp David meeting. That is how I got to know him. I found him to be a very extraordinary man. Indeed, rather weird.

The Sadat visit to Jerusalem in mid-November, 1977 was truly an extraordinary event for me and for everybody else who was even remotely involved. I suppose that it was also for all people around the world who watched through television. All of the drama began to build up with the invitations being exchanged. Begin, usually very technically astute, could never quite figure out how I was arranging to get his invitation to Sadat delivered. In fact, of course, it was cabled and then we sent the original in a special pouch. Begin thought it was very mysterious that somehow I was getting this document to Cairo and to Sadat for him. He was very appreciative. He made a big thing out of the fact that he was using the Americans as the intermediaries because he wanted very much to have us sign on to the bilateral negotiating track. This was a different approach of course than the one that Carter had been pursuing. When it became apparent from Hermann Eilts' conversations with Sadat that he was serious, the Israelis assumed that the planning for the visit would take a few weeks at least, in light of the high drama and its unique character. The visit had to be planned carefully. When I delivered on a Tuesday a message to Begin from Sadat, relayed through Eilts, that he planned to come Saturday night, it created an enormous crisis. The security dimension alone was daunting. It was clear by then that the Syrians were very much opposed to it as were many Palestinian groups. The Israelis were very fearful that someone would try to kill Sadat while he was in Jerusalem; that would have been an enormous tragedy for all concerned. The Israelis wanted to organize the security carefully and to prepare a proper reception. They wanted to do it up brown. But Begin realized, and this is to his credit, that was not something you negotiated about. If Sadat was prepared to come quickly, the Israelis would just have to be ready quickly so that he could not change his mind. They quickly put together a variety of task forces and working groups. All communications were going through our Embassies in Tel Aviv and Cairo. We had a secure phone with Cairo, which didn't work too well. We sometimes communicated through the regular telephone, but not often. In any case, the amount of expense

the US government incurred just for communications purposes in support of the Sadat-Begin exchanges must have run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Practically, all of our communication traffic was devoted to this meeting for a certain period.

The Israelis and Egyptians agreed that they wanted to get their protocol chiefs together as quickly as possible. A delegation flew from Egypt in an Egyptian Air Force craft and all had to make sure that the necessary precautions were taken to avoid shooting the plane down. The coordination of these precautions was done by our Air Force Attaché with the Israeli Defense Ministry and our Defense Attaché working through US Defense communication channels between Cairo and Tel Aviv to insure that the visit would go smoothly from a military point of view. The Egyptian team came; the head of the Israeli team was Eli Ben Elizar, then chef de cabinet for Begin. He is now in the Knesset as a leading Likud politician. I think he headed up the Israeli liaison team. The protocol people were involved, the security people were involved, some diplomatic people were involved as well. The Egyptian group stayed a couple of days -- or a day and a night -- and then returned to Egypt and then back to Israel. They began to hammer out the program, the security arrangements and the rest. I was not much involved in this because this was really a bilateral show. Our role was essentially limited to providing communications. At the very beginning, when Begin and Sadat asked Eilts and me to deliver messages, we consulted with Washington and recommended that we assist in every way possible. We were authorized to do so. After that, we basically served as postmen and facilitators. I remember the press asking me about my role in one of those impromptu press conferences that was held whenever I came out of the Prime Minister's office. They all would gather around and asked questions about what was discussed, whether the visit will take place, is it real. The line that I adopted was that I was just a "happy postman" in this affair. That gave rise to me being given the title of "Happy Postman" which was used for quite a while thereafter.

In any event, Sadat and Begin managed to get together. Israelis are frequently not very good about day-to-day administration and bureaucracy -- they can erect some of the worst bureaucratic obstacles in the world in getting things done routinely -- but they are probably the best people in the world in dealing with crises. When there is a crisis, they really turn to and that is what happened in this case. They regarded the visit as a crisis and the preparations were really extraordinary -- smoothly done in three days before Sadat's arrival.

The Sadat arrival at the Lod airport in Jerusalem on that November evening was certainly one of the two or three high points of my life, in terms of emotions in any case. The entire diplomatic corps was invited to the airport. It was a state visit. The red carpet was strung out on the tarmac in a T-shape out to where the plane would taxi. Not only was the whole diplomatic corps there, but also about two hundred of Israel's leaders, past and present, from politics, military, journalism and religion. The Druze and Bedouin communities were represented. There was a stand built right behind us for the press -- there were about 4000 journalists there, I believe, from all over the world packed into this grandstand. The arrival was scheduled for the end of the Sabbath on Saturday. Initially Sadat wanted to arrive Saturday morning, but was prevailed upon to do so at the end of Shabbat. So it was about seven or seven-thirty, just as it was getting dark. We were all lined up with the diplomatic corps in front and then two red carpets lined behind them on which stood all the previous Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, the current Cabinet and everyone who was or had been anybody. It was dark and no one was quite sure that it was

going to happen. Still, it was like a dream that Sadat would come to Jerusalem. At the appointed hour, under a dark, black sky, all of sudden this great white plane appears. It was all white and was immediately picked up by ground search-lights. The plane circled, landed and taxied up to the end of the red carpet. It was a military plane with Republic of Egypt written on its side. The stairs were rolled up and the carpet rolled out. The Chief of Protocol went up the steps, went inside for a minute. President Katzir and Begin were standing at the bottom of the steps. The Chief of Protocol opened the door and Sadat stepped out on top of the steps. He stood there at attention with the spotlight on him, wearing a gleaming white uniform while the Egyptian and Israeli national anthems were played. All around us and behind us, among the Israeli dignitaries, you could hear some very uncharacteristic sounds of people weeping. It was just an incredibly emotional moment. Sadat came down the steps, greeted Katzir and Begin. He was then escorted down the three or four lines of red carpets and introduced to all waiting by the Chief of Protocol. First, came the Cabinet, then the Diplomatic Corps and then all the other dignitaries. Begin trailed along because Katzir, as Chief of State, was the formal host. The story has oft been told that when Sadat came to several of the people in line, he would banter with them and exchange comments. These were people he knew of -- for example, Golda Meir. He told her that the Egyptians called her "The Old Lady" or something like that and that he was delighted to meet her. When he got to Arik Sharon he said something like "You know, Arik, I thought that we were going to catch you the last time". This was a reference to the 1973 War when General Sharon led the Israeli forces across the Suez Canal to the West Bank where he stayed for an extended period. Arik replied along the lines that he would never be caught. Sadat had some exchange with Moshe Dayan whom he knew well by reputation, but had never met.

Q: Mrs. Sadat was not along?

LEWIS: I don't remember, but I don't think she was. The chief players in this drama got into their cars and headed to Jerusalem. I went back to the Residence in Tel Aviv. There was one interesting thing about the car used by Sadat. During the hectic three days prior to the visit, I had received a call from the Chief of Protocol who said that although he was very embarrassed to ask, he confessed that the Israelis did not have any armored limousines. He said he knew that our limousine was armored and asked whether the Israelis could borrow it. I agreed; it was a good cause. So my rather elderly, but armored black Cadillac limousine was loaned to the Foreign Ministry. The license plate was temporarily changed; they took out temporarily our radio equipment and put in their own. For the whole period of the visit, that was Sadat's vehicle with the flags of Egypt and Israel flying up front. The car was already elderly and I kept it for another two years long beyond its normal replacement cycle. In the meantime, Carter had become so economically minded -- he would not let American Ambassadors or any other government official travel first class any longer (had to travel steerage) -- that the Administration forbade the purchase of any limousines for any officials in Washington or overseas. So the Cadillac was replaced by a small armored Cadillac sedan with a powerful engine, but it was barely large enough for four people. It did not have jump seats as the old "big boat" had. That was a very convenient car particularly in Israel where you met American dignitaries at the airport and then drove them to Jerusalem for forty-five minutes. You could have conversations in a big car with three or four people in the back which you couldn't do in a regular car. I hated to give up the old Cadillac, even though it was aged and ready to be replaced, particularly because of its history. It really had been an important part of modern history during the Sadat visit. Ultimately, the car

was retired and was to be sold on the market as had been State's practice for years. I bought that car for a few hundred dollars -- it had about two hundred thousand miles on it, at least. I used it for times when we needed a bigger car. I kept it at the Embassy and used it as a spare official car, but it was mine. Eventually, the transmission seized up and we had to sell it to someone else. But that car is still being driven around Israel by someone who knows the history and is very proud to say that was the car that Sadat used when he was in Israel.

The only other Sadat-visit event that I participated in personally was his speech to the Knesset. Everything else was bilateral and we had no role in it. I just watched as did the Israelis all the events on television. The television carried the visit night and day. We had massive newspaper reports and various politicians who were involved in the discussions would let me know in part at least how things were going. But I didn't have any official contact with Sadat or his party. We were among the guests for the formal session at the Knesset where Sadat, Begin and Shimon Peres, the leader of the opposition, all made their now-quite-famous speeches. Each spoke in his own language. For one of the rare times in the Knesset they managed to put together simultaneous interpretation for the Diplomatic Corps and the press. Sadat spoke in Arabic and Begin and Peres spoke in Hebrew. Sadat gave a very carefully prepared, quite strong nationalist pro-Palestinian speech. But the tone was very well done because it took into account Israeli sensitivities. It was a brilliantly written speech which protected his flank in the Arab world and at the same time, held out a hand to the Israelis in a very effective manner. Begin gave one of his poorer speeches. Begin was a wonderful extemporaneous speaker. He hated to read speeches. In the years that I knew him, I saw him read speeches only three times and they were all dull. This time, he didn't read but he had carefully prepared it and he chose to spend a lot of it on the tragic history of the Jewish people -- a theme which he liked to discuss often. The tone was not well received by the Israelis who thought it was very ungracious and didn't live up at all to Sadat's speech. Peres gave the third speech, which was a very open, gracious, warm and attractive speech which hit a lot of the right notes. Unfortunately, he was not the key actor, but his speech was very good. There was something else quite dramatic about the Knesset session. Ezer Weizman, Minister of Defense and Begin's campaign manager, who was a real hawk and an extraordinary fellow, just before the visit had to quell a very unfortunate incident in the Army. When it became known in the Army that Sadat was coming, General Motta Gur, then Chief of Staff, was very suspicious and thought it was all a trick -- something like the Yom Kippur war surprise. It was reasonable that he should be on guard, but he made the mistake of saying so publicly, warning the government publicly that this might all be a trick. That was seen by Begin - - correctly, I think -- as a very bad diplomatic insult. Weizman was furious and was ready to fire Gur as result of this incident, but while he was driving to Jerusalem to report to Begin on his intentions towards Gur, his driver hit or was hit by another car resulting in a very serious accident. This was just two or three days just before Sadat's arrival. Weizman was really banged up; he was on crutches; he was in a cast. Yet he was determined not to miss the visit. Somehow he got out of the hospital. I don't think he was at the airport for the arrival, but he managed to get out of the hospital and back in the game sufficiently by filling himself with pain killers to be at the hotel when the Sadat party got to Jerusalem. He met Sadat there and had some opportunity to talk to him informally, as did Dayan and others. At the Knesset session later, Ezer pulled himself on his crutches, staggered into the Knesset, got into his seat -- he was in real pain-but it was a very dramatic tribute to Sadat that he was trying to make. It was greatly appreciated by Sadat and his people.

The visit ended, the Egyptians went home and everybody spent days discussing what had happened. I got several read-outs from Begin, Dayan and Weizman on their conversations. In the meantime, Hermann Eilts was getting his read-outs in Cairo. We were cabling all this material in and little by little we were able to piece together what had happened. What had happened actually was that Sadat was disappointed in Begin's responses. He thought that his decision to come to Jerusalem was such an enormous gesture that he should have been met by greater expressions of flexibility on Begin's part. Still, they had agreed to begin the bilateral negotiating process. And that is what happened from mid-November, 1977 to January, 1978.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, Carter and his colleagues were quite put out by being left out of the whole procedure. They put a pretty good face on it; the press treatment in Washington and the Congressional reaction was so favorable that they were smart enough to realize that they couldn't be seen as opposing the meeting, but they were concerned on two grounds: one, they really felt that a bilateral deal was a mistake and would undermine the possibility of getting a comprehensive settlement, including the Palestinian issue which is what Carter had been shooting for. Second, they were very upset with Sadat, who had worked so closely with Carter, going off on his own and not really leveling with US on what he was up to until it was too late to change course. There was quite a debate apparently within our Administration concerning how we should handle ourselves in light of all these events. There were those that said we should really oppose the meeting because the total strategy had been developed by us and it would ruin any chances of reaching anything beyond the most minimal bilateral deals. But good sense prevailed and ultimately within about four or five days, which were needed so that they could write memoranda to each other and have meetings and sort of simmer down, Carter used good judgement in realizing that this wasn't what he had designed, it wasn't his plan, but it was an enormous step which he had to support and try to broaden it. We had to see it not as the end of the story. So in this period we were very much in the background with the Israelis and Egyptians perusing their dialogue directly. They set up a direct telephone line with links between Weizman's and Gamas's offices in their respective Ministries of Defense. We were still passing a lot of messages between Jerusalem and Cairo, but now they also had a way to communicate directly. Whenever we talked to the two parties, we would remind them continuously of the need to pursue their diplomacy so that it would not dash all the hopes of the Palestinians and the Jordanians for a broader settlement. That didn't make much of an impression.

The next we knew is that they had scheduled the next round of meetings between Begin and Sadat to take place in Ismalia on Christmas Day.

Q: I would like to move to the period between Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the Camp David talks. What are your recollections of this period?

LEWIS: The decision by Sadat to go to Jerusalem was a bombshell not only to the Israelis, but also to the Americans. We had no warning that Sadat intended to make this grand gesture. As the scenario began to unfold a week the before his visit, I was transmitting messages along with Ambassador Eilts in Cairo, while Walter Cronkite and Barbara Walters were performing a kind

of public version of what the messages between the field and Washington were doing privately. President Carter's colleagues were trying to figure out how not to discourage what was obviously a very important break-through, but to keep particularly Sadat focused on the problem of a comprehensive peace, not just bilateral peace. The US government was criticized rather harshly by the Israelis and by some friends of Israel in the United States for some hesitation about giving full-hearted support to this new development. That was a bit unfair, since the Sadat initiative was so contrary to the game plan that had been developed that would eventually lead to another Geneva conference. Inevitably, under these circumstances, it took four or five days of thrashing around in Washington before the conclusion was that, although this is not what Carter had in mind, it was a step that should be encouraged wholeheartedly and should be facilitated. Eventually, that is what the US government did.

Right after Sadat left to return to Cairo, the first order of business was to find out what had happened during the talks, to which we of course were not a party. Ambassador Eilts got a read-out; I saw Begin and Dayan and got reasonably full reports. It was clear that during the Sadat-Israeli talks, the Israelis particularly were not seeking more active US mediation, but greater encouragement for the bilateral Egyptian-Israeli negotiations. This was something which they had been seeking for many years and had finally achieved without any intermediaries. The period of late November and early December, 1977 was unique because it was the period during which briefly at least Israelis and Egyptians were attempting to deal directly with each other and to solve the problem without any active intervention. Unfortunately, it didn't come to a successful conclusion and by the middle of January, it had become clear that there was still too much suspicion and too many differences in the approaches that Sadat and Begin were taking to prevent them from reaching a bilateral understanding without the US.

Q: Did they realize that?

LEWIS: Sadat realized it and turned again to us in January, 1978 in order essentially to get Carter on his side. So we reentered as major players and continued to be in that role for the next year. The first thing that happened in December was that Sadat, had agreed, evidently either in Jerusalem or in subsequent contacts, to a Begin suggestion to organize a bilateral peace conference which would draft a treaty. But Sadat was very anxious not to be seen by the other Arab states as a seeker of a separate peace. The two agreed to set up what was to be called the "Cairo Conference", which Egypt would host. The Egyptians invited all Arab protagonists, including the PLO and the United Nations, to participate along with the Israelis. The Israelis didn't like that too much, but they went along probably on the assumption that with all the anger that had arisen in the Arab world about Sadat's trip, then other Arab parties were not likely to accept the invitation. And in fact, that was the case.

Before that Conference convened in early December in Cairo under the nominal chairmanship of General Silasvuo, who was the chief of the UN Forces in the Middle East and was representing Kurt Waldheim, then the Secretary General of the UN. His chairmanship was a formality. He was a Finnish General, highly respected by both sides. However, his chairmanship gave the Conference a coloration of being an extension of the Geneva Conference which also had a UN chairman. Before the Conference actually convened, there were considerable private, bilateral exchanges between the Egyptians and the Israelis with Sadat seeking to get from Begin

commitments about total withdrawal from Sinai and the principles dealing with West Bank and Gaza that he could defend in the Arab world. Ezer Weizman made one trip to Cairo and in that period, Ezer was already being seen by Sadat, after having met him in Jerusalem, as a person with whom he could do business. So Weizman became a sort of emissary in this period. More importantly, the second secret meeting between Dayan and General Tuhami took place in Morocco. Tuhami was one of Sadat's oldest colleagues from the revolutionary officers' days. He had met secretly with Dayan earlier in the Fall in Morocco under the auspices of the King. That meeting had undoubtedly something to do with Sadat's decision to go to Jerusalem, when he heard Dayan's description of Begin's ultimate solution to the Sinai issue. I don't think Dayan made any commitments for total withdrawal; I am quite sure he didn't. Tuhami chose to pick some of what he heard as an implication that Sadat could get complete withdrawal if he would bite the bullet.

So Dayan and Tuhami met again in early December, but the meeting was apparently inconclusive with Begin's position as conveyed by Dayan not very satisfactory to Sadat, but still encouraging enough for Sadat to proceed. The Cairo Conference met about December 15. Ben Elizar, who was Begin's Chief of Staff, an old Herut loyalist, was designated to represent Israel along with General Abrasha Tamir, who represented the Defense Ministry. They spent several sessions sparring about protocol matters because Begin was by this time off on another track. He didn't want the Conference to start working on substance until he had a chance to get his autonomy plan drafted. He had developed an autonomy plan idea for the West Bank and Gaza, which later became the subject of very prolonged negotiations. He drafted the plan himself without any real staff input. He called me in one day in mid-December and said that he had completed this plan -- he didn't describe it in any detail -- but he saw it as a very far reaching way to deal with problems of the territories. He told me that he wanted me to advise President Carter very privately that before unveiling the plan for Sadat, he wanted to come to Washington to discuss it with the President in the hope of eliciting his support before a meeting that he would have subsequently with Sadat. He could then present the plan with Carter's approval. This was Begin's game plan. President Carter and Secretary Vance were not very enthusiastic about the idea of a trip to Washington, but certainly couldn't reject it.

So Begin charged off to Washington. I was with him. We had meetings in the White House. He unveiled for Carter, Vance and Brzezinski and other top people, his autonomy scheme. He asked President Carter's support for it. Carter was taken favorably with some aspects of it, though he didn't see it as adequate for dealing with the problem of Palestinian self-determination. But he saw the need for staged, transitional period of autonomy. He saw enough in Begin's plan to think that it was something that Sadat should certainly consider. At Begin's suggestion, while we were in the White House, Carter telephoned Sadat and described in general terms the approach Begin was taking. He apparently told Sadat that it seemed to him to be a serious effort and something that Sadat should seriously consider. He didn't, I think, endorse it wholeheartedly, though Begin tried to depict later Carter's reaction as wholehearted support. After the meetings were over, Begin went back to Jerusalem with some over-estimation of the degree of enthusiasm that Carter had displayed toward his plan. Then Begin arranged with Sadat to have a bilateral summit meeting. This was done between the two of them because by this time, Weizman had left in Cairo one of his Air Force people with communication facilities so that messages could be passed back and forth directly without going through US channels. The meeting was set for

Ismalia on Christmas Day. That summit meeting proved the high-water mark of bilateralism and in retrospect one can see that it was a great missed opportunity. What Sadat was seeking at that point was agreement on a broad statement of principles which would encompass the future of the territories and would give enough of a framework for him to defend to the Arab world his negotiations for a detailed treaty on the Sinai. The principles obviously had to include phrases like "legitimate rights of the Palestinians", "self-determination" and phrases of that sort. I am convinced that Sadat was very anxious to move quickly to get agreement on that declaration of principles and get his treaty before Arab reaction became too negative to the whole plan. Begin was characteristically very legalistic in his approach to Sadat's proposal for a general framework; Begin instead wanted Sadat to accept his rather detailed autonomy scheme for the territories. Sadat was not interested in such details because he didn't want to be in the position of making decisions for the Palestinians about the territories for which he could be easily attacked by Syria, the PLO and other Arabs. He wanted a fig-leaf; Begin wanted a blueprint. They apparently came close. I was told afterwards by Ezer Weizman and by Dayan, both of whom attended the summit, that Begin and Sadat got along fairly well as they had gotten along well in Jerusalem. Sadat drove Begin around Ismalia in his car himself and showed him the Canal Zone. There was apparently a draft of these principles that Begin was prepared to endorse in rather limited scope. According to the Israelis, Sadat was on the point of agreeing to this draft, but Osama el Baz and other Sadat advisers intervened and warned Sadat of going too far and sacrificing the interests of the Palestinians. In the end there was no agreement. Sadat didn't accept the autonomy scheme; Begin didn't accept the declaration of principles. All they were able to agree on eventually was a procedure which was in a way built on the Cairo Conference, which to this point was only a facade or skeleton. Begin suggested and Sadat agreed that they set up two committees: a military one based in Cairo and a political committee which would meet initially in Jerusalem. These committees would negotiate the two dimensions of the problem: the military arrangements for Sinai -- disengagement and withdrawal -- and the nature of the treaty to be negotiated which would govern diplomatic and political relationships between the two countries.

When Begin returned, I was at the airport to meet the Israeli delegation. Begin put a very positive face on the meeting in his arrival statement. He didn't dwell at all on the failures, but stressed the achievement of setting up these two committees. Weizman and others were generally supportive of that stance. Dayan was the only one who was visibly down-cast, very depressed. He didn't stay for the airport press conference. He got in his car and returned to Zahala. He told me privately as he was getting into his car that a tremendous opportunity had been missed and that he was now very pessimistic. He said something like "It is now going to be up to you again".

Q: Would you say that Hermann Eilts had a particularly insightful relationship with Sadat? More than one would expect from a normal appointee?

LEWIS: He was very much in Sadat's confidence. He had great respect for Sadat and vice versa. He had been there since the re-opening of our diplomatic mission in Egypt during the Kissinger period after the 1973 war. Eilts had been a confidential intermediary between Kissinger and Sadat during that 1974-75 period of active diplomacy. His judgements about Sadat and his advice to the government were very sound. Sadat had a lot confidence in him. In many ways, Hermann and I were in quite interesting situations because he was very close to Sadat and I was very close to Begin, Dayan and Weizman. So both of us were well positioned to be useful

intermediaries in this game.

The Jerusalem Committee -- the political committee -- was scheduled to meet on the fifteenth of January. They evidently had agreed at Ismalia to invite Secretary Vance to attend. This was a reflection again that they tacitly, at least, realized they weren't going to make peace without American mediation. In Israel, there were those who were very skeptical, particularly about giving up every inch of the Sinai, which was one of Sadat's conditions from the beginning. Not only did Labor Party people assert that Israel would have to keep certain strategic positions in the Sinai -- it had stimulated some settlements there such as Yammit and others down the Sinai coast -- but in Begin's own party, there were substantial numbers who were nervous especially about his autonomy scheme which they did not see necessarily see the way Begin saw it.

Parenthetically, one example of this was when Begin returned from Washington before going to Ismalia, he revealed to the Cabinet his autonomy proposal which he had not vetted with any of them before going to the U.S., with the exception of perhaps Dayan and Weizman and one or two others. There were those in the Cabinet who believed that the plan was dangerous and would open the way to an eventual Palestinian state. They persuaded Begin to make a few modifications before he presented it to Sadat, tightening up some of the loopholes and in fact making it somewhat less attractive than the version Carter had originally seen. Sharon, who was then Minister of Agriculture and was responsible for settlement policy, was very skeptical about a number of the aspects of Begin's diplomacy.

Sharon did something in secret in the last week of December, right after Ismalia, which cast a long shadow over the next year. Seeing that the tide was running in the direction of the eventual evacuation of all of the Sinai, he established several "Potemkin" settlements. He put rudiments of settlements at several spots in the Sinai where there had been nothing before. He erected quickly a water tower here, a stockade there in order to stake out some positions in the Rafah area which would then in his mind be either bargaining chips or impediments to territorial surrender when the time came. He had bull-dozers carve out a few roads and set up a few shacks here and there. This was all done covertly, somehow believing that it would not come to anyone's attention. But it of course, did. In fact, there were some enterprising Israeli television news coverage of these efforts, which was immediately picked up in Cairo. Sadat was absolutely furious and was convinced that this was an indication of Begin's really bad faith. Coming right after Ismalia, where he had not succeeded to do what seemed necessary, Sadat apparently interpreted this caper as an indication that there was no way to deal straight-forwardly with the Israeli government. This was another reason why he began to turn back to the United States. He was too far along, by this time, to back away from the peace effort and he made his grand gesture by going to Jerusalem, but he was really soured by the Sharon operation. When leaked into the Israeli press, it was first denied, then confirmed. Other members of the Cabinet attacked Sharon publicly for spoiling the peace process with his operation. He counter-attacked by asserting that all of his actions had been approved by the Cabinet and that he was not just operating on his own. In fact, I think that he did have approval from at least some key Cabinet members, including Begin, if not the whole Cabinet itself. But he took the heat. This had such an impact on Sadat that he was on the verge of calling off the conference in Jerusalem and refusing to send his Foreign Minister. We were engaged in an active effort both in Cairo and in Jerusalem to try to keep the process on track, to smooth over the controversy. Vance was very vigorous in sending messages through us and directly by phone in an effort to keep the process on track. There was a huge controversy

about the conference agenda. It became a great frustration during the second week of January, 1978. I was cabling in Israeli agenda proposals; the Egyptians were rebutting them. Vance then got very annoyed with the whole process which he saw as quite unproductive. I was instructed to make clear to the Israelis that unless they accepted a neutral agenda formulation which did not prejudge the outcome, Vance would not come. That was sufficient to make the Israelis propose a more neutral agenda which was accepted.

Vance did come. The Conference opened at the Jerusalem Hilton, not in the best of moods, but nevertheless with hope that they would get things back on track. The focus was again on a declaration of principles as the first step. We had the opening formal meeting with everybody around a big table in the hotel ballroom. There were statements that were quite different from each other. Then as always happens at conferences of this kind, the real diplomatic activity started outside the conference room. The American delegation was on one floor, the Egyptians were two floors above us and the Israelis were on another floor. For about twenty-four hours, Cy Vance was scampering up and down the service stairs between the floors, going from Dayan's room -- he was the chief Israeli negotiator -- to Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamal's room -- this was Kamal's first venture into big time diplomacy and he was very nervous about it. After a few hours of very energetic work by Vance going back and forth and suggesting formulations, while we were drafting positions for him to use, the Conference was making a lot of progress. Then there was a formal banquet that evening. At that dinner, Begin came, although he was not in the formal negotiations, and made a speech in front of a lot of people -- it was a big affair -- including journalists. First, Kamal gave a speech which was careful and orthodox. Begin's speech was actually not intended to be anything but a good speech. It had the usual rhetoric about Israel's history which set the Egyptians' teeth on edge a little bit. What really blew the gasket was a quite inadvertent statement in Begin's speech that referred to Foreign Minister Kamal as a young man -- which was essentially correct since he was younger than Begin and certainly less experienced in diplomacy -- but the Egyptians interpreted that remark as very condescending. Moreover, the formulation of age was one that was particularly offensive to the Egyptians -- something that Begin was totally unaware of. It put a chill on the proceedings. Kamal made a rebuttal which was quite sharp. After the banquet, negotiations continued, but there was a lot of press attention on this event. There were some rather extreme headlines.

The next morning, Vance got word from the Egyptians that they were being recalled to Cairo. He worked very hard to try to persuade them not to return. Ultimately, he talked by phone in front of a group of us at lunch with Sadat and tried to persuade him not to insist, but eventually Sadat did insist and the delegation left and the Conference broke up in disarray. I remember Vance and I went to see Begin late that evening for a sort of post-mortem at his residence. Osama el Baz, Kamal and Boutros Ghali had just said goodbye to Begin before leaving. We found him in a mood very different from any that I had seen before. Begin was closer to being apologetic and quite embarrassed about what happened than I had ever seen at any other time. He realized belatedly that his speech had been a factor, although he was not ready to accept the proposition that Sadat would pull the delegation back on the basis of his speech. Incidentally, Kamal had told Vance that while he had taken offense at Begin's remarks, he had urged Sadat to let him stay. He did not think he should leave. But Sadat had felt that this was an insult and insisted that the delegation return. Later on, from memoirs and other information, it is not entirely clear that Kamal did urge that he be permitted to stay. More important, there are a lot of indications in

retrospect that Sadat was so skeptical of Begin by the time the Conference opened as the result of the phony settlements in the Sinai and a couple of tough speeches that Begin had made to his Likud Party colleagues in the Knesset -- that had been publicized in Cairo -- that he probably had decided ahead of time that he would let the delegation go -- although he had hesitated about that and only agreed after Vance's pressure -- but that he would not leave it in Tel Aviv for very long. He may well just have been looking for a pretext to bring it back. He seemed to have already concluded by that time that the only way to get around Begin's "intransigence" was to bring the full power of the United States to bear on his side.

Q: Did Kamal continue as Foreign Minister and did he go to Camp David?

LEWIS: Yes. He stayed as Foreign Minister until Camp David. He resigned at Camp David because he was very much opposed to Sadat's decision to sign the Camp David agreement as was everyone else in Sadat's entourage. Kamal said later that he felt that Sadat was signing his own death warrant and he did not want to be part of it. Sadat asked him not to say anything publicly until they returned to Cairo, but he did resign at Camp David. He was in office throughout the Spring and Summer of 1978.

Q: Was Brzezinski aloof from all this? Did he let Vance handle it alone?

LEWIS: During the phase we are discussing, Brzezinski was in Washington with Carter. This was Vance's show. Roy Atherton, who was by this time had been designated by Vance as Special Middle East Negotiator, remained in the area after the Conference broke up and Vance had returned to Washington. Roy did a lot in the next few weeks to try to help Eilts and me to keep the process on the rails. The period between the break-up of the Conference and Camp David is a blur of Secretaries of State and other officials traveling around, Begin going back and forth to Washington, Dayan moving around, Weizman going to Washington and to Cairo to try to smooth Sadat's hackles. Vance made some statements in Washington that made the Israelis very angry by reaffirming earlier Carter statements concerning the need for a Palestinian homeland. During late January and early February, there was a lot of tension between the Israelis and us because it was clearly Carter's judgement that Begin had blown the whole affair after Sadat had come to Jerusalem risking everything in the Arab world. Carter saw Begin's response as very inadequate.

After about two or three weeks of this, Sadat suggested that he meet with Carter alone to figure out the next steps. Carter invited Sadat to Camp David where they met and I learned subsequently -- some of this is mentioned in Bill Quandt's book on Camp David -- reached some kind of understanding on how to deal with Begin's "intransigence" and how to get him to be more flexible on issues such as the declaration of principles, the future of settlements, the nature of the territories, etc. This understanding involved, as Quandt described it, a kind of game plan under which over the next weeks, Carter would make much clearer in public than ever before where he and Begin disagreed. In effect, they were trying to mobilize pressure on Begin through American Jewish leaders, through Congress and through public opinion to become more flexible. Sadat in urging this course said that he would stand very firm on his positions while we would publicly discuss our disagreement with the Israelis. At a certain point then, we would come forth with some kind of compromise which would not go all the way to Sadat's positions, but which

Begin would have been softened up to accept. That was apparently Sadat's concept with which Carter agreed essentially.

In any case, in January-February there appeared much more open statements from Washington -- Carter, Vance, Brzezinski and others -- almost continually, stressing Resolutions 242 and 338, the need to withdraw from all fronts, the question of Palestinian homeland and other issues which made Begin very angry because he always wanted these matters left out of the public dialogue and to the direct negotiations. Begin came to Washington in early March to meet with Carter. The atmosphere before he came was quite tense. It was made even tenser by the fact that a few days before he came -- I was already in Washington with Ezer Weizman for pre-visit preparations -- a very bad terrorist event occurred. A group of PLO commandoes landed on the coast south of Haifa and murdered Gail Rubin, a young American woman photographer taking some nature pictures. They commandeered a bus and ordered the bus driver to go to Tel Aviv with his passengers. The bus came careening down the Haifa Highway with 10-12 commandoes in it and with frightened passengers. It was finally intercepted and stopped just about three or four miles south of Herzliyya -- where our residence was -- and just north of the outskirts of Tel Aviv. There was a shoot out with the Israeli Army during which all the commandoes were killed and a number of the passengers were killed. There was a great deal of carnage. This event was a tremendous shock in Israel. There had been nothing similar to this in some years and it was a demonstration to a lot of Israelis of the problematical nature of negotiating peace with Egypt while the PLO was still around to act in its terrorist fashion. There was an outcry and within three or four days, while I was in Washington, the Israeli Army -- even while Weizman was in Washington, but in communication with his Ministry -- was directed by Begin and the Chief of Staff to move into South Lebanon to attack PLO bases in what turned out to be a very large incursion, called "Operation Litani" which was intended to clear the whole area up to the Litani River -- 26 kilometers north of the border -- of the PLO. That caused a huge furor in the United Nations and in Washington and led ultimately to the establishment, over Israel's strong opposition, of the UN Force -- UNIFIL -- which is still in South Lebanon today. The resolution of the Security Council called on Israel to withdraw inside its borders and established UNIFIL to monitor their withdrawal. The Israelis did not withdraw for about three months during which we were trying on the one hand to push the peace process forward and on the other, trying to deal with this huge Lebanese complication. A lot of the people around Carter were convinced that the incursion was deliberately timed to take attention away from Begin's intransigence on the territories. That view soured the visit preparation mood.

Begin came and we had frank, sharp but polite talks with him and his advisors at the White House. True to the game plan, Carter, as we can see in retrospect was following the game plan, was rather precise on the actions that Begin was refusing to take. At one point in the conversation, he said, "Mr. Prime Minister, if I understand correctly, your position is that you will not do this and that you will not do that, you will not do this and will not do that." Begin, not in hostile, but in an unsympathetic mode, tried to turn it around by saying, "Mr. President, I would prefer to put our position positively. We will do this and we will do that, we will do this and this and I would hope that when you describe our position, you will describe it as I do, not as you do." But Carter persisted. One of the things that he was arguing about is whether Begin would accept the applicability of Resolution 242 to all fronts, not only to the Sinai, but also to the West Bank and Gaza. This is something Begin had never accepted formally. He accepted 242

but only according to his interpretation which was that it did not require Israel to withdraw from all territories -- that was also our interpretation -- but it did not require Israel to leave anything more than the Sinai which was the overwhelming portion of the territory. At the end of the meetings with Carter, Begin asked Carter very specifically that when he would speak to Congress and the press about these meetings, that he put a positive interpretation on Begin's position, not a negative one. Carter was noncommittal though Begin later interpreted Carter's response as signifying assent. Almost as soon as we had left the White House, there was a briefing of the press and a Carter briefing of key Members of Congress in which he characterized Begin's position of being very intransigent. Begin met with Members of Congress, as he always did when he came to Washington -- I was with him during those sessions -- who acting in response to what they had learned from Carter about Begin's position, questioned Begin in much sharper, assertive and aggressive manner than any Israeli Prime Minister had previously encountered. So when Begin left town to return to Israel, he was really mad, unhappy, angry and feeling very much abused. The press coverage was as Carter wanted it. It did depict Begin as quite intransigent.

That mood of disagreement, unhappiness and distrust between Jerusalem and Washington continued until the Summer. I spent a couple of months on Vance's instructions trying to extract from Dayan a formulation about 242 which would be closer to our view than to Begin's. I never succeeded; he was adamant. I had dozens of sessions with Dayan who was attempting to find a way of satisfying us about the matter, but at the same time keeping Begin happy because he knew where the power was. The timing problem dragged on; we had sharp disagreements with Israel about the non-withdrawal from South Lebanon. In fact, of course, when we finally pushed them to withdraw in May, they left behind in the territory -- now called the "Security Zone", just north of the border -- quite a bit of equipment to assist Major Haddad, the Lebanese Christian army renegade who had set up a little operation in South Lebanon to defend his area against the Moslems and the PLO north of him. They also left some sub rosa assistance for Major Haddad in the form of training and undercover people. So it was not a complete withdrawal. Furthermore the Israelis would not permit UNIFIL to patrol all the way to the border; they insisted that the UN had to stay outside of Major Haddad's area. That was not part of the U.N. resolution and it ultimately decreased the UN's ability to carry out a sensible UN peace-keeping operation because of this area of which it had no control. This area was governed by the South Lebanese Army, as it became to be known, and Israeli support.

That soured the mood that Spring. There were other matters like the PLO terrorist groups incursions into Israel, the lack of resolution on "Operation Litani" on our side. As the weeks dragged on, another major problem arose in Washington which further attrited the relationship. Carter decided to proceed with an F-16 arms sale to Saudi Arabia, much against the arguments of Israel, the American-Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC) and Israel' supporters in Congress. There was a huge fight in the Congress over the sale of these weapon systems. Carter won the battle, but he used up a tremendous amount of Congressional credit in the process. The partial success of his strategy of turning public opinion against Begin was undercut by this fight over the aircraft sale, because Begin and Israel had collected a good deal of sympathy for their position on the sale. The sale made a considerable difference to the aircraft balance in the Middle East. These were the best planes we had and the Israelis saw it in very apocalyptic terms.

During Spring, 1978 there was a letter from a large group of Senators which undermined Carter's position. It was a letter to the President which supported a lot of Begin's positions. Carter's political situation had, if anything, been damaged by this effort to put Begin in a box. It had not worked. The bilateral relationship with Israel had become very tense. Sadat was more and more frustrated. Nothing was happening on Egypt's peace front. In late June, Carter decided to send Fritz Mondale, the Vice-President, to Israel. Mondale was known as a good friend of Israel. This was an attempt to try to improve the image of U.S.-Israel cooperation and friendship. Fritz came out and had a very fine speech prepared. I was with him in his hotel in Jerusalem when we got a report that President Carter, at a press conference that day, had made one of his unexpected comments which was calculated to drive the Israelis up the wall, just as Mondale was in Jerusalem trying to stroke them to get them into a negotiating frame of mind. Fritz was furious but there wasn't much he could do about it. He gave his speech, he did a good job in dealing with Begin and others, but it was clear that the relationship remained very, very tense.

At this point, Carter decided that it was time to try to get all the parties together again. It must be remembered that the Egyptian leaders had not met with Israeli leaders since mid- January. All communications had passed through U.S. channels. Much of it was about details of the negotiating positions and the process was not moving forward. So a meeting was organized to be convened at Leeds Castle in England. It was a conference of Foreign Ministers -- Vance, Dayan, Kamal and members of their delegations -- which met in late July. The British Government had offered Leeds as a neutral site since the Egyptians didn't want to return to Jerusalem and the Israelis didn't want to go to Cairo unless the Egyptians would also come to Israel. Washington didn't seem like a good meeting place at the time. The first order of business when we got to Leeds, to this Henry VIII's castle, was to restart some communications between the two parties. The castle was marvelous; it had been restored with a huge great baronial dining room with a table about fifty feet long. There was a considerable amount of negotiations first to decide whether the Egyptians were going to eat separately on the first night or whether we would eat together. We finally prevailed on the Egyptians to eat together with the rest of us. We arranged the seating so that there was an American, an Egyptian, an Israeli, then an American, then an Egyptian, then an Israeli etc. The total group was about twenty-five or thirty. It started very stiffly, but after that first evening, the kind of human interaction which made things easy at the Jerusalem meeting had been restored. From then on, there was no question of eating separately. Even Kamal who was very leery of meeting with Dayan was prepared to eat with him and sit with him on occasions. But there were still a lot of tensions. The Egyptian delegation had come clearly under instructions to be stand-offish. The meetings were held around a small round table with only the principals at the table. Vance was playing the role of mediator throughout. He was very skillful. There were some very rough things said by Osama el Baz in particular which really grated on the Israelis. Some of Dayan's statements were not taken very well by Kamal. In fact, after the first meeting, everybody went back to their own wings -- each delegation had its own wing of the castle. Hermann Eilts, who had gone along with the Egyptians to sort of "schmooze" with them to test their mood, came around to tell Vance, me and the other Americans that Kamal was so upset by some of the things he had to listen to from Dayan that he was sobbing in his room. He wasn't planning to come to anymore meetings. He just couldn't bear to hear anymore of these dreadful things that the Israelis were saying, asserting their historic claims to Arab lands, etc. Vance pacified Kamal and the meetings went on, but concluded rather inconclusively. But there were very frank and, in a sense for the first time, direct exchanges of hard positions from

both sides. That had not happened either at Ismalia or in Jerusalem. In some of the separate sessions, particularly the one Dayan and I had with Vance late one night, Dayan was very anxious to break the impasse. He saw the great opportunity for peace slipping away. He criticized Begin very much for his tactics and legalisms and his intransigent style, but had to be loyal to him as his Foreign Minister. Dayan was always looking throughout this year for some way around an obstacle, some formula that Begin could swallow that would get over a big bump in the road.

That evening, Dayan offered to Vance as a thought of his own, obviously not committing anything, a formulation that dealt with the question of Palestinian rights and he may also have dealt with 242 issue. I don't remember the precise formulation, but it was the germ of an idea which ultimately surfaced again at Camp David and is in the Camp David agreement. It was a way of getting over a major negotiating hurdle that Dayan had offered at Leeds. The whole meeting showed Dayan's crucial role in the process. He was conscious of having to be loyal to Begin's policies, but he had enough self-confidence, chutzpah and historic perspective to feel free to offer in private a lot of thoughts and ideas of his own and to explore avenues although he could not of course commit Begin at the time. This made it possible for him and Vance particularly to come up with some important breakthroughs. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that they would meet again at the Foreign Ministers' level in approximately another three weeks, perhaps in the Sinai -- at the Sinai field station that we had been operating since the Sinai II disengagement agreement in 1975 to monitor military movements on behalf of both sides. When Kamal's delegation returned to Cairo and reported, Sadat told them there would be no more meetings; Leeds had been the last one. He told us the same thing; he would not agree to any more tripartite meetings. In retrospect, this proved to be clearly a tactic. He had concluded that Begin was too tough a nut to crack without Carter personally getting in the act. He in effect put it up to the United States by saying that we had said that we could deal with the Begin problem -- or you had led me to think so -- and it was time for us to put up or shut up. It was in that climate in late July that Washington decided that the peace process was clearly at an end, unless we did something very dramatic. Carter decided, against the advice of nearly all of his advisors, to invite both Begin and Sadat privately to come to Camp David so that the three of them could try to reach some agreements.

Q: Was Vance one of those in favor.

LEWIS: I don't remember what Vance's position was. The argument was that prospects were very dim by this time, the gap was too broad, the likelihood of failure was very great and for Carter to risk an investment of so much more of his prestige would be deadly for him politically, if he failed. By this time, he was a year and a half into his Administration, having devoted an enormous amount of effort in the Middle East, letting a lot of other things slide or not dealing with them adequately. His Administration was not in very good shape. Only Hamilton Jordan, his political advisor, argued with Carter that it was better to roll the dice and be seen as having tried everything possible. That would be more advantageous politically than just admitting failure and moving off to something else. The preponderance of the advice was caution and not taking the risk.

Q: Would you describe Vance as intuitively shrewd when dealing with people far afield from his

Ivy League-New York background? Did he have a feeling for the Egyptians and the Israelis?

LEWIS: He came to have. Vance acquired a great deal of respect from the Israelis. I can't really say how the Egyptians viewed him, although I think they viewed him very well, but Begin and his colleagues really acquired an enormous regard and respect for Vance. They didn't like some of the things he said, they argued very hard with him, disagreed with him sharply, but they found him to be so honorable and straight and so dedicated that he really gained their respect. Moreover, they did become convinced over a period of months that he was genuinely sympathetic and empathetic to their problems. But he was a lawyer and could talk with Begin in a kind of legal language which was also useful, if somewhat less, with Sadat, but my impression is that Sadat rested very heavily on his personal relationship with Carter. He had faith in Carter. Begin was leier of Carter. He had a lot of confidence in Vance's rectitude; he admired Carter and wanted Carter to admire him, but he realized that Carter did not like him as much as he admired Sadat and this hurt Begin who in a strange way was very thin skinned. Begin wanted to be approved by Carter. He wasn't going to change to get that approval, but he felt hurt when he did not receive it. He thought that Carter with his understanding of history, the Bible and his missionary impulse about the Middle East, should have been more in his court. Of course Begin and Carter were so totally different in personality that it was remarkable that they got along as well as they did. Carter was extraordinary in the way he handled both Begin and Sadat, particularly at Camp David, but at various other times as well. All in all, it was a very unique performance.

Carter then sent Vance with a hand-written invitation first to Jerusalem and then to Cairo, inviting Begin and Sadat to Camp David. Begin, who had been hoping for such an invitation, accepted immediately and so did Sadat. The stage was set by early August for the Camp David meeting in September, 1978.

Q: Let us pick up from the time that Secretary Vance delivered a hand written invitation from President Carter to Prime Minister Begin to join him and Sadat at Camp David, which Begin accepted immediately.

LEWIS: In retrospect, it is clear that Begin and Sadat had concluded by this time that the negotiating process between their two governments had come to an end and that a meeting between the two of them hosted by Carter might be the only hope for progress. So they both accepted the invitation with alacrity. There was about a month between the invitation having been delivered and the start of the Camp David conference, on September 5, 1978. That month was filled with the kind of events which continually intervened with the peace process -- terrorist attacks by one Palestinian group or another -- which raised Israeli's concerns and heightened the feeling of crisis. It also of course increased the sense of urgency for the peace process to come to some conclusion. There were several bombings in Israel; a huge one took place in Beirut at the PLO headquarters -- presumably an Israeli retaliatory attack. There were also a number of alarums and excursions about Jewish settlements -- a subject that was always highly provocative.

One of the terrorist incidents which had a major impact in Israel was an attack on an El Al

airlines crew outside a London hotel on August 20. The Israelis mounted retaliatory strikes against Palestinian centers in Lebanon. There were rallies in Israel in early September by the so called "Peace Now" movement to encourage Begin to be flexible at Camp David. There were statements by Arik Sharon about Israeli intentions to establish new settlements on the West bank which angered both Sadat and Carter. Then, a week later, the Israeli cabinet announced that it was postponing any new settlements until after Camp David. This was both a policy of caution and a warning of what would happen if the Camp David negotiations failed.

I returned to Washington about ten days in advance of the Camp David meetings. I worked during this period on briefing papers for the President and the Secretary with our Washington negotiators -- Harold Saunders and Roy Atherton from State and Bill Quandt from the NSC staff -- and Ambassador Eilts, who was then our representative in Cairo. There were a number of preliminary meetings. Carter was mapping out with the White House staff a very careful game plan for the conference. He was calling all the shots and was trying to figure ahead of time how to handle this unique diplomatic venture. He decided to have only small delegations at Camp David from the three countries involved. He was going to "lock up" the three delegations for ten days or so until they had really reached agreement. He had trouble getting agreement from the Israelis and the Egyptians on this process, but they finally acquiesced and agreed that there wouldn't be any coming or going from Camp David and that no one would speak to the press except the American press spokesman who would clear ahead of time any statements that he might make with his Egyptian and Israeli counterparts. He would be the only channel to the press. In retrospect, this Carter decision, which he forced on the other parties, was instrumental in determining the outcome of the negotiations. The tensions in Israel and Egypt were so high, particularly in Israel's domestic turbulent political atmosphere, that had there been real-time information leaking out in the Israeli press -- this might have applied to the Arab world as well -- the pressures on Begin and Sadat would have been so great that one or the other would have had to leave before any agreements could be reached.

Q: Would you credit Carter for that strategy?

LEWIS: As far as I know, it was Carter's idea. I don't know for sure; someone else may have suggested it, but he certainly adopted it. It was a very shrewd move and quite central in the outcome.

With regard to the preliminaries, there were phones at Camp David, which the Israelis assumed, and the Egyptians perhaps as well, would be monitored. From what Carter and others said subsequently, I do not believe that to have been the case. It was suggested that the phone calls be monitored, but Carter decided that it would not be done. But the Israelis assumed that they would be monitored and thought that the Egyptians would make the same assumption. This also inhibited the "leaking" which might have occurred over the phones otherwise. There were a few bits that trickled out, but very little accurate information left Camp David during the conference.

On September 1 -- Friday -- Hermann Eilts and I were invited to have lunch with the President at the Roosevelt Room in the White House. Vance, Mondale, Harold Brown, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Hamilton Jordan also attended. Carter asked us to stay for the NSC meeting that would follow lunch. That NSC meeting consisted of the luncheon group plus Stan Turner (CIA) and

General David Jones (JCS). At the lunch, after much jocularly and much good humor on the part of all, Carter then conducted a session in which he attempted to elicit from Eilts and me, alternatively, predictions on how Sadat and Begin might react to various proposals or situations that might arise during the conference. Carter was extremely well briefed; he was really on top of the material and was knowledgeable of all aspects -- having been immersed almost continuously with the problem for eighteen months. Therefore, he knew much about Sadat and Begin already; he had met them before and understood their political constraints. He was particularly interested in overcoming the psychological barrier that had been erected in the past six-eight months in the aftermath of Sadat's trip to Jerusalem -- things had gone off the track in that period and the Sadat-Begin relationships had become increasingly tense. They had not met since Christmas Day of 1977. The State officials were by and large rather pessimistic about what could be achieved at Camp David. Carter had asked State to prepare a set of goals for what might be achieved. I remember that during the lunch, Carter indicated that he thought the goals were far too modest and that he was setting his sights considerably higher. He was aiming for a full peace, not a partial or intermediary solution. I thought at the time that it was very wise for Carter to shoot high, although I also was not as optimistic as the President as what might be realistically expected. I notice from my notes for this period that I shared Carter's qualified optimism more than some of the other advisors. I felt that all parties had too much riding on the conference to let it fail, but it was still up to Carter to put a viable package together, which was terrifically difficult task. As we were leaving the Cabinet Room, Carter took Eilts and me aside and complimented us on how well we were representing him to our respective country's governments. That was a very nice touch.

On September 5, I met Begin at the airport. In the helicopter that took us from Andrews Air Force Base to Camp David, Begin was very keyed up. He was almost manic in the way he was approaching the conference. He was very excited. Ezer Weizman was very jumpy; he thought that Begin was too confident and he was very worried. He thought if the conference went badly, Begin would become very defiant, which would have been characteristic. Weizman worried about the potential problems ahead. Dayan, as always, was very contained and reserved. He like all the other Israelis was very tense.

What actually happened at Camp David has been well described in Bill Quandt's book, which is the best single treatment of the whole negotiating process. I am not going to repeat what is in the book. Quandt, in writing his book, had access not only to all of Brzezinski's notes as well as his own -- he was there as a key player -- but Carter later made most of his personal notes available as well. The President took detailed notes in long hand after every session, so that if you take Quandt's book and Carter's and Vance's and Brzezinski's memoirs, you have a very exhaustive description of how the conference progressed from the American point of view. There were no great contradictions among these four books. Unfortunately, there is no analogous record from the Egyptians -- there is nothing at all from there -- and from the Israeli side whose views are only included in Dayan's and Weizman's memoirs, both of which were censored by the Israelis themselves. At least in Dayan's case, the description of the negotiating process is not as frank or open as it might have been -- he was a very careful man about what he wrote. Begin has never written a word. The key problem in understanding Camp David from the Egyptian and Israeli points of view is the absence of any indication of Begin's thought process. We don't have a first hand view of that at all. We had to infer it from conversations. I doubt whether Begin will ever

write his views.

In light of this wealth of information about Camp David, I am going to limit my comments to my own perspective, without trying to describe the conference in any detail. The U.S. delegation consisted of Carter, Jordan, Brzezinski, Quandt, Vance, Saunders, Atherton, Eilts and myself. Off and on, Harold Brown would join for a session and then return to Washington. Mondale stood in for Carter at meetings in Washington, but he also came up on several occasions, particularly when things were getting tense with the Israelis because he had a very good relationship with them. Carter thought that Mondale might be helpful with the Israelis. Dennis Clift, who was in Defense at the time, was there on occasions. Eilts and I were the designated liaison officials with the two other delegations, although we all intermingled. The Camp David cabins were quite confining. Initially, the main meeting was the Carter-Begin-Sadat session which was attended only by the three principals. There were only two or three such meetings during the first couple of days. Carter concluded after the initial round of meetings that the more they were together, the more difficult it would become. Sadat was expressing the extreme Egyptian position; Begin was presenting the extreme Israeli positions. They were talking past each other and angering each other. Carter was trying to keep the meetings constructive and soon concluded that it was essential to work through the delegations. He would shuttle back and forth between Sadat and Begin, but would not bring them together again until there were some constructive results foreseeable. That was a brilliant decision by Carter. The end result was that the Camp David conference developed into "proximity" talks which was a familiar pattern in Arab-Israeli negotiations. Although we were all together in Camp David and did eat together in the same dining room, the Egyptians would sit at one end of the room at their own table and the Israelis at the other end at their own table. Ezer Weizman and one or two other Israelis tried hard to engender some spirit of conviviality and moved around the room. He had some success, but not a great deal. Sadat remained in his cabin the whole time except for walks in the woods. He never came to the dining room; he never went to the pool hall; he never went to the movies; he didn't socialize at all. Begin did come to the dining room most of the time with his delegation, but he didn't get a chance to interact with Sadat. I assume that in part is why Sadat didn't come to the dining room; he didn't want to participate in any more unpleasant bilateral discussions. Carter would typically eat in his own cabin with his wife who was with him

Q: Would you say that Eilts was a highly professional career officer representing the United States and was not an advocate for the Egyptians? And same for you and the Israelis?

LEWIS: I think that was the case. Inevitably, our particular contribution was the intimate knowledge of the governments and countries to which we were assigned. We could explain to the American delegation the limits that both Sadat and Begin were working within. I am sure that on occasion I have been regarded by some as pro-Israeli, but I believe that I have been very professional. Hermann and I got along extremely well; the American delegation had worked together for eighteen months and by this time had become a close knit team. Carter was clearly the quarterback. He was setting the strategy working closely with Cy Vance. Brzezinski was also closely involved in the whole process, but at Camp David he was less prominent than Vance by a wide margin. Vance relied heavily on Saunders as the chief draftsman of the various proposals which we ultimately began to submit. Atherton, Quandt, Eilts and I made our contributions especially on the way to shape the proposals to become more acceptable to the other parties. The

process operated in alternative meetings. Carter was very good about debriefings. When he met with Begin or Sadat, he often had Vance with him. If he didn't, he would immediately brief Vance and Brzezinski. Then Vance would debrief the rest of the American delegation. Since it had become apparent early that neither the Egyptian draft proposal nor the Israeli one had any chance of acceptance by the other side, Carter offered to have the U.S. delegation draft a proposal. From that point on, all negotiations were based on the "single draft" which essentially required the Americans to produce a draft of a set of principles. Then the American delegation would meet with one of the other delegations to discuss it and then would follow the procedure with the second delegation. Sometime, we would just present the draft and let the other delegations sit in their cabins to discuss it for hours on end. Then we would meet with one delegation to get its reaction and then with the other for the same assessment. Then we would modify the draft to take into account the reactions of both the Egyptian and Israeli delegations. The draft went through thirteen or perhaps even more revisions in this way before the final version was agreed.

There were some very interesting sessions in this thirteen days and nights. In between sessions we held tennis matches to relieve the tensions. On the second night, Carter joined the American delegation at about ten o'clock after having watched the movie. He spent about two and half hours with the whole American delegation, describing his impressions of the initial meeting between Sadat, Begin and himself. He outlined what he saw the strategy for the rest of the conference to be; he described the personalities and their positions and assessed the prospects. He also told us at that time about some very sensitive concessions that Sadat had made to him privately for Carter's use with Begin whenever Carter felt that they would be effective. It was an extraordinary meeting. Carter dealt with all of us as part of his team. That was flattering to me and to Eilts. He revealed a lot more about his views, his strategy and other people than he had done previously, except perhaps to his own immediate inner White House circle. I think Carter had become over the months since taking office, considerably more understanding of and sympathetic to Begin than he had been at the beginning and certainly since he had seen him in Washington in March in one of those dreadful meetings mentioned earlier. He had acquired a personal respect and admiration for Begin even though the latter often drove Carter up a wall with his legalisms and his rhetoric on Jewish history and his other preoccupations. It was clear that Carter was insisting that Sadat and Begin remain if at all possible at Camp David until the end of the road had been reached.

Sadat had adopted what I considered a brilliant strategy in dealing with Carter; that strategy culminated at Camp David. Sadat was uninterested in details; he was interested only in the broad principles. Begin was very interested in the details and every language change was significant to Begin. So Begin took a real interest in the drafting and re-drafting of every document; Sadat took less interest, but listened to his staff. His staff, which had unanimously objected to Sadat coming to Camp David at all, felt he was in a very tough position and didn't really want to agree to anything. Begin's staff was very eager for an agreement and their strategy throughout was designed to bring Begin around to something that was acceptable to others and viable from the Israeli point of view. Therefore, the strategy of the two delegations were almost mirror images. Camp David succeeded in part because Sadat over-ruled all of his advisors. Begin ultimately acquiesced in certain concessions that his delegation had urged on him and which Carter was pressing for. Sadat's technique was to express full confidence in Carter's understanding of

Egypt's situation and full reliance on Carter's unwillingness to do anything that would hurt Egypt. He implicitly and explicitly put himself in Carter's hands which of course was very flattering to Carter. Begin on the other hand looked with a very gimlet eye on the crosses on the "t"s and the dots on the "i"s of anything that Carter would suggest, which did not create the same sympathetic attitude that Sadat's approach did. Apparently, in the course of the early meetings, Sadat given Carter a number of specific fall-back positions that he would agree to if Carter told him that they were necessary to achieve an agreement. He left the tactics entirely up to Carter.

Q: Were either the Egyptian or Israeli delegations hamstrung at all by the curse of lawyers or were they diplomats mostly?

LEWIS: That is an interesting question. Everybody in the Egyptian delegation except Sadat was a lawyer. There were several lawyers, including Begin, in the Israeli delegation and they were very legalistic. The American delegations had only one lawyer -- Cy Vance. He had decided not to take the Department's legal advisor. Of course Vance is a renowned international lawyer himself and he felt that he was enough for our delegation. In retrospect, I am not sure that was good decision. The American delegation should have had a lawyer who was not the chief negotiator who kept his trained eye on the texts, but that was Vance's decision. In fact, because Begin was so legalistic and the Israeli delegation contained one lawyer in particular by the name of Aharon Barak, who had just resigned as Attorney General and had just been appointed to the Israeli Supreme Court, but had been assigned to the delegation before taking on his new responsibilities, made the difference in the conference's success or failure. The reason is very interesting. As we got half-way through the conference and there were still some unresolved issues -- essentially we had reached a stalemate -- Carter developed a brilliant tactical idea. One day, he approached both Begin and Sadat separately and told each of them that the conference was not progressing and that time was running. He asked that each President designate one person from each delegation to become a member of a working group with him to see whether those three people could not develop a draft which would satisfy all parties. It is rare, if indeed it ever happened for a Chief of State to chair a working group consisting of subordinate members of other delegations. This must have been unique even in diplomatic history. Begin designated Barak, in whom he had enormous confidence because they both had legal minds -- Begin had great respect for legal language and lawyers. Having seen Barak work as Attorney General, Begin knew him to be a man of great integrity. He also knew that Barak was rather more dovish than he himself was and that he would be working to get an agreement, rather than accepting failure. It may have been that subliminally Begin chose Barak for the right reasons. In any case, it was a significant choice. Osama el Baz was selected by Sadat. Carter met on several occasions with the two of them; sometime he would also add Vance, but there were no other Israelis or Egyptians. What the this informal group was doing was to focus on the sticky issues in the drafts that the larger delegation meetings were unable to resolve.

Clearly, Barak and Osama el Baz were often in an awkward position. They acted "ad referendum" for their bosses, but the presence of the President of the United States weighted heavily on them to reconcile their differences. It had its effect. Some of the key problems that confronted Begin had to do with language -- for example, the question of the "legitimate rights of the Palestinians" which had to be in the final text from the Egyptian point of view in order to assure the Palestinians that they were not being double-crossed. The language however could not

imply acceptance of an independent state for the Palestinians. Begin was not prepared to accept that. There were several phrases which had to meet Begin's legal views. Barak crafted language which met Carter's and Egyptian concerns and then he would explain the language to Begin in legal terms which would persuade Begin that he was not making any fundamental concessions to his basic principles. Begin could accept such language as long as it didn't imply more than he was prepared to imply. I think only Barak could have done that. So it was crucial that Barak was there -- at the right place and at the right time. I am not a great fan of lawyers who involve themselves in foreign policy, but in this case, having an Israeli lawyer was essential.

Carter was very rough on the subject of Israeli settlements; he always had been. He viewed them as illegal and unjustified, but he had become much more realistic about what could be gotten from Begin on this subject. That of course was one of the major issues in the conference. At the meeting of the American delegation on September 6, which I described earlier, he said that a freeze on settlements was the most that he could expect from Begin. There was no hope of obtaining Israeli agreement to withdrawal or dismantle them. He was convinced that Sadat would not give up on getting all of Sinai back. There was no chance that the Israeli settlements could be left there. Carter was also realistic about Israeli security and political problems. I felt after that meeting that Carter was over-optimistic about the chances of changing of Begin's mind based on his own persuasiveness. As it turned out, I was wrong. He had succeeded by the end of the conference to move Begin away from a number of his long held views.

Q: Were the settlements genuine at that time? That is to say were they settlements that Begin favored for solidification purposes and not just expressions of right wing views of history?

LEWIS: The history of settlements is a long and complicated one. By Camp David time, there were only perhaps ten thousand settlers on the West Bank. Sharon had pushed the settlement process during the Begin regime quite vigorously. We had been screaming and demanding that the process be halted, but had been ignored. There had been some periods of freeze, some periods of double-talk. Settlements had always been a sore subject between us. There weren't nearly as many then as there are today. The settlements then were sponsored by the Gush Emunim religious right wing groups and others. Nevertheless, in 1979, there were relatively few settlements for an area as large as the West Bank. It was apparent to us and to Sadat that if settlements continued to be developed it would be increasingly difficult to get agreement on the Palestinian issue. Begin was determined not to yield an inch on the right to settle; Jews could live anywhere -- New York, the West Bank, their ancient homeland. In his view, the right of Jews to live anywhere in Palestine was unrelated to the ultimate political decisions; that right could never be surrendered. It was a difficult argument that had gone on for months and years and at Camp David. It was clear that Begin was prepared to slow down and perhaps even stop for a while in order to get a peace treaty with Egypt, but he was never prepared to agree to a permanent freeze or cessation of settlements, which is what Carter tried to get from him. This was the issue, as we shall see, which most soured the Carter-Begin relationships after Camp David.

There were some amusing side-lights to the conference. For example, one member of the Egyptian delegation was a General Touhami -- the same gentleman who had met previously secretly with Dayan twice in Morocco. He had been an original member of Sadat's officers group. He showed up at dinner on the first night and sat at the American table. He was a

fascinating character -- a real mystic -- who took great pleasure with relating his success as a young man in mastering his bodily functions. He described the time when he confronted a lion in a cave; by the sheer force of his will and his burning eyes, had cowed the lion into submission. He claimed that he had also trained himself to stop his heart at will for as much as two minutes at a time. He offered to demonstrate at the table, but the Americans were not too enthusiastic, although there was a doctor on the premises. All in all, the General was a very unusual participant in the conference. I never knew what role he played behind the scenes, but Sadat had a lot of confidence in his discretion and I am sure he played some role.

Interspersed in these days and night of meetings -- they often went late into the night because either Begin or Sadat would meet with Carter in the early evening after which we would get debriefed and then spend hours trying to redraft based on the latest assumptions as to where the Israeli and Egyptian leaders stood. Carter also organized entertainment in addition to the movies. One evening, we had a fabulous performance by the Marine Drum and Bugle Corps including the silent drill with fixed bayonets which they did on the near-by play ground. There was not a lot of joviality that evening because the negotiations were quite tense; so the Marines offered a welcomed change of pace. One evening, the Carters gave a beautiful reception at the Laurel Lodge with strings. Sadat and Begin even exchanged a few friendly words on that occasion. I had a good chat with Sadat that evening. I found him very dejected with Begin's preoccupation with what he called "old language and old concepts". I tried to point out to Sadat how much Begin had moved since June, 1977 when I first met him. I also told him that i thought that the Israelis were anxious to reach a settlement, but Sadat was quite pessimistic at that time. He was not persuaded.

The preliminaries took place between September 5 and 8. We produced our first draft on September 9. Then the American papers began to be shuttled back and forth between delegations. The weekend was spent at Gettysburg, where Carter had taken Sadat and Begin. That was the only time we left Camp David during the conference. That was a nice diversion and provided an opportunity for all to ponder the cost of war. It was a good psychological touch.

Q: Did they watch that electronic display?

LEWIS: They didn't watch that. They went around to a number of points on the battle-field and were briefed by the Park Rangers. Carter talked about the battle a little bit. Weizman gave some disputations on military history. There was a nice feeling of interaction going on. That was a good touch. Carter was seeking continually to break the tensions and not letting them break out.

Q: Would you say that Camp David or similar a site was an essential imperative?

LEWIS: Absolutely. The site had to be isolated. On Friday night -- the eighth -- things were going badly. The Israelis had a Shabbat dinner that night and had invited Vance, Brzezinski and me to join them. It was a very nice, relaxed, religiously-tinged evening which helped to improve their relationships with Brzezinski especially, who was somewhat ephemeral in his moods about the Israelis -- he was sometimes very critical, sometimes very understanding. Late that Friday evening, after dinner, at about one o'clock, I got into a long and probably too candid conversation with Simcha Dinitz who was at that time the Israeli Ambassador in Washington. He was part of

the Israeli delegation. He was playing a somewhat parallel role to mine. We compared notes about the ominous situation that seemed to be developing and what might be done about it. I told him something that I had heard from Carter and that was that it had been Begin who had insisted on continuing the trilateral meetings among the three leaders, long after they were obviously counter-productive. Begin had not suggested that Weizman be brought into the discussions. Dinitz was thunder-struck and apparently on the next day he told Dayan what I had said. Dayan then told Begin, who called me Saturday evening in clear anger, categorically denying that he had ever insisted on continuing the trilateral meetings. That episode says something about the virtue of candor late at night during negotiations. I still think that my report was correct, but it exposed the problems within the Israeli delegation. Both Dayan and Weizman were anxious to reach an agreement; Begin was unhappy with a lot of their advice. They were pressing him a great deal in their own different ways, although Dayan was the much more important player at Camp David.

Weizman's main role was to keep some kind of relationship with the Egyptians particularly when tensions were high. He was the only Israeli, for example, who saw Sadat outside the receptions and the general meetings. He went more than once to Sadat's cabin and tried to explain some of the nuances of the Israeli concerns. He also asked Sadat to meet with Dayan. Sadat had, ever since his visit to Jerusalem, a kind of estrangement with Dayan. He liked Weizman; he never trusted Dayan which may be explained by Dayan's role in the wars and his reputation as a somewhat tricky fellow. In any case, Dayan, who was constructive and helpful in trying to reach an agreement, was alienated from Sadat while Weizman wasn't. Weizman wanted to change that and he finally persuaded Sadat to invite Dayan to his cabin for a conversation. That ultimately happened, but didn't produce much change in the views held by either. That complicated psychological relationships because Weizman had access to Sadat, but it was Dayan who was favored by us as the negotiator. Begin was standing on principle and resented somewhat the role that his lieutenants were playing. That may be one explanation for the outburst I received from Begin Saturday night.

Q: Were Sadat and Weizman communicating in English?

LEWIS: They were talking directly to each other without interpreters. Everyone was talking in English. The conference was conducted in English, which was another interesting dimension. Among themselves, the Israelis obviously spoke in Hebrew and the Egyptians in Arabic, but all the interactions were in English. All the Israelis had a good command of English; Begin's was excellent and Dayan's, although somewhat rough, was perfectly serviceable.

The conference went on for days and days as did the tennis games, the walks in the woods, the meals, the pool games, the drafts, the meetings. At a certain point, Carter decided that he would take in his own hand a part of the problem. There were two sets of issues. One concerned the final deal that could be reached in the peace process over the Sinai and the other concerned the nature of the framework of principles needed for the settlement of the broader conflict with Syria, Jordan, the Palestinians. It had to be a framework that Egypt could endorse and would encourage the others to ultimately enter into negotiations with Israel. This framework included the autonomy concept which made it very difficult to hammer out. Most of the negotiations were about the framework. The question of the Sinai after a few days became fairly clear. Carter

himself produced a brief draft of a framework for peace between Egypt and Israel. He worked on that draft separately with Barak and El Baz. The delegations continued to struggle with the broader principles and related issues.

There was one event that occurred that I remember still vividly. We had met with Carter after dinner and he was very frustrated, particularly with Begin's obstinacy. As Carter left the cabin to return to his own, he asked me to walk with him. He said in a very frustrated and angry manner: "I don't think Begin wants peace. He really doesn't". I told him that he was wrong, that Begin and all Israelis wanted peace above all. They had been wanting nothing else for years. I told the President that the issue is not the objective, but the price that the Israelis were prepared to pay in addition to the political risks that Begin was prepared to run. Those were the problems, not whether they wanted peace. Carter mumbled and said: "I suppose you are right". He had almost reached the conclusion at that point that Begin was looking for a failure of the conference. That view was beginning to affect Carter's psychology. But I think he accepted that his emotional view may not have been correct and his reaction was a matter of a moment and had caused an outburst, but that intellectually he accepted my analysis.

On about Wednesday of the second week, September 13, lengthy meetings had been taking place and Carter had spent hours and hours with his drafting group of Barak and El Baz -- while others were just marking time -- we began to get hints from members of the Israeli delegation that Begin might indeed sign eventually. That was not the impression that he had given Carter on Tuesday night, which had been a very difficult meeting concentrating on the settlements issue and on a phrase in the preamble of the ultimate framework on the unacceptability of the acquisition of territories by force, which was very important to the Egyptians, but an anathema to Begin, because it suggested that however you obtained territory -- even in a legitimate war of defense -- you would have to surrender it. He had always argued that there had been a lot of other cases in the world in which wars had ended with transfer of territory. The question for Begin was how the territory was acquired -- what had led to the acquisition. But the Egyptians had picked up a phrase from the U.N. and insisted on having it in the agreement, implying that the Israelis would eventually have to surrender the whole of the West Bank and Gaza. Begin found that very hard to accept, although eventually the phrase was included in the preamble because Barak had convinced Begin that its inclusion there did not make it binding. That episode is an illustration of the point I had made earlier about Barak's role.

There was another interesting event that came to light that Wednesday evening. After lunch, I was sitting with Begin and several other Israelis. Begin said to me: "Sam, do you know what the President said to me last night? He told me that Sadat had told him that he would never sign an agreement as long as I was Prime Minister. He was asking Carter to have me removed". Begin showed great indignation and obviously had had his pride hurt severely. He then told me that he had told Carter to make it clear to Sadat that the Israeli Prime Minister is elected by the Israeli people and that would continue to be the case, whether that pleased the Egyptian President or not. Begin was furious when he heard Sadat's real views of himself from Carter. He categorized Sadat as a hypocrite because Sadat had been warm and friendly when they had been together. I wondered myself why Carter had repeated Sadat's comments to Begin because it was bound to be a very incendiary statement. It was bad enough that Begin had heard it, but it was made worse when the other Israelis heard about it. If the Camp David conference would have failed, Begin

had a perfect vindication to use when he returned to Israel. If the Sadat comment had in fact been made, it would also have blackened his reputation in the U.S. I thought Carter may have made a major error. In the same conversation, Begin also recounted an exchange he had with Brzezinski the previous morning. He had asked Zbig who had developed the phrase "Palestinian aspirations". Zbig said that it had come out of the Vienna formula and that Peres seemed to have liked it. As background, you should know that only a few weeks before Camp David, but after the conference had all been arranged, Peres, as leader of the opposition had met with Sadat in Vienna, under the auspices of Chancellor Kreisky. Peres and Sadat had reached an understanding on a formulation of principles for peace which was much more forthcoming than anything that Begin was prepared to endorse. Peres immediately leaked this understanding as soon as he had returned to Jerusalem and had told his colleagues that if Begin could not make peace with Sadat, he just had proved that he and Sadat could reach a meeting of minds. In any democratic system, such a ploy would have been provocative, but it was very destructive in Israel, given the history of the tense relationship between Peres and Begin -- the latter having succeeded the former as Prime Minister and having insulted him in the Knesset. For Zbig to have quoted to Begin language that Peres approved and that we were pushing was clearly tactically very unwise. Begin was scathing; he wanted to know what the Socialist International was doing in these negotiations. He wondered how Zbig would feel if the Republican party was drafting the U.S. position for the negotiations. When the history of the phrase was checked later, it was found that it had not been included in the Vienna declaration at all. It had been a statement that had been dropped during the Sadat-Peres consultations, but Peres asserted that he believed that Sadat wanted to keep that language in as a fall back. In retrospect, I believe that the phrase was actually adopted by the Socialist International at a meeting in Vienna which had been the cover used by Sadat and Peres to have their consultations. Since it was in an international declaration, both Sadat and Peres could accept it as a basis for an agreement. It looked to me at the time as another tactical goof which could have had some deleterious consequences. I checked later with Vance on Begin's comments and he agreed that the President had made a bad error in repeating Sadat's words. He said he had talked to Carter about it, but I don't know that any damage repair efforts were ever undertaken. But these are illustrations of the kind of events that take place in lengthy negotiations; you have to always keep the nuances in mind. On the other hand, it is surprising that there were no more slips during the thirteen days.

During this whole period at Camp David, there was a major diversion -- the big blow up in Lebanon. That sort of thing often seems to happen during peace conferences. There was also a lot of trouble in Iran -- this was the beginning of the Shah's period of decline. Carter was therefore distracted some of the time, but didn't allow himself to be distracted for any length of time. The conference was marked by hills of optimism followed by valleys of pessimism. By September 13, the Israelis are in despair and the Egyptians are feeling better since the latest drafts had begun to move in their direction. I remember that I noted to myself that I was arguing the "Israeli problem" too consistently with my colleagues while discussing the drafts. I thought that my credibility was ebbing with my delegation. We had prepared a new draft to take care of Sadat's concerns that the final document refer to something close to self-determination. I had told everybody that I didn't think that Begin could swallow such thoughts and that he might explode. And indeed he did, during a conversation with Vance that evening. Vance pressured Begin very hard when he was invited by Begin to join him in the latter's cabin to get his reaction to the new draft. At one point Vance told Begin that it might be better to drop the whole thing and leave.

Begin backed off a little at that juncture. Begin was something of a bully; if he thought he had someone on the ropes, he was not adverse at pushing hard. That evening, everybody in the Israeli delegation was discouraged and were seriously discussing leaving. Meanwhile, in private, Sadat was continuing to give Weizman a very hard line. He also gave Dayan a very hard line. Sadat continued to stick with his strategy -- no concessions directly to the Israelis, but giving some to Carter which then could be used with the Israelis if he chose to do so. For example, Sadat had told Carter that the resolution of the future of the settlements in Sinai could be postponed -- the Israelis wanted to retain them after withdrawal. This issue could be discussed when the peace treaty itself would be discussed; it would be sufficient that the Israelis at Camp David would just agree to dismantle them at some time.

On Thursday, September 14, the leit motiv had been set during a Carter-Sadat morning walk. Sadat had drawn his bottom line. We tried during the day to draft a document that would meet Sadat's needs. When Begin saw that draft, he exploded as I mentioned earlier. We made no progress on that day, except to leave the Israelis very depressed. By the morning of Friday, the 14th, it looked like everything would slip away. There may have been parts of the draft that Begin would approve; he certainly would not sign the document as it then stood. It didn't look like a deal could be struck. Begin was very grim and defiant that day. Barak, Weizman and Dayan were working very hard to save something. Vance relayed to us Carter's instructions to prepare to wrap-up on Sunday. He wanted the chronology prepared, a speech prepared, a "Questions and Answers" paper for press interview, talking points for Congress, etc.

It should not be forgotten that it was clear to the Israelis at the beginning that if the conference were to fail, some one would be blamed. Carter had decided that failure would be blamed on the Israelis. Bill Quandt had been assigned to write a speech, on which he worked throughout the conference, in which Carter would explain what had happened and why the conference had failed. The burden of failure in that speech was put on the Israelis. The Israelis knew that or at least they sensed it. So on Friday, everyone was beginning to work on the end-game assuming a conference failure. In the meantime, Foreign Minister Kamal and the Egyptians were considerably more up-beat, probably because they hoped for failure. Carter had told everybody that the conference would end Sunday evening regardless. During Friday afternoon, he sent Mondale to see both Begin and Sadat, asking that their final suggestions be provided by that evening so that the U.S. could put together a final proposal on Saturday. That proposal would be a "take it or leave it" draft to be either signed or dismissed on Sunday. On Monday, Carter would deliver an address to the nation before a joint session of Congress. Begin was expecting to stay in the U.S. for a couple of days after the conference in Washington and New York and would therefore be in the country when Carter would make his speech.

By Friday midnight, there were a few glimmers of light, although I recall that none of us had been invited to Sabbath dinner that night. Barak had made a super-human effort with Begin on the language dealing with the Palestinian problem and had made some progress. The question of the Sinai settlements remained intractable. Everybody realized that Saturday was to be "crunch time". I had breakfast Saturday with Weizman and Barak who were very critical of our draft because of the effect it had had on Begin. They were very frustrated, especially Weizman. Dayan, typically, during the night had been trying to find a way to convince us and Sadat to postpone until later the resolution of the Sinai settlements. Dayan always looked for a way

around an obstacle if it couldn't be removed. He went to see Carter along with Vance Saturday mid-morning. This was part of a long series of meetings -- Mondale-Weizman, Mondale-Sadat, Vance-Sadat, Mondale-Begin -- intended to deliver Carter's views. It was the President's intention to give the U.S. view of what happened at Camp David before Sadat and Begin had a chance to give theirs.

On Saturday afternoon, there was a meeting with Weizman and Dayan concerning the Sinai security issues. We had agreed tentatively to build a new military airfield in Israel if the Israelis would agree to give up their airfields in Sinai within three years and if the settlements issue were resolved. I spent the day, very frustrated, working on a number of relatively minor problems. In the evening, we got together with the President to review the situation. He outlined his strategy for winding up the conference still hoping that a deal could be salvaged, but he was obviously exasperated with Begin and didn't mind showing it. After dinner, Vance and I met with Barak and Dinitz to discuss some alternative language about the West Bank and Gaza issues that the Israelis had provided. Barak conveyed some significant movement on Begin's part which they said that they had extracted from him with great difficulty. Weizman burst into the meeting to give an emotional account of an half-hour meeting he had just held with Sadat during which he had pleaded that the Sinai settlements not be the stumbling block which would send everyone home empty handed to "prepare for war". He argued that all other issues could be resolved and that time was necessary to convince the Knesset to move the settlements -- at least that was what it sounded like. Weizman thought that he had made an impact on Sadat, although we found out later that Sadat was apparently confused by Weizman's presentation. Nevertheless, it produced a good reaction. Weizman thought that Sadat was at the point of leaving the conference before their discussion. We now know that Sadat was apparently prepared to leave Thursday night, but was dissuaded by Carter.

We worked through most of Friday night in redrafting and sat around most of Saturday waiting for the conclusion of a climactic Carter-Begin meeting that was also attended by Vance and Barak and Dayan. That meeting broke up at 12:30 a.m. Sunday morning after about five hours. It was this meeting that sealed the deal at Camp David. It also planted the seeds for the break-down of relationships between Carter and Begin not very much later. The two reached a kind of agreement on a draft, but as we were debriefed at one o'clock in the morning, it was not immediately apparent that a deal had in fact been struck. We understood that some polishing was necessary, but didn't realize that Carter had made the essential break-through. For the Sinai agreement, it was agreed to leaving the settlements question to be put to the Knesset. That was a formality since Begin had said all along that he would not agree to remove the settlements, but would be prepared to put the issue before the Knesset as a make-or-break issue on an otherwise sealed agreement. It was actually a way for Begin to save face because he knew perfectly well that if he had peace with Egypt in hand, the Knesset would not allow the Sinai settlements to stand in the way of final signature. But Begin would not take the responsibility of making the decision himself. The general framework that was agreed upon was pretty good. I think Begin would have come out ahead had he accepted the declaration of principles that Sadat had offered back in December at Ismalia. He would not have accepted at that time the phrases that he so much disliked, such as "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people", and a procedure on autonomy which led more in the direction of independence that he was willing to accept.

It was clearly a great achievement. Carter, Vance, Barak and all the others were rubbing their eyes at the success. The next morning, Sunday, Sadat went for a walk with Carter. Carter apparently told him at that time what he had achieved with Begin the night before. He told Sadat that he had gotten Begin's agreement to freeze settlements during the negotiation period following Camp David. Carter understood Begin to agree that this freeze would last until the negotiations about autonomy were completed; i.e., until autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza was in place. That was a misunderstanding and that is what subsequently soured the relationship.

During Sunday, we were putting the final touches on the draft. Carter was preparing to launch his campaign with the other two leaders to get them to the signing point. Sunday, in fact, turned into a cliff-hanger, not a wind-down as it should have. That I gather is common to many conferences in which you think you have a deal, only to find out at the last minute that there are still issues to be resolved. That is what happened at Camp David on the final day. We thought everything had been pretty well resolved. Then the all of a sudden, the issue of Jerusalem exploded unexpectedly. Since no meeting of the minds was possible on the issue. it had been agreed by the three delegations that each would state its own view of the problem in a letter to be attached to the agreement. Actually, we had all agreed on some language at one point -- a simple statement that Jerusalem should remain undivided, the rights to the holy places should be respected and that Jerusalem's ultimate status should be left to further negotiations -- all very vague and general -- but Sadat was persuaded Saturday night by his advisors not to agree to that because it was giving away too much for Arab sensitivities. Sadat was convinced that it would have been better to be silent on the subject than to have a the minimal agreement that was achievable. On the basis of our understanding, we had drafted a letter on our position on Jerusalem, addressed to Sadat and Begin. We delivered that letter to the Israelis so that they could see it in advance before they delivered their letter to us. The difficulties arose because Carter and Vance thought that it had been clear to Begin that the U.S. would restate our view on Jerusalem -- that our views would be stated in addition to the Israeli and Egyptian views. The fact that we had to state our views is because that was the understanding we had reached with Sadat in exchange for his approval of dropping the whole issue out of the final Camp David agreement. He knew of course, that our view was somewhat closer to his than it was to that of Israel's and he wanted our view on the public record, even if were to be in a side letter. This was one of the two topics that was discussed in the marathon meeting Saturday night. It is there that the misunderstanding started which is not surprising in light of the weariness of the participants which may have made them miss the nuances. It is a lesson why negotiations should not be carried on too late at night.

So on Sunday morning, Vance read to Dayan the text of our draft letter on Jerusalem which was essentially a summary of statements that Arthur Goldberg and Charles Yost had made to the U.N. previously in 1967 and 1969. Dayan was very upset to hear our position restated so baldly - - namely that the status of Jerusalem was subject to later negotiations, which along with other nuances, implied that we viewed Jerusalem as occupied territory and not an integral part of Israel. Dayan went off to explain it to Begin. He was particularly upset by a phrase which identified East Jerusalem as occupied territory. (We should note that the same issues have recently arisen again and this is now 1990.) Shortly after that meeting broke up at about 12:30 and the Israelis went off to lunch, I got an agitated call from Meir Rosenne, the legal advisor of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and a member of the Israeli delegation. He wanted a copy of our letter immediately, which I brought to him, after carefully marking it "First draft-uncleared".

When I arrived at the Israeli cabin, I found Begin fuming angrily to his colleagues, all of whom looked very worried. Dayan took me aside and described to me Begin's explosion at the idea that the U.S. would put forth its position at this last moment. He urged me to try to convince Vance that our draft had to be killed or that the conference might break down. Begin was furious when he spoke to his delegation. So I went back and reported to Vance, who insisted that Begin had been told of our intentions the night before and had not objected. Carter had given assurances just that Sunday morning that we would state our position in a side letter. The public restatement of our position on Jerusalem was *sine qua non* for Sadat's signature to the final agreement. It was Vance's view that Begin would just have to swallow it. I told Vance that I didn't think he would; he didn't seem to be bluffing. I also told Vance that none of the three Israelis who were present at the Saturday night meeting -- Begin, Dayan and Barak -- would admit that they had heard anything about our intention to restate our views on Jerusalem. I went back to Dayan; Begin was adamant. Finally we got Dayan and Barak to meet with Vance in the pool hall in Holly Cabin. Carter and Mondale suddenly joined in. Then Jordan and Dinitz and Weizman and Saunders and I also joined. It began to be a crowd. Carter was polite, but cool and tough. He said he could not go back on his word to Sadat. He had made known his intentions to make the letter public the night before. He tactfully pointed out that it was not the Israeli responsibility to tell the U.S. whether or where or how it should state its views and policies. The meeting broke up in a pessimistic view. Then Carter picked up a hint from Dayan. He asked Vance to look at the language of our draft letter again to see what could be done to ease Israeli concerns without breaking his commitment to Sadat. In fact, Vance had already realized by then that the original language could not stand and had already commissioned a new draft. It was practically ready when Carter asked for it. The new draft merely said that our new position was as had been stated by Goldberg and Yost, but didn't restate it. This version was eventually accepted by both Begin and Sadat. So the "Jerusalem crisis" was contained and didn't raise its head again at Camp David. This episode was a good illustration of the last minute unexpected events that can blow up towards the end of a conference, which can be resolved, but that at the moment looks like a sure tragedy. In retrospect, I think that the Jerusalem issue could have wrecked the conference because on Sunday morning, although the Israelis were so close to achieving peace with Egypt and would not have wished to have it slip away, Begin might have driven Sadat out of the game inadvertently if he had dragged the meeting out further.

There were more meetings to get the final wording on the Sinai and other issues. At approximately 5:30 p.m., that Sunday afternoon, after the deal had been sealed, we were deluged by a cloud burst which delayed our departure for about an hour. We then took all the documents and got on helicopters to the White House. The Israeli delegation, which I accompanied on their helicopter, was euphoric. Everybody was very happy. The Egyptians were putting up a good front, but they were essentially very unhappy and scared. Many members of the Egyptian delegation genuinely felt they were committing suicide by being party to this peace agreement. They felt that eventually they might lose their lives because of their participation. Kamal had told Sadat two days earlier that he would resign because he couldn't support Sadat's determination to reach agreement. Sadat prevailed on him to stay through the conference. It was clear that Begin's rather obnoxious and difficult negotiating strategy had paid off. I thought then and I still believe now that Israel got a somewhat better deal than Egypt did, but that both sides had made a good many concessions. It was obvious that neither side was totally satisfied which I consider a good negotiating outcome. Begin would have some political problems at home about what he had

given away in Sinai -- the settlements -- and other issues, but I was sure that he could overcome the problems because Labor would certainly support him even if all of the Likud didn't. That is what ultimately happened in the Knesset.

Q: During all of these frenetic days, was anything said to the press? Were there any press available?

LEWIS: The press was not inside Camp David. There were a number staying at the nearest town, but they couldn't get a snip of anything. Approximately once or perhaps twice a day, Jody Powell, who was Carter's press spokesman, would make an agreed-upon statement to the press about progress. It was very anodyne, saying nothing about what was transpiring. There was a press center in that near-by town which he would visit, but essentially never told the press anything.

That Sunday evening, we landed at the Washington Monument helipad at about 9:45 p.m. and motorcaded to the White House. Most everyone went to the East Room for the formal announcement to the world. No one outside the delegations knew that success had been achieved. All the hints coming out of Camp David in the few previous days had been pessimistic. So the outcome of the conference came as a terrific bomb-shell for the press, the Congress, the various publics in Israel and Egypt. Interestingly, when we went up to the East Room, only a couple of members of the Egyptian delegation went. El Baz was one of them, being very faithful to Sadat and happy that the agreement had been reached. Two or three others drifted away so that they wouldn't be photographed. The Israelis were all there. Carter, Begin and Sadat sat on the rostrum. Begin stole the show; he made a warm and witty speech. Sadat gave a formal speech, praising Carter, but not mentioning Begin at all. Then the famous picture was taken; this is the one that got a lot of press play. Begin embraced Carter and then Sadat for a photo opportunity which he was anxious to have on the record. He mouse-trapped Sadat into that picture; Sadat couldn't avoid it. It was a very smooth performance.

It was a great triumph for Carter, but as it turned out it was not to be a happy start for a new Carter-Begin relationship.

Almost immediately after the joyous announcement, we got into an argument with Begin about the interpretation of the framework agreement. The elements became subject to controversy. One was whether any or all of the Israeli forces would withdraw during a five year period -- the language was not entirely clear on this subject. And then came the question of how long the freeze on new settlements on the West Bank would last. As I mentioned earlier, at the climactic Saturday night meeting, Carter had pressed Begin to freeze settlements for the duration of the negotiations. Carter's own notes and Vance's recollections make it clear that Carter, believing that Begin understood, used the term "negotiations" not to cover only the treaty negotiating period -- which were supposed to last only three months -- but the whole subsequent negotiations which include discussion of the autonomy of the West Bank and Gaza -- a negotiation that was never completed. Carter's notes said that Begin had agreed. Carter had asked, according to the notes, Begin to give him those assurances in writing. Begin's recollections, supported by Barak's notes and remembrances which I discussed with him at great length later, was that he had said that he would consider the matter overnight and that he would give Carter his answer in the

morning. Dayan's recollection was somewhere between Carter's and Begin's accounts. But Carter and Vance are absolutely sure that they were right.

The next morning, Sunday morning, a letter from Begin's cabin was delivered to Carter which essentially said that in accordance with their prior night's discussion that he would agree to settlement freeze for the period of the peace treaty negotiations. Carter gave that note to Saunders and said: "That isn't what Begin agreed to last night. The settlements are to be frozen for the whole period of the autonomy negotiations. Take this back to the Israelis and get the right language!". Then Carter went off to his walk with Sadat and told Sadat that he had Begin's agreement to a freeze until the autonomy issue was resolved. In the meantime, Begin, either directly or through an intermediary, told Saunders that he had not agreed to a freeze during the autonomy negotiations, but only that he would consider Carter's proposal and that he would give his answer in the morning. And the letter that morning to Carter was his position. When Carter learned of this, he made what I consider an unfortunate tactical mistake. He was convinced of his own recollection and convinced that a deal had been struck which needed to be sealed right away. He didn't confront Begin directly; he didn't try to clarify the differences. He told Saunders to get the matter straightened out when they returned to Washington and to get the right language then. He left the disagreement unresolved.

When Carter returned to Washington, Carter and Vance continued to rely on Saunders to negotiate with Begin and the Israeli Embassy to resolve the dispute. They were unable to do so. In the meantime, Carter was telling everybody that he had Begin's assurance on the settlements' freeze. He reported so to Congressional leaders. That of course was immediately reported in the press. Begin, either leaked or gave out directly, a contrary version, reflecting his own view of events and agreements -- i.e., that the freeze would only cover the period of negotiations for the peace treaty. It therefore became clear to Carter, Brzezinski and everybody that Begin had not changed his mind. Yet Carter proceeded in a speech to the Congress to state his view of the "freeze" agreement. This only made the disagreement worse. At no point, did Carter try to engage Begin in a dialogue on this issue. He was convinced that he had made a commitment to Sadat that Begin had approved. For whatever reason, he decided not to confront the issue directly, but after I returned to Israel, I kept getting messages to see Begin to "straighten" him out on this issue. I had a number of conversations and talked to all the Camp David principals. I sent messages back trying to explain that I thought there was a genuine misunderstanding on what happened that Saturday night and that there had been a failure of communication in that late night, blurry meeting. I reported that Begin maintained that he had not said what Carter thought he had said; that it was not a matter of bad faith, but a genuine failure of communication in a tough moment in a tough negotiation. Carter became convinced that it was a matter of bad faith and that Begin had changed his mind by Sunday morning. Carter felt that Begin had made a commitment and then welshed on it. To this day, he has not changed his view. Carter's feeling of bad faith and Begin's feeling of injury which grew as time passed poisoned the U.S.-Israeli relationships for the remainder of the Begin administration, during Carter's presidency and even after. The issue is raised in Carter's books and therefore remains an unresolved and nasty element. Moreover, it gave Sadat reason to charge the Israelis with bad faith, which soured the peace treaty and autonomy negotiations which started the following year. It was this Begin "commitment" that governed the psychology of the negotiators.

And another thing happened after the Camp David agreement. Vance was very tired and suffered from back problems. He had to get on an airplane soon after that final Sunday to visit the Middle East to try to sell the agreement to the King of Jordan and the King of Saudi Arabia. Sadat had promised King Hussein that he would keep him informed during the Camp David meeting. He had not done so. He then made an arrangement to see Hussein in Morocco to brief him, but when Hussein saw what the agreement contained, he was so apprehensive and unhappy that he canceled the Morocco meeting. So Sadat didn't play any personal part in persuading the other Arabs to support Camp David. In fact, he made a number of disdainful public statements about how Egypt, the great Arab leader, had found the road to peace which the other Arab states would also have to follow. He was quoted around the Arab world making very disdainful comments about Hussein -- "that dwarf in Amman" as he used to call him. He considered the Saudis as kind of barbarians and not worth a lot of effort for their support. He felt that they should understand that they should follow his lead. So Vance and Roy Atherton, who accompanied him, did their very best to bring the Saudis and the Jordanians aboard immediately to see the opportunity that the Camp David accords provided the Palestinians if they would only accept the idea of autonomy and their future after five-years of self-rule. They were unsuccessful.

Hussein kept his powder dry for a while. While Vance was in Amman, Hussein asked him how the U.S. interpreted this clause or that clause. Vance made what I consider a grave tactical error. He should have said that each side may have somewhat different interpretations on a number of clauses, but that the text stands and speaks for itself. The accords were the beginning of a process during which the various interpretations would be melded. Instead, Vance told King Hussein that if he were to give us the questions, we would take them back and provide him with authoritative American interpretations. Those were drafted and approved by Carter. Hal Saunders was sent to the Middle East to deliver them to the King. Hussein found some reassuring, some not; in any case they were not reassuring enough to convince him to join the process, but at least the door was kept open. The agreement itself called for Jordanian participation in the next phase.

After Amman, Saunders came to Israel and met with Begin. I had already given Begin a copy of our position papers which were given to Hussein. Saunders had come to Jerusalem to try to discuss our positions with Begin. But Begin saw the whole exercise as a complete betrayal and an undermining of his position. He thought that the U.S. had no right what-so-ever to give authoritative interpretations of language that had been so carefully tailored to the concerns of two other parties. He was angry with us. So while Carter was angry with Begin over the settlements freeze issue, Begin was angry with us over our statements to Jordan. Within a month, the U.S.-Israel relationships went into a nose dive after a tremendous triumph.

Another reason why the relationship took such a bad turn is that after Camp David, Begin stayed in the States for several days. Weizman and Dayan, unfortunately, went back to Israel immediately. Begin met with many Jewish and Congressional groups to which he made statements tailored to his domestic audience. He tried to justify to his own party in Israel through the press that he really had made no concessions and that he had come out a victor. He took a public line in the U.S. which was tough, bellicose, defiant, trying to convince himself and his followers that he had not conceded anything to the Egyptians. Carter talked to him about this line just before his departure for Jerusalem, trying to convince Begin that it was very important to put the best image on the accords for the Arab audiences because it was crucial that the Arabs

support Sadat, who was very vulnerable. Begin couldn't focus on Sadat's problems; he could only concern himself on his own political vulnerabilities at home. Carter's pitch had no effect on him. Begin put priority on dealing with his own perceived political problems before he got home. He also had a polemical style anyway; his reaction to debates was essentially confrontational. These factors produced further irritations on Carter's part and made Vance's job of selling the accords to the Arabs much more difficult. Vance was trying to emphasize what the accords meant for the Palestinian future; Begin's statements were designed to assure the Israeli right wing that nothing was going to change. The press of course was carrying all of the statements all over the region.

So within a month after the Camp David agreement was signed, a great many seeds of discord were planted before its implementation had even begun.

LEWIS: As I said earlier, right after Camp David, a serious disagreement between Carter and Begin erupted over what Begin may or may not have agreed to at Camp David on freezing the settlements in the occupied territories. In my view, that was a very unfortunate misunderstanding and I am convinced still today that it had indeed been a misunderstanding, although Carter has never changed his mind that the tensions arose due to Begin's bad faith. This misunderstanding soured their personal relationship to a significant degree for the rest of the Carter Administration. Begin insisted then and always thereafter that he had promised to suspend the settlements for the duration of the peace treaty negotiations which we all assumed would take only about three months after the signature of the framework agreement at Camp David. Carter insisted that Begin had agreed to freeze the settlements until negotiations on the autonomy of the West Bank and Gaza would be concluded, which obviously would have taken considerably longer. In fact, those negotiations were never completed. Carter believed that Begin just changed his mind overnight.

After our return from Camp David, Hal Saunders, who was then the Assistant Secretary for the Near East and South Asia Bureau in the Department of State, was supposed to get it all straightened out with Begin. He didn't succeed because Begin felt that he knew what he had committed himself to. Begin returned to Israel with the issue unresolved. I was then instructed to resolve matters by getting the letter from Begin with the right wording that Carter thought he had been promised, as a replacement for the one that had been delivered in Washington. I discussed the matter with Begin several times and with Dayan several times. I also went to Barak, who was the other key Israeli participant at the meeting on that last night at Camp David. He was by then a Justice on the Israeli Supreme Court, but had acted as notetaker at that Carter-Begin meeting. His version of events were somewhat closer to Begin's recollections than Carter's. I could never obtain any change in Begin's position so the issue remained unresolved. Begin announced to the Knesset that he had agreed to a settlements freeze for three months. And that is what happened. Carter felt double-crossed.

Immediately after the signing ceremony and Carter's address to a Joint Session of Congress, it became very important to the United States to get support for the Camp David accords from other Arab countries particularly, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, Sadat had made matters considerably more difficult by snubbing King Hussein whom he had allegedly pledged

before Camp David to keep fully informed during the Conference. That had not been done. Sadat had also arranged to meet Hussein in Morocco on the way back to Cairo, but when the agreement was announced, Hussein was so upset by what he understood the nature of that agreement to be about -- especially as it concerned the West Bank -- that he canceled the Morocco meeting. That made Sadat unhappy and disdainful of the King. So Secretary Vance, who was completely worn out by his work at Camp David, was immediately put on an airplane and sent off to the Middle East in an effort to sell the Camp David accords to the Saudis and the Jordanians. As Vance went about this business, Sadat made some public statements which made Arab acceptance even more difficult because they suggested that he had made the peace and then it was up to all the other Arab countries to fall into line to follow him.

Q: In retrospect, would you say it was a tactical mistake to show Begin what we were giving to Hussein? Or would the Israelis have found out anyway?

LEWIS: The tactical mistake was made when Vance agreed to provide Hussein in writing our interpretations of the agreement, especially in the detail we did. Although the written material must have been made available to all parties, the second mistake was made when we did not foresee that by being as specific as we were we would engender the debate all over again. We should have kept our answers, if in fact we needed to provide them in writing at all, as general as possible. It may have made it less persuasive to Hussein, but in any case, even our detailed answers did not persuade the King anyway. The end result of the process was to make Begin very suspicious about Carter's intentions on implementing the accords, and not succeeding in getting Hussein into the act. So we failed in our main objective while exacerbating tensions with Begin. Saunder's trip was very sad because during it he also met with a group of West Bank and Gaza residents in an effort to get their support for the agreement and participation in the autonomy system. They were not persuaded either, partly because the PLO had already issued a blanket denunciation of the agreement and was putting on a lot of pressure on all West Bank and Gaza residents to reject Camp David.

From that point on, the Israelis and Begin in particular, for several months, as we were trying to negotiate the details of the peace treaty and subsequently the details of the autonomy agreement, which could only be done after the peace treaty was completed, became more paranoid about what they saw in the U.S. response to Hussein along with other perceived signals from Carter. He felt that our real intention was to make Palestine independent and that our acceptance of full autonomy for a specified period was just a smoke screen. At the same time, the Palestinians didn't see enough assurances in the Camp David agreement that Israel would ultimately withdraw and give Palestine its independence. They saw autonomy as the end of the process. The agreement was artfully drafted to leave that issue open; it could not have been solved at Camp David in any case. King Hussein hesitated and wouldn't join the process and the Palestinians were under severe pressure from the PLO and were being told all sorts of exaggerated interpretations of the agreement. Our ability to contact the key Palestinian leaders was very limited; Saunders, our Consul General in Jerusalem and I met with them here and there, but we were not really in any position to make much of an impact on Palestinian opinion in competition with the PLO's successful propaganda. Sadat was doing nothing to try to sell the agreement to either the Palestinians or the Jordanians. He was reveling in his own achievements and in the peace treaty which was his major goal.

There was a period therefore of six-eight weeks when things teetered in the balance in whether we were going to succeed in getting Palestinian and Jordanian participation in the process based on the Camp David framework. By January, it had become clear that Hussein had backed off and would not be persuaded and the PLO had succeeded in convincing Palestinians to have nothing to do with the accords -- despite the fact that in the beginning a number of Palestinians had seen some very positive elements in the autonomy parts of Camp David and if left alone might well have participated in the negotiations for autonomy. In the meantime, Begin had made a major effort with the Knesset and with his own party to convince them that Sadat had made all of the concessions at Camp David and he, Begin, had given away nothing -- that autonomy would mean very little change. Since Israel was a very open society, the speeches and press conferences received maximum exposure and therefore were widely known to the Jordanians and Palestinians, all which confirmed what the PLO was saying about the Camp David agreements. Moreover, Begin's efforts to obtain his party's support had raised Sadat's suspicions that Begin was trying to suck him into just a bilateral treaty and had no intention of pursuing the Palestinian part of the agreement.

That was the atmosphere at the time the negotiations opened in mid-October in Blair House in Washington between the Egyptians and the Israelis. They were supposed to draft the peace treaty whose outlines had been agreed to at Camp David. The first week went very well and then the mutual suspicions began to arise. The Israeli Cabinet played a very damaging role by slowing down the negotiations. Ezer Weizman and Moshe Dayan were the two chief negotiators for the Israelis; Begin did not come to Washington. Both Dayan and Weizman were eager to conclude the negotiations quickly and were moving along very nicely. After ten days, Weizman went back to Jerusalem to attend a "brit" for his first grandchild and took with him an offer which he wanted to introduce into the negotiations. Essentially, Weizman wanted to propose that Israel would accelerate its withdrawal from El-Arish and some other areas as a token of good intentions -- this was a move in which the Egyptians would have been quite interested. The Cabinet turned Weizman down. Sadat then felt betrayed because he thought he had been promised such acceleration informally, but Weizman couldn't deliver. Sadat further felt betrayed because Carter had persuaded Sadat to exchange Ambassadors before the negotiating process had been completed. This was a move which the Israelis had urged on an expedited basis and Sadat had agreed on the explicit understanding that the *quid pro quo* would be this partial withdrawal from the El-Arish area. When Weizman was not able to get Cabinet approval, Sadat withdrew the offer for an early exchange of Ambassadors making Begin feel double-crossed. Each side began to feel that the other was welshing on deals made. Dayan during this period made some moves that didn't help. Begin had gone to Canada on a visit while Dayan and Weizman were in Washington. So while Begin was out of town, Dayan returned to Jerusalem to get Cabinet approval for certain key negotiating points. This was not a smart move on Dayan's part. The Cabinet took the opportunity to berate both Weizman and Dayan for giving away too much and repudiated the *ad referendum* agreements that they had reached with the Egyptian delegations. I should note that we were involved in these negotiations as sort of honest brokers. Dayan and Vance had worked until about two o'clock in the morning drafting a side letter between the Egyptians and Israelis intended to set a very vague target date for the completion of the autonomy negotiations. For some reason, there was a communication break-down and the draft letter didn't get to Begin immediately as it should have, but only as he was entering a

meeting with Vance at Kennedy airport in New York as he was heading back to Israel. Begin became furious with Dayan for proceeding on this letter without checking with him and then confronting him with it at the last moment and he therefore repudiated the letter in front of Vance and then engineered his Cabinet's disavowal of the letter upon his return to Jerusalem. Dayan became so angry that he threatened to resign, but was persuaded not to. These unfortunate mishaps in the Israeli delegation, to which I was closer than those that occurred in the Egyptian delegation as well, went on for weeks. Finally, the U.S. got dragged further and further into the middle of the negotiations -- drafting formulations -- which should have been a rather simple task of translating agreed principles into detailed implementation steps; they became much more complicated. On November 11, 1978, a full treaty was finally completed. It was a good draft. Vance tried to get both sides to say that this was the best they could do and that the text should not be reopened lest the delicate compromises reached be all jeopardized. First, the Israeli Cabinet would not go along, but finally on November 17, at Dayan's urgings, it withdrew its reservations to the preamble and accepted the treaty text and the annexes. But it didn't accept the "side letter" which included the target date for the completion of the autonomy negotiations. Part of the problem was that from the beginning there had been a long argument about the linkage between the peace treaty and autonomy negotiations. The Israelis were eager for the peace treaty and the Egyptians were eager to get the autonomy negotiations on behalf of the Palestinians. So the Egyptians wanted linkage, the Israelis didn't. Ultimately there was kind of linkage build into a side letter but the two were not made totally dependent on each other.

When the Egyptian delegation, which was led by Boutros Ghali, the Minister of State then and now and Hassan Ali, then Minister of Defense, returned to Cairo, they found a very unhappy Sadat who was not entirely satisfied with the work that they had done. He balked at Article VI. He felt that the U.S. side letter was much too vague for his purposes. He had become more cautious because since Camp David, when he was very confident that all of the Arab states would follow his lead and that once Egypt had spoken all would see the wisdom of Egyptian diplomacy, he then began to perceive opposition from the Arab states. They had all met in Baghdad in late October and had unanimously agreed to reject the Camp David accords. Even Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia joined the condemnation of Egypt. The Iraqis, incidentally, had applied maximum pressure on the Saudis through personal intimidation on the Saudi leaders in Baghdad. So Sadat was more concerned at this time than he was at the end of Camp David that there be a treaty package agreed upon that he could defend in the Arab world. He had to have a document that would prove that he had not given away any Palestinian interests and did not look like a separate peace. That made the side letter, which linked the two negotiations, an essential part of the peace treaty negotiations. In the meantime, in Jerusalem, Begin's colleagues were becoming more suspicious of Sadat and worried about whether the Egyptians intended to conclude a peace treaty.

These issues created a sort of a stalemate between mid-November until early December. The atmospheres in Cairo and Jerusalem were very unpleasant. I had conversation during this time with Dayan and Begin, trying to get them to refocus on the "big picture", but I was not very successful. Carter was getting increasingly frustrated and also became diverted by other issues, such as the increase of difficulties in Iran. At Camp David, it had been agreed that the peace treaty would be signed within three months, during which the Israelis would cease new settlement buildings in the West Bank and Gaza. That three months period would have expired

on December 17. As that day came closer, everybody got increasingly nervous and upset. Roy Atherton, who was at this time the special Middle East negotiator, came to the area to try to break the impasse and failed. Secretary Vance then persuaded the Egyptian Prime Minister and Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan to meet him in Brussels. The three had dinner and made some progress on the side letter. Then in desperation, Vance went to Cairo. He spent three days during which he had some very tough talks with Sadat. He finally got Sadat to accept the treaty text that we felt was the best that could be done with the understanding that we would add certain interpretive notes to some of the articles and if the side letter were strengthened on the linkage between the peace treaty and the autonomy talks and if the letter included linkage between exchange of Ambassadors and the inauguration of the governing authority which was to be established by the autonomy agreement.

During the November-December deadlock, Golda Meir, the ex-Prime Minister of Israel, died on December 8 at the age of 80. As in other moments like this, there was a high level U.S. delegation sent to the funeral. It was co-headed by President Carter's mother, Miss Lillian, and by Cy Vance; the delegation included a lot of dignitaries who had known and worked with Meir, like Henry Kissinger, Justice Goldberg, and Pat Moynihan. There were so many people in the delegation that when the special plane landed at Ben Gurion airport, we had the insolvable problem of sorting out the protocol. There were just too many high level people to figure who would ride in which car. We decided to solve the problem by putting Miss Lillian, who was formally the head of the delegation since Vance had not yet arrived, in the car with the Israeli personage who had been sent to meet her, namely the wife of the President -- Mrs. Navon -- and my wife and I. So the four of us left in a limousine to head up the hill to Jerusalem. Everybody else -- all the dignitaries -- were put on a bus. That way we avoided an argument on who would precede whom. In any case there were so many. The question was: Who would tell Henry Kissinger that he was riding on the bus? That task was given to my wife Sallie. She went up to Henry as he got off the plane and said: "Henry, I want to tell you that we have so many VIPs that protocol has become so complicated that you have to get on a bus to Jerusalem". Kissinger looked at Sallie in his inimitable fashion and in his best Kissingerian tones said: "Sallie, you must be kidding?". My wife, nevertheless, escorted him to the bus listening all the while to his grumbling and wit. She got him on the bus and Henry behaved pretty well. For weeks thereafter, he kept telling the tale of how Sallie Lewis had shoved him on a bus -- the first time in his life he had ever been treated like that. Vance arrived later and met the delegation in Jerusalem. The funeral was held in a downpour the likes of which I had never seen in Jerusalem before. This just added to the Israeli depression which had already taken a beating from Meir's death. She represented something very important. Also the peace treaty was on hold and it appeared that the great achievements of Camp David were coming apart.

Vance arrived in time for the funeral; he had come from Cairo where he had held discussions about the deadlock. In Jerusalem, we had one meeting -- rather frosty -- with Begin. Then Vance returned to Egypt for a day. He met with Sadat and then returned to Israel. He then had another session with Begin. At that point, Carter made a few public statements back in Washington based on Vance's reporting. Those statements did not help Vance's efforts because they referred to Sadat as "very generous" in accepting a certain formulation. Begin didn't regard Sadat's acceptances as a matter of generosity at all and therefore more than ever didn't appreciate Carter's public praise of Sadat's flexibility. He saw it essentially as a pressure on Israel to

compromise.

Vance once again returned to Egypt -- this was his third trip of the "shuttle" -- and Sadat finally agreed to the text with the interpretive notes. Vance came back to Jerusalem on December 15th. - - two days before the deadline -- and was almost completely rejected by Begin and the Israeli Cabinet. They just wouldn't approve the package that Vance had finally got Sadat to approve. They were not persuaded by Vance's argument that it was very important that the deadline not be breached. Begin always had an antipathy to negotiating within a certain time frame. He believed that if you allowed yourself to be effected by a deadline, then you would surrender considerable negotiating leverage -- I suspect that he may have been correct in that attitude. So every time we would mention a deadline, he would get his back up and would drag out the negotiations. The tactic of time pressures did not work with Begin. In addition to running into Begin's resistance to time limitations, we also ran into a problem created by the state of global communications. Vance and his party -- Atherton, Saunders and others -- who had worked long and hard hours over a period of weeks, trying to bring the peace treaty to a successful conclusion, had to accept in mid-December the fact that there just wasn't going to be a peace treaty at that time. Begin had been quite proper with Vance and had complimented him on his hard work; he certainly was cordial. Their relationship had become rather strained as a consequence of the "shuttle". Vance and his party, after their last visit to Jerusalem, boarded their Air Force plane to return to Washington. During the flight, while still over the Mediterranean Sea, Vance talked to Carter by phone from the plane. The technology at the time had not sufficiently progressed for that conversation to be in a secure mode. It was an open phone call that the Israelis were able to monitor through their quite sophisticated technical capability. They had a private contractor, who had acquired the most modern equipment available in the world, who had monitored all the radio broadcasts in the Middle East for the last twenty-five years from his own home. He worked for the Israeli national radio and television company. This capability permitted Israeli intelligence to get advance notice on many events through this one man SIGINT (signal intelligence). They often got advance warning through this method of events faster than Washington or anyone else in Israel. By spinning his radio dial, this man picked up the Carter-Vance telephone conversation and overheard comments that Vance made which were less than complimentary about Begin's intransigence during the negotiations. Immediately after the phone conversation there was a press story filed from the plane quoting a "senior U.S. official" -- a euphemism always used for the Secretary of State when he is giving off the record or background interviews -- to the effect that the Israelis had been very stubborn and that their position had really blocked the completion of the peace treaty. The story in short blamed the Israelis for the failure of the negotiations. That hit the Israeli press the next morning, in combination with the intercepted phone call. That really hardened attitudes in the Israeli Cabinet and soured Begin's view of the role the U.S. was playing. He became increasingly convinced that we were supporting the Egyptians and were essentially for Sadat and that we were trying to push Israel into a corner.

Christmas of 1978 was a very unpleasant period. The peace negotiations were frozen. The deadline came and passed and nothing happened. Carter first apparently decided that it would be best to let matters cool for an extended period and not to push anybody. Then he decided that this was too dangerous because at the same time, the Shah's position in Iran was beginning to seriously erode. He may in fact have already left the country by this time. It was also becoming obvious that Egypt and Israel were beginning to harden their positions and although the treaty

was 95% finished, it appeared that it would not be concluded and Carter's achievement would evaporate. So at the end of January, 1989, he sent Atherton and the Department's legal advisor, Herb Hansell, to the Middle East to see whether a new Article VI of the Treaty could be formulated. Article VI concerned a very esoteric legal issue dealing with the question of what took precedence: Egypt's responsibilities in case of a conflict under its treaties with other Arab countries, or the Israel-Egypt peace treaty. Begin, who was perfectly capable of making legalisms into major issues, began to say that Article VI was the vital heart of the whole Treaty. No one else ever thought it was, but he now made it the most important matter in the whole Treaty. Hansell, Atherton and I and Meir Rosanne, who was then the Foreign Ministry's legal advisor, and the Israeli Attorney General and Ben Elizar, who was Begin's chief of staff, and Ruth Lapidot who was then a law professor and now is a Peace Fellow at the Institute for Peace negotiated until three o'clock in the morning on Article VI, Paragraph V. This discussion was supposed to produce some kind of side agreement to counterbalance a legal opinion that Hansell had given to the Egyptians in December. He had spent seven days then negotiating over something that disturbed them. The whole treaty negotiations had deteriorated to a very detailed discussion of legal minutiae. That state of affairs had resulted from the almost total break-down of trust among the three principals who participated in the Camp David process. The desire to reach agreement had frayed so badly that one could find million of reasons why a Treaty should not be concluded. We had almost reached agreement with the Egyptians, but when they heard that we were about to give the Israelis a side letter, they were horrified and wouldn't accept it. So the whole negotiating process came to a stop. It was clear by then that the technical negotiators couldn't resolve the remaining issues. The impasse was political and could only be resolved at that level. Dayan argued that Begin had to be put back directly together with Carter and Sadat. He felt that this was the only way the deadlock could be broken. The other possibility would have Dayan be the main negotiator but then the discussions would have to be close to Jerusalem because he needed to be close to Begin who had gotten so suspicious of Dayan's negotiating ability as consequence of the Washington-Blair House round that he would not have trusted Dayan if he were far away. Carter on the other hand felt that he couldn't spare Vance and couldn't let him leave Washington for another extended round of negotiations. There were too many problems around the world.

So with great misgivings, Dayan and I set out for Camp David again for what I call "Camp David II". Unfortunately, the second round was not as successful as the first. By this time, we believed that this might be the last chance to conclude a treaty. Begin was hinting to me that he was really concerned that he might lose the Treaty. Dayan was concerned about the instability of the region. Sadat was anxious to conclude a treaty, particularly as the Shah had just fallen from power. However, we all had our fingers crossed and prospects were not great. We got to Camp David and Carter wasn't too anxious to become personally involved again, but realized that he must. Carter was the host at Camp David; Dayan and Prime Minister Khalil and Vance were present.

We went to Camp David February 20, 1979. The day before, Washington had been paralyzed by a snow-storm. I was staying with some friends in Cleveland Park. We were supposed to go up to Camp David on Tuesday. The snow storm came on Monday -- George Washington's Birthday. I was called on Monday morning from the Secretary's office telling me that Vance wanted to meet downtown that day to discuss the up-coming negotiations. I looked out of the window and told

the office that there was no way I could get to the Department. We had something like 25 inches of snow the previous night. The voice at the other end told me that the Secretary was on his way in and that he would pick me up at Wisconsin Avenue if I could get there. So I trudged through the snow for four blocks. I stood out on a deserted street and after a little while, there appeared a big snow plow moving down Wisconsin. I peered and sure enough, there was the Secretary of State sitting on the passenger side of the plow. He gestured to me to get in with him and that is how we got to the Department that Monday morning.

The Camp David II conference was a real mess. We spent five days and nights there in the snow. I got into an awkward situation at one point. We had thought that Khalil, Sadat's Prime Minister, was the right person to meet with Dayan at this time. It turned out that neither Khalil or Dayan had much flexibility. So Carter was banging his head against two stone walls for a couple of days.

He was not able to move them. Then Carter decided that the only solution was to get Begin to Washington. He asked Dayan to call Begin to invite him to come to see whether he could help in breaking the deadlock. Begin was highly offended by this invitation because he thought that he was being summoned to Washington to meet Egypt's Number 2 official -- not the Number 1 man-Sadat. He let us know his views in no uncertain terms. Dayan was aghast by Begin's reaction. He argued with Begin to no effect. Carter was furious and told me and others that if Begin did not come, he would wash his hands of the whole negotiation and would tell the world who was to blame. The President was fed up. I think he was serious; I think he was considering making a speech, blaming the collapse of negotiations on Begin, which was the last thing that Begin wanted. He had tried throughout this period to keep the onus on the Egyptians. Dayan then said to me: "Look, I have tried my best with Begin. You talk to him. see if you can persuade him! Convey to him Carter's feelings".

I tried to reach Begin, but he wasn't available. So I talked to Eli Ben Elizar who was Begin's chief of staff. I asked him to give Begin a private, personal message from me. The substance of the message was that I was personally deeply concerned about the state of affairs and that the Prime Minister would be blamed for the collapse of the negotiations. To be blamed in such a manner would be bad for Israel and for Begin. I told him also that I thought he should come to Washington to make one more try. Ben Elizar relayed, as I learned later, my message to Begin in a very tendentious way -- in a incorrect, distorted and trouble-making fashion. It was put to Begin in such a way that the Prime Minister felt that he was being given an ultimatum. It complicated my subsequent relationships with Begin considerably. Worst of all, my message did not have the intended effect; Begin still refused to come. He sent a message back, rather haughtily, that he would not consider meeting with anybody but Sadat and Carter. But he did pass a hint that if Carter would invite him to Washington -- just him -- he would certainly never turn down an invitation from the American President. By this time, Carter had his back up and it took several anguishing hours to persuade him. Vance and all of us worked to try to get Carter to swallow his pride and to try Begin's way. None of us wanted to lose the treaty. Ultimately, that is the way the issue of Begin's coming to the U.S. was resolved. Carter invited Begin for a visit to the White House. Of course, while in Washington at the President's invitation, he could have some discussions on the side with Khalil. But the main reason for the visit was to meet with Carter at the latter's invitation.

Begin came and had some meetings in the White House and some side meetings with Khalil. Unfortunately, the visit didn't solve anything, although some hints were dropped. In any case, Begin's ego was assuaged. Carter handled him quite well so that Begin began to see that it was not the U.S. and Egypt vs Israel. That had been the real problem throughout these weeks and that perception had stood in the way of progress. But even by the end of the visit, we didn't have an agreement. The atmosphere had improved, but the problems were not completely solved. We were now in early March, 1979. The region was in terrible shape. Carter was trying to decide what to do after Begin's departure. Sadat had just sent a message that he would like to come to Washington to mirror Begin's visit. He didn't want to meet with Begin, but wished to take his case about Begin's intransigence to the U.S. Congress, the media and the American public, preferably while Begin was still in New York. He wanted to fight the public relations battle with Begin on American soil while the U.S. President sat on the sidelines, watching the debate. The vision that Sadat and Begin would be firing high explosives on each other over Carter's head in the U.S. was just too much to swallow. This prospect drove Carter to decide that he had to bite the bullet and go to the Middle East personally to obtain approval of the treaty once and for all. All of Carter's advisors, except for Hamilton Jordan, were against this trip. Everybody else thought that the President was risking too much political and personal prestige. They were afraid that he would be perceived as traipsing around the Middle East, hat in hand, when the two major leaders in the area could not reach agreement. The possibility of failure was very high and most of the advisors saw it as a bad idea. Jordan saw it the other way. Carter had invested so much prestige on the Camp David agreements that if the implementation steps were not taken, it would be seen by the American public as an empty victory. The President's standing could only be maintained if he made a major personal effort so that he could not be accused of not having tried everything possible. No possible avenue should be spared. Carter followed Jordan's advice.

After his return from the United States, Begin had convinced his Cabinet to make a few concessions on some of the articles that Carter had discussed with him. There were also further discussions about the target date. Then came Carter's announcement about his trip to Egypt and Israel. All the professionals in the State Department and other places were astounded because the trip appeared as an act of desperation. There were no pre-arrangements; Carter's reputation was tottering somewhat at that stage for other reasons beyond the peace treaty. But everybody turned out to be wrong. Carter's gamble succeeded. In any case, Carter, Vance, Secretary of Defense Brown, Brzezinski and many more came out. The whole foreign and defense policy leadership of the Administration was on that Presidential plane. Carter first went to Egypt, where Carter and Sadat had another of their "love feasts". Although Khalil and his colleagues were tough in their bargaining, Sadat essentially gave Carter a blank check. He told Carter to do the best he could; he would trust the American President not give away Egypt's interests. That was a technique that Sadat repeatedly used with Carter and used very successfully.

So after getting pretty much of a blank check from Sadat, Carter arrived at 8 o'clock on Saturday night, March 10, 1979, at Ben Gurion airport. The American delegation was still very moved by the fact that millions of Egyptians, undoubtedly spurred on by Sadat, had come out to cheer Carter's train as it moved from Cairo to Alexandria. At Ben Gurion, there was an arrival ceremony, which looked very much like the Sadat arrival of November 1977, although there were far fewer people to greet Carter than there were for Sadat. Fortunately, my sons' school, the

American International School, were there in great numbers, cheering widely which was of considerable help. The arrival was a moving moment. It was the only time an American President had visited Israel, except for Nixon's visit in 1974 in the last days of his Administration. We had had a discussion with Teddy Kollek, the Mayor of Jerusalem, about a ceremony that he wanted when the party would reach the entrance of Jerusalem. He wanted to hold a full arrival ceremony with the traditional wine and salt. I got Teddy to promise that there wouldn't be any speeches (at White House insistence) and there weren't. Everything went smoothly though our people from Washington were sure that Kollek would double cross them. There were all sorts of frenzies with the Secret Service people. The head of the detail saw a mike standing near Kollek and all during the "Star Spangled Banner" kept yelling at me about it. The motorcade came off without hitches. Everybody was pretty much up-beat through the buffet that evening that Weizman hosted at the King David hotel for the whole delegation. There was a kind of electric mood in the room. In the meantime, Carter was having a private dinner upstairs in the hotel with the Begins. He came down to where we were at about 1:30 and the bubble just evaporated because he told us that the trip to Israel was a complete waste of time. Begin had just said no to everything; Carter was tired and frustrated. He quoted Begin as saying that he could not even initial a treaty publicly with his two counterparts -- Carter and Sadat -- which was the scenario that Carter had desired, until after the Knesset debate and ratification. Begin had told us after Camp David that he had made a pledge that he wouldn't sign a treaty until the Knesset had worked its will, even though under Israeli Constitutional practices, it was the Cabinet that could ratify treaties. The fact that Begin wanted Knesset approval was an indication of the importance of the peace treaty. But we never dreamed that Begin wouldn't at least initial it prior to Knesset approval. So the whole scenario of a major public event with the three principals initialing the treaty had been shot down, much to the dismay of the public relations people in the White House. So Carter was at least quite grumpy at this stage.

On Sunday morning, we went to President Navon's, we went to Yad Vashem, went to the Unknown Soldiers Tomb at the Knesset -- all the kinds of things that State visitors do. There was a church service at the Scottish Presbyterian church in Jerusalem. All that went well. The first formal working meeting was at 11:00 o'clock and lasted two and half hours. It was a disaster. Begin was at his most hyper-defiant, oratorical, preachy, dramatic -- repeating all the "nos" that he had given Carter the night before. He insisted that we stand by our "agreements" that we were supposed to have concluded during his last visit to Washington on joint U.S.-Israeli language on Article VI and the accompanying side notes to which he had gotten Cabinet approval. Another issue that had become important related to oil supplies which had become important during the treaty negotiations because the Israelis began to worry about guarantees for future oil supplies. They were surrendering their oil wells in the Gulf of Suez which they had exploited since their 1967 occupation. The Israelis wanted some guarantee that they would be able to buy their oil from Egypt or some other producer -- those were the days when the Arab states would not sell oil to Israel, except Iran which by now had become very unstable and unreliable. So the Israelis were looking to the U.S. for the guaranteed supply if they couldn't buy it on the open market. So the working out of this arrangement became another sticking point. Begin was insisting at this time that Egypt guarantee in writing that it would sell Israel two and half million tons of oil per annum for five years, but the Egyptians were not willing to do so. There was no agreement on the language about Gaza and a lot of other issues.

Carter barely kept his cool at the meetings. Then there was a big working lunch downstairs that helped to thaw the atmosphere a little bit. That was followed by another working session and Carter stepped up the pressure. Begin sensed by this point that he had to respond somehow to Carter's insistence for faster action. We adjourned at three o'clock for an hour and a half during which each delegation held separate meetings. We stayed in the Prime Minister's Cabinet Room, which was probably bugged. Carter stretched out despondently over two chairs making some unguarded wise-cracks about Begin. We met again with the Israelis until 5:30. Begin was really worn out at this point. He suggested a halt. Carter had just completed a very tough summation of his position. One of the issues that was being discussed concerned Egypt's need for access to the people of Gaza through the establishment of a consulate or an open border or some means. Sadat was very interested in this. Carter told Begin that this contact was a matter of his own personal honor and of direct interest to the U.S. He obviously had promised it to Sadat. So we provided some appropriate language to be included in the treaty. Begin then agreed to call his full Cabinet into session after dinner to discuss this new proposal. Up to this time, we had been dealing with only seven Ministers -- the so-called Security-Defense Committee -- out of approximately twenty. As he was about to leave, Dayan agreed to remain behind to talk informally with Vance on further language refinements before the draft was to be submitted to the Cabinet. That helped a little to make the language a little more acceptable to the Cabinet.

After that, we changed clothes quickly at the hotel and went off to the Knesset for a beautiful, fancy State dinner in the big hall decorated by the magnificent Chagall tapestries hanging behind the rostrum. After dinner, Isaac Stern and Pinina Salzman played some duets. The toasts by Navon, Begin and Carter were very gracious. I got drowsy during dinner and napped during one of the toasts. It was about ten o'clock and I was tired. After the toasts, came the Inbal dance group to entertain, but fortunately their performance lasted only about seven minutes. Dinner ended about eleven o'clock. The whole Israeli Cabinet went back to the Prime Minister's office for a meeting. I slipped to Dayan as he was leaving some new improved text -- our latest draft -- which Vance had worked on in an office while dessert was being served at dinner. He then asked me to pass it to the Israelis, which I did.

The U.S. delegation sat around the hotel after dinner rather gloomily until about 2 a.m. Monday morning. Later, we found out that the Cabinet meeting had gone on until 5:30 a.m. We met for a working breakfast and learned of the Cabinet decision from Rosanne and Evron. There had been some progress, but not enough. Begin was expecting praise from Carter for what he had been able to accomplish, but he didn't give much. Carter kept pressing for new flexibility on the Gaza access issue and on oil supplies. Begin was tired and offended, but polite. He agreed to meet with us after lunch for another attempt. Carter then said that he would leave for home that Monday afternoon; he couldn't stay any longer. He had talked to us about leaving even sooner; he was worn out with the negotiations about matters that he regarded essentially as very trivial. For weeks, he had thought that all the key issues had been solved and that Begin was really quibbling over small details that didn't make a bit of difference. That perception made Carter increasingly angry.

After breakfast, Carter went to a Knesset session which had been previously scheduled. Before delivering his speech, there was a singular incident. Geula Cohen, a formidable renegade member of Begin's own fighting family who had taken issue with the Prime Minister over Camp

David and opposed the treaty, heckled Begin -- as was done all the time in the Knesset -- as he was introducing Carter. Carter of course wasn't sure who was being heckled and had to be reassured that it wasn't him. She was warned three times by the Speaker, but she kept yelling and screaming about how Begin was selling out Israel. She was finally expelled from the Knesset floor. Carter watched all this and then finally was allowed to deliver his speech -- passionate and very eloquent -- which had been drafted in part by our Political Counselor, Bob Blackwill. He had convinced Carter's speech writers to use a good deal of his text. Unfortunately, Carter had penned in one line that didn't help. As he looked directly at Begin, he said that the leaders of our nations had not lived up to the aspirations of their peoples. That didn't go over very well. But the speech overall was a fine speech, in part because the Embassy, and in particular Robert Blackwill, our Political Counselor and I, had such major involvement in its drafting. It was about the most eloquent statement about U.S.-Israel relationships that I have heard or that was ever delivered by an American President. It was well received except for that one line I mentioned earlier. Begin made a very poor impression; he was being heckled by a lot of people in addition to Cohen. The extreme left and the extreme right were very unhappy. Peres gave a very eloquent statement on behalf of the opposition with considerable emphasis on Palestinian rights which of course was not well received by Begin, but delighted Carter. During both Begin's and Peres' speeches, Carter got a good sense from the heckling, the rowdiness and the raucousness of how tough Begin's problems were in the Knesset. Afterwards, Carter asked whether the Knesset behavior wasn't deliberately staged for his benefit as evidence of Begin's political problems. I don't think it was staged at all and said so.

After the Knesset session, we had lunch with the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committees. In the meantime, the Cabinet was meeting to reconsider our latest draft. The lunch with the Knesset Committees was very good. Carter was excellent in rebutting the suspicions and arguments from the Israelis about Egyptian reliability. He had a strong impact on the Knesset members with respect to Sadat's problems on the oil issue, the U.S. commitment to Israel and the risks to all participants of failure of the peace process. Carter then went to take a nap; he was very tired. The departure plans were put on hold pending the completion of the Cabinet's deliberations. We met with Begin and eight other Cabinet members after the completion of their session to hear the results. From the first sentence of Begin's report, it was clear that we had pushed the Cabinet into a kind of negative psychology -- they were tired, having been up all night and having had three meetings within 24 hours. Begin announced essentially that they had stuck to all the positions they had developed the previous night; they gave no ground. They were sick of being whittled away by Sadat's continuing demands that were made every time they had laboriously agreed to new American proposals. We tried to probe Israeli stand on other issues; Begin was not willing to go any further on any. So finally, around 7:00 p.m., we left the meeting with the Cabinet, very discouraged.

I learned later from some Cabinet members that the sentence that Carter had penned himself into his speech about "leaders not living up to the expectations of their people" had become one of the major reasons why the Cabinet had been so negative. Begin had taken such offense at that that he had used it to work up a lot of animosity. This is a good illustration of how very tired people can act and react.

In the meantime, while we were in session with Begin, Carter had completed his nap and decided

to postpone his departure until noon the following day. He called Begin to thank him for all the efforts he had made and invited him and his wife to breakfast the following morning -- Tuesday. That pleased Begin a great deal. On Monday evening, some of us went out to dinner trying to forget how things were going. When we returned, I felt that the mood had changed. A group of seven Cabinet members led by Dayan and Weizman and including Sharon had gotten together after the Cabinet meeting and agreed that Carter shouldn't be allowed to leave under existing circumstances. I don't know whether Begin was aware of this informal meeting; I think the seven probably got together without Begin's knowledge. After the seven had met, there was a lot of scurrying around. Dayan talked to Begin by phone about a different approach on the oil guarantee issue which had festered continuously. Then Dayan and Evron went to see Vance, who felt immediately that the Israelis didn't want Carter to return home empty-handed. Vance told us that he began to smell that the pieces were beginning to fall into place. The U.S. delegation then went to work until the early hours of Tuesday morning on a new set of proposals to be used by Carter at his breakfast with Begin. These proposals were based on the Dayan-Vance conversations.

To everyone's pleasure, the Israeli position became more flexible at the breakfast. After a while, Carter and Begin asked Vance and Dayan to join them. Initially, Dayan was not very optimistic because he found out that Begin had changed his mind once again on the oil issue. The irascible Israeli Energy Minister, Moday, was pushing very hard and was very difficult to deal with. After they had been with their leaders for a while, Vance and Dayan met with Weizman and Harold Brown. We found out later that Weizman had threatened during the night to resign unless a treaty was concluded. He was very upset with Begin's tactics; they were just too risky for him. At 11:30, as we were entering the motorcade cars to go to the airport, I still wasn't sure what had happened in the previous hours. I had not gotten a full debriefing from the four persons meeting. I learned from Vance in the car that Begin had given Carter a little more on the formulations -- not a lot, but little -- but it was something. Carter had agreed to take it to Sadat to see if he could sell it. Begin showed again that he was a very tenacious bargainer. At the airport ceremony, everyone looked very strained and concerned. Roy Atherton thought Sadat would accept the new formulations. Everyone else was very dubious. I told Dayan that the odds were three out of four that the new package would sell, but I wasn't sure that I really believed that. Begin's strategy was clear; he wanted to force Sadat to reveal his bottom line on all the outstanding issues and then, and only then, to ask the Cabinet to decide on those issues. Had this strategy failed, Carter would have been the big loser.

Carter knew that he could sell the new package to Sadat because he knew how much of a blank check he had received from Sadat. We, the rest of the U.S. delegation, didn't know it at the time so it appeared to be a risky strategy. In retrospect, it really wasn't. Furthermore, I have also found out subsequently from my Israeli friends that Begin clearly never had any intention of allowing Carter to return to Washington empty-handed. Once he had invited Carter to come to Jerusalem, he wasn't going to destroy him and the treaty. Begin was simply and purely bargaining; he was going through his usual, very tough, emotional, tenacious, legalistic, annoying bargaining tactics. Begin was a very tough and effective negotiator. He drove everybody crazy, but usually got 90% of his objectives. And that, after all, is the test.

Q: How about Begin's health at this particular time?

LEWIS: At this time, it was good. His health went through several phases. He had a couple of falls, he had a heart infection, he had spells of depression at two or three different points, but they were relatively short, until his deep depression following his wife's death from which he never fully recovered.

To finish off the story of the Carter Middle East trip, I saw the party off at the airport and we were all making bets on what it would cost Carter if he failed in Cairo. At about 5:30 that afternoon, my assistant, Josiah Rosenblatt, rushed to me at the Embassy with his transistor radio. He was listening to Carter speaking on VOA from Cairo, announcing that Sadat had accepted all the peace treaty formulations just agreed to with the Israelis. Carter had already phoned Begin with the news and the Israeli Cabinet met the next day to reaffirm the decisions. Carter had won. I called Begin, who was by now walking on air. So were Dayan and Weizman when I spoke to them. I had a call from Vance from Air Force I as he was returning to the United States during which he made a lot of nice comments about the Embassy's performance. We made mutual congratulations on the outcome. Dayan told me later that Begin had said, almost ruefully, with respect to our last offer on oil that "I guess we will just have to accept it!". Dayan had to laugh because we had given the Israelis an absolute fifteen year guarantee of oil supplies, from the United States, if necessary.

I was told that I would receive Carter's letter to Begin later that night containing the written agreement which had been orally approved. Begin told me to call him at any time, day or night, when the letter arrived. I got it to him immediately upon receipt. The peace treaty was essentially wrapped up; there were a couple of last minute cliff-hangers in Washington at the signing ceremony. Even there, the oil supply issue reared its head again, twenty-four hours before the signing. A new formulation and new letter of assurance was negotiated, but in Washington, for the first time since Camp David, Sadat and Begin met alone without Americans which we very much encouraged. It happened at the Egyptian Embassy. They had a very good meeting the night before the signing ceremony. That helped to kick off the autonomy negotiations the next day and to start the withdrawal of the forces from the Sinai.

The period from Camp David to the end of March was very intensive. What should have taken three months took six. What could have been done clearly in one month took a lot longer because of the negotiating styles and because personal trust evaporated between Carter and Begin in the days immediately following Camp David. To me that was the principal reason why all the unnecessary negotiating trauma had to go on.

Q: The last interview ended with the signing of the Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel in March 1979, which was the culmination of an intensive 18 months of negotiations which started with the advent of the Carter administration. What happened next?

LEWIS: There was obviously a great deal of joy and enthusiasm at the ceremonies. As we all sat on the White House lawn watching Carter, Sadat and Begin signing the Peace Treaty on a beautiful, cool afternoon, I was struck at the time as highly significant -- and indeed it became

more significant as years passed -- that during the ceremony there was a small group of protestors across Pennsylvania Avenue in Lafayette Park which held up signs and chanted: "PLO, PLO, PLO". Indeed many of the following years of my involvement with Israel increasingly focused on the problem of the PLO and Israel's refusal to have any contact with it, either directly or with any Palestinian who had any connection with the organization.

After the Treaty was signed, the next step in the process was to be the formal ratification, which under differing Constitutional systems, would be handled differently by each signatory. Since the U.S. was only a witness to the Treaty, we did not have to send it to the Senate, but in Israel, ratification is formally provided by the Cabinet, rather than by the Knesset. Nevertheless, because of the importance of the Treaty, Begin did send it to the Knesset for approval. The debate was spirited but approval was a foregone conclusion since the Labor Party joined most of the Likud in supporting it. Then the Cabinet ratified it. There was a good deal of euphoria in Israel, although it was somewhat reduced by the difficult preceding months which followed Camp David and which were devoted to negotiations of the detail chapters of the Treaty. That took some of the bloom off the rose, but still there existed in Israel a great hope for the future. There was also an expectation that once Egypt had made peace with Israel, then other Arab states would surely follow one by one.

Q: Was this a governmental or popular euphoria?

LEWIS: I am referring to a popular euphoria. The government was happy to have the Treaty concluded, but had many doubts about whether the Egyptians would live up to its terms, particularly the many provisions involving the normalization of relations, which the Israelis viewed as very important. The Israelis were looking for real peace and not just a formal document. After Israeli and Egyptian ratifications -- I believe that the Egyptian Parliament ratified the Treaty -- the instruments of ratification must be exchanged according to diplomatic practice before a treaty goes into effect. That exchange ceremony raised some discussions; there was some talk about Secretary Vance coming to the region to witness the process first in Cairo and then in Jerusalem, but ultimately it was decided that the exchange would take place in the Sinai at the American "field mission" which consisted of a small U.S. civilian unit which had been established when the forces had been separated under agreements negotiated by Henry Kissinger in 1974-75. The U.S. had accepted at the time responsibility for monitoring observance of the agreement in the crucial areas of the Mitla and Gidi passes in mid-Sinai -- by stationing American civilians right on the demarcation line.

Q: To what agency did these Americans belong?

LEWIS: It was a fascinating operation, not well known or recorded by history. The lead agency was the Department of State which contracted with a private American business organization -- E Systems Corporation of Dallas, Texas. It established a small camp in the middle of the desert on a promontory overlooking the passes. The State Department staffed that mission with its own employees and E Systems furnished the logistical support. We had some rudimentary technological devices in the camp to watch potential infiltration routes; such violations were to be reported to both parties. That camp had been in existence for five years by the time the instruments of ratification were to be exchanged. It was right on the line which at that time

separated Israeli and Egyptian forces. So it was decided to have the exchange take place at this camp. It was scheduled for a month after the signing of the Peace Treaty at five p.m. Rather than having any dignitaries come from Washington, Ambassador Hermann Eilts, the U.S. Ambassador in Cairo, and I were designated jointly as the U.S. representatives at this ceremony. Eli Ben Elizar, the *chef de Cabinet* for Begin, represented the Israelis -- or it might have been Moshe Dayan -- I don't recall who was the head of the Israeli delegation. Their counterparts represented Egypt -- I believe it was Boutros Ghali, the Egyptian Minister of State. We drove to the camp by car and arrived around noon where the U.S. delegation was met by the Israeli and Egyptian groups. Of course, as seems to happen in most negotiations, there was a last minute snag. There were a great many invited journalists present; pictures were being taken. When the delegations first met, it was announced that Prime Minister Begin would not accept a footnote in the wording of the Egyptian document of ratification. Precisely, Begin's legal advisors who were there -- Eli Rubenstein and Meir Rosanne -- found the footnote to be inconsistent with Israel's interpretation of the form of the document. The Israelis consulted Begin on the phone and the Prime Minister instructed them not to proceed. That was followed by about three hours of anguishing negotiations between the Egyptians and the Israelis over this footnote with us Americans playing the customary role of intermediators in the effort to get around the roadblock. Eventually we reformulated two or three words; I was then pressed into service, as often happened, to convince Begin over the phone that he could accept the new wording, which he finally did after hearing me and his people. They wanted to proceed and not hold up the ceremony any longer. With some reluctance, Begin finally agreed to this very minor reformulation.

Q: Was this classic nit-picking?

LEWIS: It was classic and of course it was nit-picking, but the footnote effected a phrase that contained a great deal of substance to Begin. Our legal advisor, Herb Hansell, who had been instrumental in the formulation of the final documents, in working with the other two legal advisors, recognized that there was a problem. I believe that it was related to something that had happened at the signing of the Treaty itself, when for about two hours just before the signing ceremony the delegations discussed a footnote. It was finally only resolved by Carter shortly before the signing of the Treaty took place. It was a question of how one identified such words as "Palestinians" in English or in Hebrew or in Arabic or whether the Gulf of Aqaba was called the "Gulf of Elat" or the "Gulf of Aqaba" -- these were the sorts of issues that caused last minute flurries. There were not many footnotes; the one I discussed might have been the only one that was relevant in the instruments of ratification.

When we finally got Begin's agreement, the ceremony proceeded about three hours late. But by that time the sun was setting and it sets pretty fast in the Sinai. We were on a rocky promontory with a strong wind blowing. It was a beautiful, barren and rugged country side, but it was getting chilly. The flags of the three countries were flying over a rostrum; the press was arrayed below with the TV and still cameras ready. You of course can't have a ceremony without speeches. There was an Israeli speech; there was an Egyptian speech; and then there were two American speeches, since there were two of us. The U.S. delegation consisted of two or three of my staff, two or three from Hermann's staff and several people from Washington, but we were fewer in numbers than the Israelis or Egyptians -- there must have been fifty or sixty officials in addition

to a couple of hundred media representatives. I wear contact lenses; when I rose to give my remarks which I intended to read off some cards on which I had written quite carefully -- this being a very historical occasion -- I was looking right into the sun and facing a rather stiff wind. Just as I stood up, a grain of sand lodged behind one of my contact lenses, which as all contact lens wearers know, can be one of the most excruciating experiences that one can suffer. My eyes began to tear and I could hardly stand the pain. I couldn't see the cards because of the tearing. Somehow I stumbled through it, but I will always remember that experience as being one of my most excruciating ones of my life. It had of course to happen on such a memorable day. It was very ironic.

As I mentioned earlier, the hang-up of the previous six months was in great part caused by something called the "joint letter". This was a letter to President Carter that ultimately Begin and Sadat jointly signed -- it had been carefully negotiated -- in which they described their intention to enter into the negotiations on the autonomy arrangements for the West Bank and Gaza immediately after the signing of the Peace Treaty. That was a part of the Camp David agreement that dealt with the Palestinian issue -- it was of great, great significance to Sadat. This letter had been fought over endlessly. The Egyptians wanted very much to have a strong linkage between the Peace Treaty and their withdrawal from the Sinai on the one hand and the autonomy arrangements for the Palestinians on the other. This would have permitted the Egyptians to argue that they had not sacrificed the Palestinian cause for return of the Sinai and that they had been able to achieve a temporary autonomy on the way to a final negotiation on the status of the West bank and Gaza. The Israelis had resisted such linkage for a long time. The final letter provided for a kind of provisional linkage. The Egyptians wanted a date certain for the conclusion of the negotiations so that the Israelis couldn't string them out indefinitely and never get around to providing autonomy for the Palestinians. The Israelis didn't want a deadline; they preferred an open ended negotiation. Eventually we ended up with a one year "target" date, which was not a deadline but a target. This was something, incidentally, that Cy Vance had very much advised the Israelis and the Egyptians against, having had some bad experiences with such "targets:" in other negotiations. Nevertheless, they agreed to this "target" date and to a commitment to start the negotiations within a month after the exchange of the instruments of ratification. So the autonomy talks were due to begin in late May, 1979.

Vance, who by this time had spent the first sixteen or seventeen months of the Carter administration in the Middle East negotiations -- sometimes fully engaged for weeks on end in his role as mediator -- had concluded that it was just impossible for him to continue to be the chief U.S. mediator in the autonomy negotiations. Too many other foreign policy issues in other regions were not being properly attended. By mid-1979, the Shah had been forced out of office and our whole position in the Persian Gulf was being substantially eroded; then there was China, USSR -- which was beginning to be difficult again -- and many others. It was becoming clear to Carter and Vance that the Secretary just had to step back and let someone else carry the ball. That was the origin of the idea of appointing a special Presidential representative as the U.S. intermediary for the autonomy talks. It was clear to everyone, based on our experiences in the Peace Treaty negotiations, that the U.S. would have to be an active player. We would have to have a delegation on site; we would have to keep prodding, pushing and brokering. A number of names were considered including Robert Strauss, who had just concluded successfully a very important trade agreement during one of the multilateral trade negotiations which had been quite

a *tour de force*, particularly since he managed to get the package approved by Congress with almost no dissent. He had won the President's admiration as a skillful negotiator; he was also an important political figure in the Democratic Party. So Strauss was chosen as the U.S. representative. In private, Vance was very much opposed to Strauss' appointment; he didn't think that Strauss had the right temperament or background on the issues. Strauss had never really had any involvement in the Middle East, although he was known as a very skillful Texan style horse-trading negotiator with very sophisticated political skills. Despite Vance's skepticism, Strauss was appointed as a representative of the President, not of the Secretary, or of the Department of State. This caused some difficulties in the Department because Strauss was quite independent, formed his own staff and viewed himself as reporting to the President directly and in a collegial way, consulting with the Secretary. The staff was very small, consisting primarily of a couple of young lawyers from his law firm in Washington. Vance insisted on -- he and I discussed this at considerable length -- giving Strauss some professional, experienced staff to support him. We agreed on and Vance was successful in recruiting Ambassador James Leonard, who was then the President of the United Nations Association, after his retirement from the government. Vance had been active in the association and knew Leonard well. In his earlier incarnations, Jim Leonard had been a senior official in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and had been involved in several international negotiations, particularly on arms control. He had had some Middle East experience, not of recent vintage however. He was a very able professional. He was persuaded to return to government and serve as Strauss' deputy with the rank of Ambassador. During the remainder of the Carter administration, Leonard played an important role. He and his wife essentially resided in the region -- in Israel most of the time, but sometime in Cairo as well. He worked out of our Embassies, while Strauss remained in Washington, as did Sol Linowitz, who succeeded Strauss later. Both of them played their roles as Presidential envoys from Washington; they had offices in the State Department; their staffs were there. They would travel to the Middle East for the negotiating rounds and then return to Washington. In between, Leonard would shuttle between Cairo and Jerusalem and tried to push the process along. It became a pretty good team operation. There were two or three other State Department employees attached to the delegation; they were stationed in the region. One officer from the Political Section of our Embassy in Cairo and one officer from the Political Section in Tel Aviv were part of the Strauss-Leonard team. That allowed the two Embassies to play a significant role as well. Both Eilts and I were deeply involved particularly when meetings were taking place in our countries. The meeting place for the negotiations alternated between Egypt and Israel; if they were in Egypt, a member of my Tel Aviv staff would attend and vice-versa. This insured that the perspective of our Embassy and Israel would be available to and understood by Strauss and Leonard.

Q: Was there any Egyptian skepticism since both Strauss and Leonard are Jewish?

LEWIS: I am not sure about that. There probably was some skepticism and ultimately, interestingly enough, they had rather different impacts on the two countries they were dealing with. Strauss stayed in the job for only a few months -- for about two rounds of negotiations. I think he concluded quickly that this kind of effort was not his cup of tea and he began to seek a graceful way to withdraw. He did that in the late summer. A few weeks later, Sol Linowitz was recruited. By that time, several months of negotiations had already passed. Linowitz joined the U.S. delegation in the Fall of 1979, right after he had concluded the Panama Canal Treaty

negotiations during which he had earned admiration from the Carter administration for that diplomatic success. In the beginning, Strauss was feeling his way through a series of mine fields. Initially, he decided that his tried and true negotiation techniques could work in the Middle East as they had everywhere else. He started by trying to establish an informal personal relationship with Begin and Sadat -- "*bonhomie*" -- which he had used very successfully in the United States and perhaps elsewhere. My perception gained from sitting in all the Begin-Strauss meetings is that that technique didn't work very well. Begin was never quite sure what he was dealing with and the two men never did find temperamental affinity, but since Strauss was Carter's representative, he was treated politely. I never felt that in the short time that Strauss was engaged in the process, he was taken as seriously as he should have been. He didn't know the region, which was a clear drawback. He was Jewish, although essentially secular, and he had not had any connection with Israel before this time, as far as I know. All in all, it was a funny situation for Strauss to walk into.

Q: You implied that Cy Vance might have foreseen the difficulties.

LEWIS: I do think that Cy understood that in advance and that is one of the reasons why he opposed the appointment initially. Every one had a lot of respect for Strauss' accomplishments and political savvy, but he just didn't fit this situation well.

Q: Bonhomie was not a good basis for relationship with Begin ever, was it?

LEWIS: No. The Texan approach to creating rapport didn't work very well with Begin. I did think that Strauss would also have problems in Cairo, but I have been told long after the fact by Ambassador Eilts and others who were in a position to observe that Strauss got along quite well with Sadat. He was probably more effective with the Egyptians than he was with the Israelis. The round of negotiations began one month after the exchange of the articles of ratification when a meeting was held in Beersheba. We had agreed that the autonomy negotiations would start in Beersheba in the presence of Secretary Vance, Begin and Sadat. This was the occasion of the first Begin visit to Egyptian occupied Sinai and the first occasion for Sadat to visit Israel after the famous trip to Jerusalem. It was quite an event and the two sides arranged it well, operating through their liaison people in both capitals and the hot line between the two Defense Ministers which had been established sometime earlier between Weizman and Gamasy. It was agreed that the initial meeting between Begin and Sadat would take place at El'Arish in the Sinai and that from there the opening session of the autonomy talks would take place at Beersheba. Vance and Strauss, Dayan from Israel and Boutros Ghali from Egypt would head up the negotiating delegations. I flew with the Israelis to El'Arish in a very uncomfortable Israeli Air Force transport -- it had long wooden planks running along the sides of the plane with small windows - - nothing fancy for the Prime Minister and most of his Cabinet. We landed in El'Arish and met the Egyptian party. Vance was also there.

A special event had been arranged ahead of time which was truly moving. It had been Begin's idea. He had suggested it to Sadat, who agreed. First there was a reception in the morning during which Egyptian officials, both civilian and military, mingled with Israeli officials and members of the American delegation. Then Begin and Sadat, accompanied by a few senior officials, and a few members of the American delegation -- I think Vance was there, although he may have gone

directly to Beersheba -- went to another building on this military base. There, we found some food buffet style. It was not very fancy. We were met by approximately 150 disabled war veterans, both Egyptian and Israelis, who had been victimized by the various wars between the two countries. There were people in wheel chairs; there were people without arms or legs; there were the blind. They had been brought together for a reconciliation meeting to mark the beginning of an era of new relationships between the two countries. Begin and Sadat circulated among the group and asked about where they had fought and been maimed. It was very, very moving and made a deep impression on everybody there. It was the kind of event that was very important to Begin, particularly. It showed the human tragedy of the a war. Sadat was also very moved.

After that ceremony, we all were taken to two planes to be flown to Beersheba and that was fascinating. The senior Egyptians and the senior Israelis and I were in one plane. There could have been one or two other Americans on the same plane, but I am not clear on that. The more junior Egyptians and Israelis were in the second plane. The plane I was in, which also had Sadat and Begin on board, was the same uncomfortable military transport which had brought us to El'Arish. Begin and Sadat were sitting next to each other in the forward area. Dayan was sitting with Boutros Ghali somewhere in the middle; Weizman and General Gamasy were sitting next to each other. There was a lot of joshing going on. At one point, Begin, who was very fastidious about his appearance, looked at his black shoes, which were always very formal, which had gotten sandy and dust covered. He took out his handkerchief, put one foot on top of the other and polished his shoes. He then turned to Sadat and asked him whether he would like to use the handkerchief to polish his shoes. Sadat very graciously declined. Then Dayan went to Begin and took the handkerchief and cleaned his own shoes. He then took that handkerchief and went down the plane and cleaned two or three other people's shoes. It was a most unusual gesture for Moshe. It was all done in a kind of jocular fashion to symbolize, I guess, the new era. It made quite a picture.

We landed in Beersheba about thirty minutes later and went to the University, where the formal meetings were to be held. Before the formal session started, an event was staged outside the building. The Egyptian and Israeli flags flew together and lot of speeches were made. There were a number of Sadat's associates who had never been to Israel. I remember especially one who had sat next to me -- Mr. Osman Osman, an Egyptian contractor, who had built half of the buildings in Cairo and was a great pal of Sadat's. He commented about the very modest nature of Beersheba, which is a nice, but not fancy city. There was a lot of talk about how the experiences and talents of the two people could be combined; lots of ideas were being kicked around such as bringing the waters of the Nile to the Negev and the joint construction of nuclear power plants in the Sinai which would serve both countries and the development of a chemical industry based on the natural gas in the fields of the Gulf of Suez which would serve the needs of both Israeli and Egyptian industries. None of these ideas have ever come to fruition, but in those days there was a lot of hope that there would be cooperation between the two countries which would produce such joint economic projects.

The negotiations started ceremoniously with various people making speeches. They agreed on the date for the next meeting and then everybody went home. The Egyptians flew back to Cairo and we returned to Israel. Vance came back to Jerusalem for some additional discussions. During

the period prior to the beginning of the autonomy talks, the die had been cast in many ways. Events took place which led to the ultimate failure. On the Israeli side, the problems were Begin and Dayan. Dayan, who was indispensable to Begin, was a proud man who chafed under the short leash that Begin had him on, but in the prolonged period leading up to the peace treaty had lost Begin's confidence. Begin was convinced that Dayan was prepared to accommodate the Egyptians to a much greater extent on a number of issues that he, Begin, was willing to do. Therefore, the Prime Minister was no longer willing to let Dayan act as chief negotiator without constraints from other ministers. Dayan of course assumed that he would continue in that role since he was still the Foreign Minister. But he discovered, shortly after the Peace Treaty was signed, that Begin did not intend to allow him much freedom as chief negotiator, but preferred to have a Cabinet committee of six Ministers including Ariel Sharon as the negotiating team. Dayan then recognized that his chances of succeeding in the autonomy negotiations, under constraints of a Cabinet committee consisting primarily of conservative Ministers, would be pretty slim. He didn't want any part of such a process. He initially told Begin to appoint another chief negotiator. Begin named Dr. Yosef Burg, who was then the Minister of Interior and who had for many years represented the national religious party in the Cabinet. Burg had not had any real foreign policy experience, though he had traveled widely all over the world among Jewish circles. He was a very distinguished Orthodox Jewish scholar -- he was funny, erudite and a conciliator by instinct -- not a leader. But the idea that Dayan, the Foreign Minister, would sit on a Committee headed by Yosef Burg which would steer the Israeli position on the autonomy talks, boggled the mind. It could never have worked. Formally, as long as he remained Foreign Minister, Dayan had to be part of the Committee and after a good deal of foot-dragging, he allowed his staff to participate in the Committee's staff work. In fact, however, I am convinced now in retrospect that Dayan had already decided to leave the Cabinet. He believed that Begin was already regretting some of the concessions he made in the Peace Treaty, particularly on the definition of "autonomy" in the Camp David Accords. Begin was determined to retreat from the agreed phraseology in some manner during the course of the actual autonomy negotiations. He wanted to maintain a tighter Israeli control over the territories than might have been understood in the Accords. Dayan did not believe that this was an appropriate course and didn't want anything to do with it. In the Fall of 1979, Dayan resigned from the Cabinet and broke formally with Begin at that point. He went into political exile for a while, became quite ill; then he tried to form his own political party and ran in 1981 as the leader of a small splinter party for the first time in his life. He only got two seats in the Cabinet and died soon thereafter.

The fact that Dayan took himself out of the game after seeing the hand-writing on the wall meant that Begin was going to keep personally very tight control over the negotiations. He would work through Dr. Burg and his Committee, but he would be in control. All the Committee members would sit on the negotiating sessions -- six Israeli Ministers appeared at these meetings, which on the face of it was not a very efficient method of operation. On the Egyptian side, the die had been cast by the fact that after Camp David, despite the efforts that I described earlier, we had been unable to get the Jordanians or Palestinians from the territories to agree to take part in the post-Camp David process -- i.e. the autonomy negotiations. The Egyptians therefore were left in the position of having to represent the Palestinian interests in these negotiations. Sadat had once said grandly that there was no problem if the Palestinians were not involved; he would represent the Palestinian cause and defend their interest most adequately. The formula was unworkable. The Egyptian delegation knew very little about what really was happening in the occupied territories;

they had had no representation in Gaza since 1967; they had very limited knowledge of how those territories had changed from that time. They knew little about the inter-mingling of the economies of Israel and the occupied territories; they knew little about the water problems; they knew little about security problems. They did not have an adequate grasp of the situation. Moreover, even after they began to visit the territories during the negotiating missions -- they tried to familiarize themselves about what the land and people they were negotiating about -- they felt totally constrained since there were no Palestinians with them. They were deathly afraid of being attacked by the PLO or by other Arab States for selling out Palestinian interests. The Egyptians therefore were in not in a position to bargain or to make any compromises. They could only take rhetorical positions on issues -- positions of principle which could be defended to the Arab audiences. In the period after Camp David and particularly after the signing of the Peace Treaty, it must be remembered that Egypt was being ostracized by the Arab world. In fact, after Camp David, they were partially ostracized, but no one broke diplomatic relations with them. The Saudis and others hoped against hope that the Egyptians would not proceed with the Peace Treaty, but when that was signed, there was a summit convened in Baghdad. The Iraqis put on a great deal of pressure. In fact, throughout the period the Syrians, the Iraqis and the PLO...

Q: The question that came to mind is, Arafat and other PLO factions, were they sideswiping Sadat or were they....?

LEWIS: Yes. Throughout this period, particularly after the treaty was signed, there was a full-court press by Syria, the PLO and Iraqis, in particular the Iraqis, to attack Sadat. The Iraqis hosted this Baghdad meeting at which Arab League's decision to ostracize Egypt was agreed. It was a summit that was very tumultuous; the Saudis were still hanging back about severing all ties with Egypt, and we learned later that Iraq's Saddam Hussein, in particular, put some very brutal threats and pressures on the Saudis to force them to go along, including crude personal threats to Prince Fahd himself.

Q: Sam, I believe you wanted now to add some inserts into previous discussions. Where would you like to start?

LEWIS: I would like to start with interview 8, dated April 30, 1991. During that interview, I dealt with the period right after the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979. I want now to complete that period through the end of the Carter administration -- end of 1980.

This was a period that began with a lot of hope in light of the signing of the peace treaty. There was hope that in a very few months we could complete the negotiations on the second part of Camp David -- the autonomy agreement. That would have completed the whole Camp David framework. That aspiration ultimately came to naught. I mentioned earlier the role that Bob Strauss played as the first U.S. Special Representative. He in fact took over from Secretary Vance. I suggested that Strauss was not very well suited for the role. He came to the same conclusion himself soon after taking the job -- after one or two rounds of negotiations. So he spent most of the summer of 1979 maneuvering to get himself out of the job. By early Fall, he had succeeded and was replaced by Sol Linowitz. Sol carried the negotiations through the rest of

1979 and 1980. Sol was a much better choice for the job. We all believed that although the odds were very much against reaching agreement, had Linowitz been appointed first and had he been able to carry the negotiations from the beginning, there might have been a chance that we might have achieved success in the autonomy talks. As I said, we recognized that the odds of success were slim because the Egyptians were hamstrung because they had no support from the Palestinians or the Jordanians; they could not afford the risk of making any concessions on matters of primary interest to another party. They would have been severely criticized in the Arab world if they had been perceived as giving away any Palestinian rights. It is quite likely that Linowitz would not have achieved success, but he had a better crack at it than Strauss.

Early on, Sol established a highly professional negotiating style with both Sadat and Begin. He managed to win their confidence. He worked hard; he used his staff extremely well. He was determined to achieve success and as I said, he might have done so had he been in on the process from the beginning. One of the problems he faced was that we had agreed, albeit reluctantly, to place a deadline in the famous joint letter that Sadat and Begin ultimately sent to Carter. The target for negotiations was one year. I should note that the Egyptians had initially been the party that had insisted on a deadline and that it be tied closely to the peace treaty. The Israelis also wanted a deadline, but for different reasons. Cy Vance tried to talk them out of it. His experiences as a negotiator had led him to the conclusion that deadlines were usually counter-productive. The Israelis wouldn't agree to a tight deadline, but did agree to a "target" date; they wanted to be sure that the completion of the peace treaty was not dependent on reaching agreement on the Palestinian issue. There was a connection, but it was very loose -- much less than the Egyptians wanted.

It became apparent soon after the beginning of the negotiations that such a deadline was self-defeating. In the first place, both sides became quite wary about moving too rapidly. They both felt that they had lots of time. We had very little luck in encouraging them to move faster. We were always worried that unforeseen events -- like eruptions in Lebanon which had occurred often -- could derail the whole process. So we were anxious for an early agreement. But we were unable to convince the Israelis and the Egyptians. Maybe we didn't try hard enough although we discussed the issue of pace often enough.

The first few months of the negotiations went very slowly. As we approached the "target" date, we ran into another effect which also slowed any potential progress. Particularly the Israelis, but also the Egyptians, became very nervous about making decisions under the pressure of an impending deadline. They feared of course making the wrong decisions under time pressures. So in the Spring, 1980, there came to be a tacit understanding between the two parties to essentially ignore the "target" date. During the Summer, 1979, as the negotiations struggled to begin, Dayan bowed out of the process. He had a cancer operation, which put him out of action, although never relinquishing his position as Foreign Minister. He resigned in early fall. Dr. Burg headed the Israeli team, with great caution, deference and care. Begin was actually pulling the strings. He had become convinced that he had given away more at Camp David concerning the Palestinians, the West Bank and Gaza, than he had intended. So he was determined to enforce the strictest and narrowest interpretation of the autonomy concept. That made it even more unlikely that an agreement could be reached.

In the meantime, on an intermittent basis, the administration had been conducting very quiet, surreptitious probings of the PLO views through unofficial and clandestine representatives. CIA was involved in some of them. There were also some American private citizens who were carrying messages back and forth. These contacts were often probes intended to clarify the limits of PLO acceptance of certain formulations. Hal Saunders, who was then the Assistant Secretary for NEA, was an important player. He did not have any personal contacts with the PLO, but knew what was going on; he was the principal expert in the U.S. government about PLO attitudes.

One of these contacts became known early August, 1979. That was the one that involved Andy Young, then our Ambassador to the UN. He had attended a social gathering in July, which was also "unexpectedly" attended by a PLO official. The two of them held a conversation, much to the displeasure of Vance and Carter. There was in existence at the time a prohibition against any U.S. government official having contact with any PLO representative, even though there had been some clandestine contacts. This meeting finally forced Young to resign, primarily because Vance was so angry. When the meeting became public -- after the Israelis heard about it and publicized it -- Young was asked about it. He gave an inaccurate version of events; he essentially denied that such a meeting had taken place and later had to explain the meeting and his first version of events. Vance became furious and made an issue, not so much about the meeting, but of Young's not leveling with him initially. I think Vance insisted to the President that Young be relieved of his duties. Young was very close to Carter, who was very happy that Young had taken the Ambassador's job. Vance's insistence must have created considerable friction between himself and the President. In any case, Young resigned in the middle of August. It was clear that the contact he had made with the PLO was on his own initiative. It was the subsequent attempt at "cover-up" that made Vance angry.

The questions of contacts with the PLO kept being repeated throughout the Carter administration. There was some indirect relationship involving Vance, the Saudis and the PLO in 1977. Whenever the Israelis -- and Begin in particular -- suspected any U.S. relationships with the PLO, they would generate a flurry of press leaks and attacks. That put Carter always on the defensive, having to deny any such occurrences. He was very unhappy about this situation, as many of us were. It forced us back to a strict interpretation of "PLO contacts" commitment that Carter had promulgated early in his administration. The original commitment on this subject had been made by Kissinger to the Israelis in writing in connection with the second Israel-Egypt disengagement agreement of 1975. That agreement included a provision that the U.S. would have no negotiations with the PLO. At the time, that was not interpreted as preventing the U.S. from talking to the PLO, but Carter, upon taking office, had publicly interpreted the limitation to be much more severe. That, in the minds of many U.S. officials, became self-defeating; it would have been helpful to have at least the possibility of having conversations with the PLO.

But the PLO issue kept raising its head. It came up again later that year -- November, I think -- when Brzezinski, while in Algiers, accidentally met Arafat at a large diplomatic reception. They shook hands and a photograph was taken. It was barely a contact, but it set off a huge flurry of Israeli news reports and speculation that put Carter on the defensive again. Losing Andy Young over this issue embittered Carter. It was one of the issues that beginning in 1979 and spilling over into 1980 soured Carter's views of the Israelis and Begin particularly.

Our main contacts with the PLO were taking place in Beirut, through the CIA station there. There were also people in New York, working for non-profit organizations, who had very good contacts with the Palestinians. They also played a diplomatic role which was useful, but would have been disavowed had they become public.

By early Fall of 1979, the autonomy negotiations were essentially stalled. Jewish settlements were continuing to be developed on the West Bank and Gaza, giving rise to our continuing concern which had started almost immediately after Camp David, where the issue had never been resolved. There were also troubles in Lebanon and along the Israel-Lebanon border. That forced Strauss, in his trips to the area, to discuss Lebanon as well as the autonomy negotiations. An interesting dinner was held at the Israeli Embassy on September 18 in honor of Ezer Weizman, the Israeli Defense Minister, who was in Washington at the time. He was there to discuss co-production issues, especially opportunities to co-produce fighter aircraft in Israel. He also was in Washington to discuss other weapon acquisitions. Hal Saunders attended the dinner and was attacked by Weizman publicly in front of a number of journalists -- that was his modus operandi -- on the issue of Israel's bombing of Lebanon and the U.S.'s reaction. That was only one example of the increasing number of arguments that we were having with Israel about its conduct in the post-treaty period. We had anticipated a much smoother relationship after Camp David.

In October, Strauss stated that he was not at all certain that the autonomy negotiations could be completed by the following May, as had been planned. Shortly thereafter, Dayan resigned. Linowitz became the chief U.S. negotiator in November-December, 1979. That meant that for about six months the negotiations had really stalled. So when Linowitz started his work, he only had about five months left before the target date was to be reached. That is why I say that he really had his hands tied behind him when he took the assignment. Linowitz became very active in December; he held meetings all around the region. In Israel, he saw Begin and other Cabinet officials. He brought a lot of fresh ideas and energy with him. So there was a brief period of a couple of months when there was a spurt of hope that the negotiations might be successful. Linowitz was assisted primarily by two people: Ned Walker -- a very able young career officer, now our Ambassador in Cairo -- and a young lawyer, Andy Marks, from his law firm. Both were extremely able. In addition, he relied heavily on Jim Leonard, who was his deputy, on the staff left over from the Strauss days and on our two Ambassadors to Egypt and Israel and their staffs. He also worked closely with NEA. He fit very well into the bureaucratic framework. Having negotiated the Panama Canal treaty, Linowitz was very familiar with the Washington scene and how to navigate successfully between the White House and the State Department. He used his close connections with Carter very effectively, but he worked closely and well with Vance. The Secretary never felt threatened by Linowitz as he had by Strauss.

Despite Linowitz' infusion of new ideas and energy, time passed rapidly without any discernable movement. Many other events were taking place in other parts of the world -- the USSR was becoming a threat in Afghanistan, Iran was tottering and the Iranian "student" take-over of our Embassy triggered the hostage crisis which ran on throughout the rest of Carter's term. So Carter was preoccupied with many other issues. The urgency had in fact gone out of the autonomy negotiations, as far as the U.S. administration was concerned. Periodically, the Israelis would

take some actions which would upset Carter -- new settlements, some Begin dyspeptic comments. Linowitz was working very hard trying to make progress, but he did not have the energetic support that Carter had given prior peace accord efforts. By Spring of 1980, the Iran hostage crisis became the critical issue and caused Vance's resignation.

We were rapidly approaching the May 26 target date. In early 1980, we were beginning to acknowledge that there was no chance of an agreement. Carter had finally agreed, after considerable discussion, that there was no alternative except to slog ahead, trying to get around the target date as best we could. An effort was being made in the Security Council, led by the Europeans, to amend UN Resolution 242. The question for us was whether we would veto that effort. That issue generated considerable argument within the administration. The President finally decided that we would veto any effort to amend 242 at Begin's insistence, although by this time, Carter had become very disenchanted with Begin. The latter had gone to Washington in mid-April; I went with him, as I normally did. That visit turned out to be a stand-off. Begin tabled four principles that had to be met if the autonomy talks were to proceed. Carter tried, against my advice, to finesse the whole issue; he wanted Linowitz to discuss these matters with Begin, although the principles were not to be confronted, but rather skirted. That enabled Begin to return to Jerusalem thinking that Carter had accepted his preconditions to further negotiations. Carter did get Begin's commitment to "continuous intensive negotiations over the next forty days" to try to narrow the existing differences on the autonomy agreement by May 26. That commitment fell by the wayside as soon as the Israeli party returned. There were about four or five days of negotiations, but when Begin's four preconditions became known to the Egyptians, they were furious. The talks began to disintegrate. Begin then withdrew them as preconditions, but they remained as principles. This was another illustration of Begin's very annoying, but brilliant negotiating tactics. He would make a major issue of a procedural point -- e.g., a "precondition" -- ; he would grudgingly retreat from the procedural point, but essentially not change the substantive nature of his approach. He would therefore, while taking credit for making a concession, not change his substantive position one iota. He used this ploy repeatedly and we were never able to cope with it diplomatically. Finally, the Israelis became serious during the discussions in Herzliyya at the end of April about one issue that had been Begin's fourth principle. That question concerned how Israeli security would be treated in the autonomy regime. Begin insisted that Israel had to have full responsibility for both external and internal security. Agreement was finally reached that there would be two ministerial level discussions, which turned out to be very explosive, largely as result of a massacre of a group of Yeshiva students that had just taken place in Hebron. There was a major uproar, as you can well imagine, in Israel. General Hassan Ali, who was leading the Egyptian delegation, chose the day of the funeral for the massacre victims to table the Egyptian plan. Weizman, Abrasha Tamir, Burg, Sharon and the rest of the Israeli delegation were amazed and dismayed by this poor timing. Weizman, as Minister of Defense, the chairman of the Israeli team, was statesmanlike and careful, but the Egyptians had presented their security formulation at the worst possible time. That episode was another illustration of how some discussions that might have looked even slightly promising immediately atrophied because of outside factors, the "devil in in the details", and lack of cultural empathy between Israelis and Egyptians.

The negotiating parties were preparing for another meeting when Sadat canceled it. That, among other things, led Sol Linowitz to send some very discouraging reports to Washington. Carter and

Muskie, now the Secretary of State after Vance's resignation, decided to have a full review of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. I got a call on May 9 requesting me to return to Washington as soon as possible. Roy Atherton in Cairo received a similar call. On Sunday afternoon, I met with Hal Saunders, Mike Sterner -- his deputy for the negotiations -- David Korn -- the Director of the Office for Israel Affairs -- Roy Atherton, Linowitz and others. We reviewed a paper that had been drafted in NEA which was going to be discussed with the President on the following morning. The paper postulated essentially two options: a) try to overlook the target date and find some means to keep the negotiations going or; b) try to bring the negotiations to a head, forcing an agreement in the very near future. All of us believed that the second option was a non-starter. We all preferred option (a), but we believed that Carter really preferred option (b). That forced us to consider various formulations for implementing option (b).

On the Monday morning, we met for breakfast at 7:00 a.m. with Muskie and others. We then went to the White House and met in the Cabinet Room with the President, Mondale, Brzezinski, Jordan and Bob Hunter of the NSC staff. Muskie asked Roy and me to state our views on the options, in light of the potential reactions in Egypt and Israel. I made a flat prediction that we would be dealing with the Begin government for at least the rest of 1980, though Peres and Weizman had been trying to bring the government down and to force new elections. I said that any efforts that we might make to force an immediate agreement had absolutely no chance for success because Begin was not about to make the necessary concessions. U.S. pressure would probably strengthen Begin's political support. Atherton reported that Sadat was not interested in a show-down at the time; he wanted to continue the process in a deliberate way, awaiting a possible change of government in Israel. Muskie endorsed our analyses and took the position that option (a) was the only feasible approach. Carter was very unhappy; he wanted to try to force an agreement. Carter was concerned by a comment that Brzezinski had made, which was that we had to find some way to explain to the American public and the Europeans. Some one -- either Mondale or Muskie -- would have to give a speech explaining our position. It was clear that Muskie intended to give the speech. Muskie was very much in charge and I was very impressed with the command that the Secretary had of the situation, even though he had been in office only a month. He was quietly, but firmly, asserting his authority. He put Brzezinski back in his place on a couple of occasions when the National Security Advisor seemed to get off the track. I liked the way Muskie listened and asked the right questions; he came to sensible judgements. He was very self-confident in a very quiet and effective way with the President, which also was impressive.

This entire period was sheer torture for Carter. The hostage crisis worsened right after the deplorable Begin visit to Washington. Then came Vance's resignation over the hostage rescue mission. Muskie's selection was a brilliant choice which reestablished some confidence in the country in our foreign policy. I think that had Carter been re-elected, Muskie would have continued as Secretary and would have shaken up the Department. He was an excellent Secretary for the brief period he was in office and had he been given a chance, I think he would have been a very successful one over a longer period. I don't think he has received much historical credit for his stewardship, but he steadied the President and the administration in a very rough period.

I and my State Department colleagues had been very troubled that in the wake of Vance's resignation, Carter had made a few gratuitous remarks about Vance in public which were not

called for. That was very petty, which reflected a negative side of Carter that was not pleasant. Those of us who knew Vance to be an extraordinarily able, hard-working, loyal, dedicated Secretary were upset by Carter's comments. Cy characteristically did not respond, but I think they really hurt him.

Eventually, the President made the right choice on the U.S. position on the autonomy talks. He endorsed a tactic that I had urged, which was to make clear to the Europeans that we would oppose any efforts to modify UN Resolution 242 as long as negotiations were still on-going. Any veto of an amended 242 at this time would have had grave consequences in the Arab world. Any change in the UN status quo would have derailed all of our efforts, both in the Arab world and in Israel. So keeping 242 as it was was very important if any progress was to be made in the negotiations. Carter finally agreed with that position, although by this time he was completely skeptical of any progress being made on autonomy talks. He was convinced that Begin was hopeless and no agreement acceptable to us or the Egyptians would ever be developed as long as Begin was in power. On the other hand, Carter's domestic political situation, which he understood well, prevented him from confronting Begin. So grudgingly, he agreed with us to just keep matters afloat; he left the Cabinet Room after the meeting very unhappy.

I made some notes during this meeting about Carter. He looked terribly old and tired. That was of course understandable in light of the events of the previous two weeks. At one point, we discussed the oft postponed visit of King Hussein to Washington. The King had been invited several times; he had accepted and then at the last minute, he regretted. So by this time Carter was pretty well fed up with the King. The darker side of Carter's personality came to the fore during a "stream of consciousness" diatribe during which he characterized Hussein as a three time back-stabber, a prostitute who took money from everybody, a worthless individual, etc. Everyone else around the table tried to make the point that Hussein remained very influential with the Palestinians; regardless of whether one liked the King, he had to be dealt with. Hussein was obviously distancing himself from the Camp David Accords, as the Jordanian and Arab politics dictated. Finally, Carter, after much muttering, agreed to allow Phil Habib, who happened to be in Amman at that moment, to probe whether His Majesty would entertain another invitation to Washington. Carter was reluctant to invite him again, fearing another last minute embarrassment if Hussein again did not show. Carter could not see the world through Hussein's eyes; he did not understand why it would be awkward for Hussein to come to Washington immediately following Begin and Sadat, under circumstances then existing. Hussein saw such a visit as just too politically dangerous. That meeting did not show Carter's best side.

Just before I left Washington to return to Tel Aviv, I had lunch with Sol Linowitz, who unburdened himself about Warren Christopher's ambivalence about remaining as Deputy Secretary -- after Carter had publicly chastised Vance. Muskie wanted Christopher to remain, but Carter's comments had shaken Christopher. So he was undecided, but ultimately stayed on. At that lunch, we also discussed what Muskie might do as the Department's senior manager. We agreed that he would probably make a lot of changes if he were still Secretary after the Presidential elections. We discussed some of the personnel changes that Muskie might make.

I had barely returned after the Washington review and the Presidential decisions to move along when Sadat pulled one of his classic double maneuvers. Carter had telephoned him after our

policy review and was able to convince Sadat to say publicly that he was willing to continue negotiations, even after the target date of May 26. The day after making that statement, Sadat announced that he was so shocked by an action taken by the Israeli Knesset concerning Jerusalem that he had decided to suspend negotiations. In fact, Sadat overreacted to an erroneous press report from Israel which suggested that the Begin government had just passed a new law affirming that Jerusalem was Israel's capital. The ultimate outcome of this story became very destructive to the negotiations and other factors in the U.S.-Israel relationships.

The story went something like this. Ms. Geula Cohen, an old Begin side-kick now opposing his government, was very much opposed to the peace treaty and had voted against it in the Knesset when Begin submitted it for ratification, thereby breaking with her friend. She was always thereafter trying to find some way to sabotage the autonomy negotiations. She submitted a "private member" bill which asserted that Jerusalem, in its post 1967 boundaries, was Israel's sole and sovereign capital. That bill was totally unnecessary because in fact that claim had already been staked out in 1950. But she took this route to provoke her enemies. Both the Likud and the Labor leaders in Knesset tried to get her to withdraw her bill. She resisted. A "private member" bill has to be sent to a committee of the Knesset to be reviewed and judged. When the question of referring her bill to a committee arose, everyone had to vote in favor because no member of the Knesset, even Labor parliamentarians, could vote against considering a bill that dealt with Jerusalem without wishing to commit political suicide. Of course, everyone expected that "the fix" was on and that the bill would languish in committee. The bill was referred to the Law Committee, chaired by David Glass who belonged to the National Religious Party. He was a major "dove" and opposed the bill. He was opposed to anything that might interfere with the negotiations. So the vote to send the Cohen bill to his Committee was understood to be the way to kill it. No one expected the bill to come out of that Committee for years, if ever. Glass had in fact assured many people that this would happen. However, a distorted version of events was reported in the press, generating that strong Sadat reaction to suspend the negotiations. I suspect of course that Sadat used the Cohen bill fiasco as an excuse. At the time of this uproar, a conference of the Islamic League was being held in Islamabad. Egypt was certainly going to be denounced there in strong terms for its participation in the Camp David process and for making peace with Israel. I therefore felt that Sadat may well have seized the Cohen bill as an excuse to suspend the negotiations, distancing himself thereby from Israel and perhaps putting Egypt in a better light at the Islamabad conference. In any case, the whole affair became a big mess.

There was considerable diplomatic activity in an effort to get the autonomy agreement negotiations re-started. There was a shake-up in the Egyptian government. Mustafa Khalil resigned as Prime Minister; Hassan Ali was appointed as Foreign Minister. The new Foreign Minister told Roy Atherton that the Egyptians would continue the negotiations if they had assurances from the Israelis that the infamous Cohen bill would not be supported by the Begin government if it ever were reported out of Committee. Sadat sent Begin a long letter covering this and other issues (e.g., Sharon's drive to build more settlements on the West Bank, actions of a repressive nature that the Israelis were taking on the West Bank in the wake of the Hebron massacre, etc.), in very polite terms -- the matters that were making it difficult for the Egyptians to continue the negotiations. Sadat left it up to Begin to do what he could to improve the negotiating atmosphere.

Begin's response was essentially to point out that it was the Egyptians who had broken off the negotiations and therefore it was up to them to propose a way to re-start them. Begin took the same position in a letter to Carter. I talked to many people in and out of the Israeli government. I discussed the status of the negotiations with Shamir and Burg, but there wasn't much movement. Muskie, while in Europe, tried to get agreement from the French, the British and the Germans that they wouldn't pursue amending Resolution 242 in the Security Council, so that we would have maximum flexibility in pushing the negotiations. He did not get much satisfaction, particularly from the French, but all of the Europeans agreed to a temporary cessation of their UN initiative.

At about this time, Weizman resigned as Defense Minister. That was very sad because he had been the last strong voice in the Israeli autonomy talks team and in the Cabinet against Begin's hard line position. But Weizman had finally become disaffected and abandoned his hope to become Begin's chosen successor one day. Begin was fed up with him for all the arguments he was putting up and Weizman was fed up with Begin. The ostensible rationale for his resignation was that the defense budget was being cut -- the Israeli government was going through an economy drive. Weizman insisted that the defense budget be approved at the level he had requested; when it wasn't, he resigned. Begin didn't try to persuade him otherwise. The gap between the two had by this time become so sharp -- on such issues as the settlements, the West Bank policy in general, the autonomy talks -- that Weizman was not much of a factor in Cabinet discussions. I had a very nostalgic farewell meeting with him on a Friday afternoon, as he was packing his personal belongings in the office and writing his letter of resignation, an emotional attack on Begin which, of course, soon became public. The appointment of a replacement became a major issue. Sharon desperately wanted the job, but the Likud Liberals and the Democrat Party, which was a member of the coalition, were unalterably opposed to Sharon. Moshe Arens was a possibility, but Sharon was strongly opposed to that. Eventually, the issue was resolved by Begin keeping the defense portfolio for himself, following the precedent that Ben Gurion had started many years earlier. Begin stayed as Defense Minister for the remainder of that government's term, which was well over a year until the election of 1981. He would not have given Sharon the post even then if he could have avoided it because he was worried about having Sharon in that job; he didn't trust Sharon even then. However, after the 1981 election which Begin won by a whisker, Sharon threatened to pull the two or three Likud Knesset members that he controlled out of the coalition if he was not appointed as Defense Minister. That election had been almost a dead heat, forcing Begin to form a government with only a majority of one or two members in the Knesset. That made the Sharon people swing votes that Begin could not afford to lose and therefore he had to appoint him as Defense Minister.

But from May 1980 to July 1981, Begin served both as Prime Minister and Defense Minister. He spent about one day each week in Tel Aviv at the Defense Ministry. He was supported by a very able military assistant, General Poran, who had been in that position for several years starting when Peres was Defense Minister in Rabin's cabinet. He was a moderate, serious, thoughtful individual. He kept Begin fairly well advised about on-going matters in the Defense Ministry. But it was not a very satisfactory arrangement. Begin's lack of familiarity with defense issues made it very awkward. Begin loved to play the role of Defense Minister; he enjoyed presiding at meetings of the generals; that gave him a big kick. He did make a number of mistakes as Defense Minister because the job required full time attention that Begin could not give it, even if he had

the necessary background. Nevertheless, it was better to have Begin as Defense Minister than Sharon as we all learned later before and during the Lebanon war. Weizman just decided to go into "exile" at home, hoping to be recalled at some stage, like de Gaulle.

Time passed; we did not manage to get the negotiations back on track for several weeks. In the meantime, the Cohen bill did not turn out to be as simple a matter as we had hoped, as I had been assured. As often happens in Israeli politics, the unexpected tends to dominate the headlines. The best plans of mice and men go astray. After Sadat had first suspended the negotiations, citing the Jerusalem problem, the issue became a major one in the Arab world and in the world press. That forced a lot of the world's public attention on Cohen's bill. It was discussed in the Security Council. That triggered a chain of events which ultimately produced a result 180% opposite of that desired by Sadat. In fact, the Committee had to discharge the bill and bring it to the floor, where it was passed, despite the *sotto voce* opposition of all of the Knesset members. I had been urging by phone, by cables -- that both Washington and Cairo not get embroiled publicly in the Jerusalem issue. I had hoped that Sadat would avoid it because public debate about the issue would not serve the cause of peace and certainly would derail the negotiations. Both the White House and the Department of State understood the problem, but Sadat had dramatized it, making it into a sort of Greek tragedy. No one could stop the furor. The Israeli government had no strategy for handling the debate. It had anticipated that putting it into Glass' Committee would be the end of Cohen's bill. The Labor Party dithered; it obviously opposed the bill, but didn't want to be perceived to be on the wrong side of the issue if a vote were to be taken. It couldn't afford to be against the law while the Likud supported it. Because the bill had been introduced and because Sadat had highlighted it, the Arab block then insisted on a full debate over the Jerusalem issue in the Security Council. The Arab countries also wanted a separate and full debate on the whole Middle East-Palestinian issue. After much debate, the U.S. delegation finally decided to veto any Security Council resolution that might call for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Our international legal position on Jerusalem, which we had held historically since 1948 and had postulated more often than any can remember, was that the Jerusalem issue was a matter for the parties in the dispute, who had to resolve the question themselves. Our position had always angered the Israelis even though we had stated it many, many times. Once the Jerusalem issue was raised in the Security Council, the U.S. government had to restate its historic position. By the end of July, a Jerusalem resolution had been introduced in the Security Council and a vote had been scheduled. The Arabs had drafted the resolution carefully to reflect the traditional U.S. position. That made it very difficult for us to veto it. I sent in several messages urging that we veto the resolution in order to defend the Camp David process; I thought that nothing should pass which would undermine that process.

My position was reinforced by the White House political operatives who saw Carter's re-election campaign already in deep trouble with Jewish voters. They also argued in favor of a veto; the State Department was torn, to put it mildly. As so often happens, the suicidal instincts of Israeli domestic politics surfaced and won the day. I learned later that Carter was in the Cabinet Room on Monday morning, July 28, 1980 agonizing with Muskie and other advisors on how the U.S. would vote in the Security Council. The practical choices were a) veto or b) abstain. At that very time, David Glass folded after very effective demagoguery by Ms. Cohen. He allowed his Committee to vote whether to bring the bill to the floor of the Knesset for a first reading. He later explained to me that he thought he had enough votes (8 against vs 6) in the Committee to favor

his plan which was to hold extensive hearings and thereby delay any action for several months. But he miscounted the votes and lost a procedural vote in the Committee by 8-7. The Labor Party members, having lost on that vote, then switched sides and voted to bring the bill to the floor. Two members that Glass had counted on -- a Liberal, and a very dovish member now a leader of the Meretz Party -- were not present for inexplicable reasons. They would have voted with Glass, but Glass obviously was a very inept chairman. He couldn't control his own Committee's agenda. He was under considerable pressure from the religious parties not to be perceived as "soft" on Jerusalem; that was an important factor politically for him. So on that Monday morning, a UPI ticker story was handed to Carter while he was deliberating the U.S. position; that report stated that the bill had just been sent by the Committee to the floor of Knesset. One of the participants in the Cabinet meeting told me that the ticker story hit the table with a loud thud and the debate stopped. Carter immediately saw that there was no way that the bill would not be approved by the Knesset; my arguments thereafter fell on deaf ears because its assumption was that the bill could be kept in Committee if the U.S. would veto the resolution. So Carter approved a U.S. abstention in the Security Council.

Our abstention in the Security Council gave rise to another series of events which increased the difficulties in restarting autonomy negotiations. A little later in September, Sol Linowitz achieved an extraordinary success. He persuaded Sadat to agree to a vague joint statement to the effect that negotiations would resume, that a summit would be held between them at a time and place to be agreed upon later. That statement was well received in the White House. Carter heard about it by phone from Linowitz a couple of hours before Reagan was to appear before the B'nai B'rith conference. He had the news put out publicly, slightly upstaging Reagan. That raised Linowitz' stock with the political operatives in the White House. The three days that Linowitz had spent in Jerusalem and Cairo were a tour de force. I later wrote that he had been both sympathetic, tough, and long suffering. He took the worst that Begin could dish out and then in return shook Begin up. He used background sessions with Israeli editors and American correspondents very skillfully. He gave the Israeli negotiation team a real earful about what they were risking. Linowitz' performance in Israel was very skilled and he was ably supported by Ned Walker and Andy Marks.

I thought the matter would rock along relatively smoothly until after the U.S. elections, after which I hoped that negotiations would be restarted. But during August, U.S.-Israeli relations had sagged badly. The UN resolution, in which we abstained, not only condemned Israel for its actions in Jerusalem, but called on all countries to remove their Embassies from that city. Beyond that, it generally expressed the historical U.S. position. The fact that the U.S. allowed that resolution to be adopted was not well received in Israel to put it mildly. Across the political spectrum, the Israelis resented our position. Within a few weeks of the passage of the resolution, eleven Embassies, out of thirteen, had moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. That included the Dutch who had been the first to open an Embassy in Jerusalem. The net effect of the Jerusalem controversy, which Begin had tried to use to bolster his own domestic political support, resulted in isolating Israel internationally. That was a totally unnecessary outcome. The deputies that had voted in favor of the Cohen bill then began to comment that they really had been against it all along. I noted at the time that there was never any greater accuracy to the old Kissinger adage that "Israel had no foreign policy; it only has domestic politics".

The White House and the State Department were furious with Begin, but they could not express their frustrations publicly because of the Presidential campaign which was going badly for Carter. The Jewish vote in New York was absolutely crucial if he had any hopes of re-election. In August-September, Reagan and Carter were running neck-in-neck. The whole series of events surrounding the Jerusalem tempest convinced me that if Carter were re-elected and as long as Begin remained as Prime Minister, it would be very difficult to have a useful U.S.-Israel relationship. A summit meeting was being planned for November; if Carter had won re-election, it would have been a very difficult meeting for the Israelis because I was sure that Carter would have read the riot act to them. I also thought that if this scenario were to develop, Begin would relish standing up to American pressures because that would have helped boost his domestic political support which he needed for the 1981 Israeli elections. In early September, I was predicting that the following ten months would be a very rough period for Israeli-U.S. relations. Of course, Carter lost to Reagan.

I wrote some notes on November 16, 1980 right after the final Carter-Begin meeting. I reflected on the beauty of Washington as a city, the mood of the city now that a transition in the White House had been ordained by the American public, the significance of the departure of such Senate stalwarts as Church, McGovern, Bayh, Stone, Javits, Ribicoff, Talmadge, Magnuson and others. I also speculated about who might be included in a Reagan administration. Shultz and Haig were the front runners for the position of Secretary of State. As it turned out, it was Haig first to be followed by Shultz eighteen months later.

My ostensible purpose for returning to Washington in mid-November was to accompany Begin for his last meeting with Carter -- the tenth. First I went to New York to meet Begin upon his arrival. I sat on the dais at a black tie dinner celebrating Jabotinski's 100th birthday. He was the political leader who competed with Weizman for the leadership of the world Zionist movement. We are now talking about the '20s and 30's when he led the "Revisionist" wing movement of the movement. It was a great event for Begin, who always described himself as an apostle of Jabotinski and also had tried to model himself after him. Begin had written a very long speech for the occasion. He told me that it was only one of three speeches that he had ever written personally. I had only heard him previously speaking from notes. But this occasion was so important to him that he wrote out the speech in full text. It turned out to be deadly dull -- no punch; it put a lot of people to sleep during the hour that it took to deliver. It was the worst speech I ever heard Begin give and I attribute that to the fact that he had written it out. There were 3,000 people at the dinner in the huge Waldorf Astoria Hotel ballroom, each paying \$500 for a seat. All of us had to sit from 6:30 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.(!) listening to various speeches from Jewish leaders and Begin. Then, and only then, was dinner served. Begin -- wisely as it turned out -- wanted to speak before dinner. That meant that all the other speakers had to precede him. There were dozens of people on the dais, all of whom had to be recognized and many of whom had to say something. I was sitting right next to Begin, facing the huge audience. Cameras and lights were whirring away. The only food on the table were some olives and a little bit of cantaloupe which I devoured quickly. Sometime during Begin's speech, I dropped off to sleep. The long trip, jet lag, no food finally caught up to me. I am sure that I appear in some photographs napping away right next to the principal speaker, who had characterized his remarks as the most important in his life. I don't know whether Begin noticed; at least he never mentioned it, but a lot of other people did.

After this difficult evening, we flew to Washington, where I attended the last of the Begin arrival ceremonies. I had persuaded Muskie that he should come personally to the airport to greet Begin; he normally would not have done that. I was concerned that unless the Secretary was there, the Israeli press would be writing stories about the Carter administration being so angry at the minimal support it had received in the election from the American Jewish community that it had snubbed Begin. Muskie weighed my arguments and did go to the airport; I think it was the appropriate gesture. That night, I attended a reception at Ambassador Evron's house -- I think there were more press and Secret Service agents than guests -- a sad affair. The next morning, we met at the White House. I went in the motorcade with the Israeli delegation because often the American Ambassador plays the role of "meeter and greeter" for such official occasions. As was the practice, I went to the hotel to meet Begin and to escort him to the White House. The other members of the American delegation went to the White House directly. As we walked past the Rose Garden through the South Lawn into the President's residential quarters, there we saw Carter grinning ear to ear, all teeth. He put on a fantastic show of good humor and friendship. He very graciously took Begin into the Oval Office for a one-on-one meeting for about forty minutes. The other members of the American and Israeli delegations sat in the Cabinet Room talking with each other. Brzezinski was very subdued; Jody Powell was very quiet, looking very sad. Linowitz and Muskie were very quiet. The Israelis seemed nervous. Ambassador Evron was worrying about his own press problems; he was in some difficulties with some Cabinet officers over some alleged slights he was supposed to have made toward some Republicans during the campaign. He also had been unable to arrange for a meeting between Reagan and Begin on this trip. Fortunately, both Begin and Foreign Minister Shamir soon confirmed that Evron would remain as Israeli Ambassador.

Carter and Begin came to the Cabinet Room for a further meeting that lasted about twenty minutes. There were some ceremonial exchanges around the table, with reference to some of their achievements like Camp David. Muskie made some gracious comments about both Carter and Begin. The only substantive comments were actually made by Linowitz. Both Carter and Begin had mentioned that they hoped that the autonomy talks would begin again soon and be completed. Muskie suggested that a joint summary document be drafted. Both Carter and Begin reluctantly agreed, but it was actually intended to provide the remaining members of the peace team -- Ned Walker et al -- something to work on during the transition. In fact, we could not reach agreement on such a document. Instead, Linowitz and his staff drafted their own summary which the U.S. made public. Linowitz concluded that in fact 80% of the issues had been resolved in the autonomy negotiations; he detailed the matters that had been agreed upon. He somewhat exaggerated the degree of achievement. The percentage may have been technically correct, but all the really difficult issues remained unresolved so that the toughest work remained. He urged that the new administration make a concerted effort to conclude them.

After the White House meeting, Carter and Begin met the press on the driveway. Both made warm valedictory statements. Begin was very eloquent in expressing his admiration for the way Carter was accepting the will of the American people and what that said for the strength of democracy. Then they shook hands for the last time. Carter stood with what I thought were a couple of tears in his eyes, waving goodbye to the Israeli delegation. The Camp David hopes remained unfulfilled. The Americans went back into the West Wing and I talked to the President

for about five minutes. I again noticed how visibly worn out he was. His mask had dropped off. He had handled himself with great dignity which was even more impressive because we all knew how bitter he was. He really blamed Begin for his defeat. To this day, Carter is convinced that Begin was responsible for his loss of Jewish support, starting with the primary defeat in New York by Ted Kennedy and then the election. During our conversation he was both bitter and calm. He regretted that all of his peace making efforts -- Camp David and its aftermath, non-proliferation, Panama Canal -- had brought him nothing but political grief. He was convinced that he had been beaten because he had done the right thing. He was very kind in his comments about my work and contributions. I was pleased that I had been able to make some contribution to the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, which was an enormous achievement.

He also told me that during the private meeting he had been very blunt with Begin. He hadn't seen any reason to hold back. He described for Begin clearly the disastrous consequences if the Knesset were to adopt any legislation annexing the Golan Heights, because it would destroy Resolution 242 and the peace process (NOTE: that is exactly what Begin did a year later in 1981.) Carter said that Begin had listened carefully, but didn't respond. Carter said that he had also gotten Begin's agreement not to send any military equipment to Iran until our hostages had been safely returned; and even then, he wanted the Israelis to consult with us before any shipment occurred. (NOTE: that issue was key to the Iran-gate crisis three years later.) As usual, Lebanon did not arise during the meeting between the two principals. Carter never liked to take on more issues than he had to. Even though Lebanon should have been discussed, Carter decided that it would not have served any useful purpose. At the end of my session with the President, I was impressed with his show of dignity throughout what must have been a very trying experience.

Linowitz agreed with my assessment that Carter blamed Begin for not having quietly passed the word to the American Jewish community that Carter was a true friend of Israel, which he indeed was. I noted at the time that I thought that Begin was genuinely sympathetic towards Carter during the campaign. I believed that the poor perception that the American Jewish community had of Carter came at the instigation of others in Israel -- not Begin. Later, however, I learned from conversation with some of Begin's close advisors that he had indeed concluded -- long before the election -- that Carter had outlived his usefulness. He secretly hoped for a Reagan victory because he viewed him as being more understanding and sympathetic of Israel. Begin undoubtedly felt that he and Carter had had too many disagreements by 1980. Whether Begin's personal views were communicated to the American Jewish community and therefore influenced the outcome, I don't know. But it was clear that that community in 1980 had come to the conclusion that although Carter had accomplished much at Camp David, he had expressed some very negative views about Israel subsequently and therefore was probably not worth their trust. There is no doubt that the Jewish vote swung heavily toward the Republicans, which was certainly a factor in a moderately close election.

I should note one other interesting aspect of that last Begin-Carter meeting. Up to the day before they met, Carter was toying with the idea of a summit meeting with Sadat and Begin. He had hoped thereby to conclude the autonomy negotiations and cap his foreign policy stewardship with a singular achievement. He tried to ignore that as a "lame duck" he had no leverage over the other two to persuade them to make any concessions. Muskie had somewhere gotten the notion

that Begin wanted a summit and in order to achieve that, might be willing to make some major concessions to make a successful meeting.

Before returning to Tel Aviv, I spent considerable time discussing Lebanon with Roy Atherton, our Ambassador to Egypt, Nick Veliotis, our Ambassador to Jordan, Talcott Seelye, our Ambassador to Syria and John Gunther Dean, our Ambassador to Lebanon. It was a sort of small Chiefs of Mission conference at the end of the Carter administration. We were trying to develop recommendations for the new administration. We, as usual, disagreed sharply about Lebanon, especially Dean and me. Warren Christopher had attended one of the meetings that Muskie had held with the six of us. Dean and Seelye argued that the PLO was the essential interlocutor for the administration. They felt that an American administration had to deal with that group if it were to prevent a disaster. Christopher noted sarcastically that if he had just come from Mars, he would have assumed that Carter had been firmly opposed to negotiations involving the Palestinians and that Reagan had been saying that the negotiations with the PLO should be started! That was another indicator of Carter's frustrations of not being able to deal with the PLO; he felt that his hands were tied by domestic political considerations and by precedent and prior commitments. We all agreed that nothing further could be done about negotiations until after the Israeli elections which were to be held in June, 1981. We believed that if Peres won, the chances of bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion would be more promising. But in the meantime, there was nothing to do, but hope that no new major barrier would arise and try to educate the new administration.

We did not agree with Linowitz' argument that negotiations could be resumed immediately in January and could be brought to a successful conclusion soon thereafter. We saw that Begin was too firmly planted and could not or would not move during a pre-election period. John Dean was concerned that a hiatus of a year might bring greater instability in Lebanon that he thought might only be prevented by contacts with the PLO. Seelye tended to support that thesis, although he had to admit that the Syrians were not in any position to cause much mischief for the next year. Furthermore, he also thought that the PLO was in such disarray that perhaps the U.S. position might not be too damaging to overall stability in the region. We five Ambassadors had many disagreements about strategy and tactics. Seelye particularly pushed relentlessly the thesis that until the U.S. brought the PLO into the negotiations, there would be no way to achieve a comprehensive settlement. He voiced concern that the Saudis, under PLO blackmail, might return to an oil embargo. John West, our Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, argued that the Saudis were at that moment at the point of using the oil weapon because they were so frustrated about U.S. reluctance to sell them advanced fighter aircraft and other issues. He also argued in favor of a U.S. dialogue with the PLO partly to keep the Saudis from doing anything rash. I disagreed with that position as well as Dean's views of Lebanon. He and I argued frequently and vehemently about the state of that country, all during our tenures as Ambassadors. Dean detested Bashir Gemayel and he tried to ignore the Phalange as much as possible. He always tried to find ways to force the Israelis to withdraw their support from Gemayel and to clamp down on Major Haddad in the south on the assumption that would have some undefinable positive impact in Beirut. We never managed to agree about very much.

At this point in my career, I didn't have any idea about my future. I assumed that I would be replaced in Israel, as customarily happens with a change in administrations. A number of people

asked me about my wishes and I told all of them that I would like to stay on in Israel for at least a couple of years more. I thought that the Camp David process was only half completed and I wanted to see what further progress we could make before leaving. There was no other position that I was really interested in. I had decided that I would retire if my appointment as Ambassador to Israel were terminated. In fact, I did retire from the Foreign Service in January, 1981 when, just having turned fifty with more than twenty-five years of service, I became eligible. But I remained Ambassador as a Presidential appointee for the rest of my tenure in Israel to 1985.

In fact, Haig decided -- very wisely, I thought -- to keep on all the professional Ambassadors to Middle East countries. That enabled the new administration to maintain some continuity in policy in that region. As it turned out, I stayed the longest, all the way through the first term of the Reagan administration. That Haig decision was unusual, but he was a professional himself and understood the benefits of maintaining continuity. I think he has been somewhat maligned as Secretary of State; he was a better Secretary than he has been credited.

Q: We have now reached the end of the Carter Administration. Ambassadors Strauss and Linowitz had worked on the autonomy negotiations, which had been agreed to at Camp David. What happened next?

LEWIS: At that stage of the game, it was Ambassador Linowitz' view that we had managed to get resolved about eighty percent of the outstanding issues between the Egyptians and the Israelis. He strongly urged the new administration -- President Reagan and Secretary Haig -- to become immediately involved in the negotiations and to appoint a new U.S. negotiator so that the momentum leading to an agreement would not be lost. He thought that the arrangements could be completed in a relatively short time. As a matter of fact, Linowitz wrote a long report for Carter to pass to Reagan in which he went into great detail on the state of the key issues, what we had done to mediate them and the road-blocks still facing the negotiators. That report was passed to the Reagan team, but for a variety of reasons it was not placed high on the agenda by the new team. More than six months had expired before the new administration turned to the Camp David follow-on process; they tried to resuscitate it, but by that time too much water had gone over the dam and the process lay fallow for many months. (Though what follows gets ahead of the chronology, it's relevant to the fate of the autonomy negotiations.)

In 1984, not too many months before I left Israel, I was asked by the "Dayan Center for Near East and African Studies" at Tel Aviv University to participate in a day-long symposium on the aftermath of the peace treaty with Egypt. I was asked to give a lecture on why the autonomy negotiations had failed. I did that, resulting in some unintended political flack. Right after my lecture, I was due to race from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to participate in a diplomatic ceremony -- by this time, I had become the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps. The Tel Aviv University conference took place on Columbus Day -- the "Day of the Americas" as it is called in Latin America. Israel's President Chaim Herzog was holding his traditional reception at Beit Hanassi, his official residence in Jerusalem, for all Western Hemisphere Ambassadors, including the Canadian and myself. Since I was the Dean, it was particularly important that I be present. So I rushed through the last part of my speech so that I could leave for Jerusalem as quickly as possible. I unfortunately arrived at the Herzog residence about one-half hour late, to be met by a very steely gaze from the President as I tried to creep into my rostrum seat. He didn't of course

know why I was late and although I tried to explain afterwards, he did not take it at all well. We were good friends and he finally got over my *faux pas*, but he always had been someone who stressed form and formality. It was an unfortunate result of my lecture. But not the most unfortunate.

As I was rushing through the last part of my lecture on why the autonomy negotiations had failed, I was trying to make a dramatic point, as many speakers will do, particularly if they are speaking extemporaneously, by trying to find a catchy phrase. I was trying to end my discussion with some comments about the Reagan initiative of September 1, 1982 which was the last gasp in the process. I said: "The Reagan initiative was a genuine effort to re-create momentum, to re-launch the Camp David Agreement with some embellishments, but fundamentally on the same terms. Unfortunately, the timing was, in my judgement, abysmal; the tactics of its presentation, worse; and the outcome, so far, nil". Then I finished the rest of the speech. There was an AP journalist in the audience who filed a story that night which was headlined: "American Ambassador Attacks Reagan". This came out one week before the November, 1984 election. I had never even thought about that possible political connection! Also, as I was planning to retire the next spring after 8 years, I had become more casual about my public statements -- though I always made clear on such occasions that my remarks were purely personal, non-official, "analytical" views. The NEW YORK TIMES correspondent -- Tom Friedman -- who was a friend of mine and is now widely known to the public and in journalistic circles, had not covered my speech. His editor telephoned him at 2 a.m. from New York and asked him what the story of my attacking Reagan was all about. The editor wanted to know where Friedman's story on this issue was. Tom, of course, didn't know anything about it. So the editor explained that I had been giving a lecture and AP had carried a story about it. So Friedman dashed around and filed a story, based on his interviews with a couple of people who had been there. The next day, I received a phone call from the White House which was, to say the least, chilly. I quickly sent in a cable with the full text of the transcript, which we made from a recording that had been made of my lecture. When the phrase was seen in its full context, it clearly was not quite what it sounded like on the AP ticker. Nevertheless, I got word from Secretary Shultz' office that my words had created a stir and that there was some thought in the White House that my tour of duty might be shortened from the June, 1985 target date which I had planned on. In addition to cabling in the transcript, I explained the circumstances and I also wrote a letter to President Reagan, which I sent to Shultz, with a request to the Secretary that if he thought it was necessary or useful that my letter be passed to the President with an explanation of the circumstances. Shultz did pass the letter to the President. Later, I got a gracious letter in reply from the President telling me not to worry about the episode. But there were several days after my lecture that could have been devoted to packing! That is another side of the diplomatic business. You should never forget that anything you say can end up on the front pages somewhere!

I mentioned earlier that, after his re-election defeat, Carter received Begin one last time in the White House. I should add one foot-note to the history of the 1980 campaign. The Israeli Minister of Defense, Ezer Weizman, who was a great admirer of Jimmy Carter because of the latter's role in Camp David and because he liked Carter whom he felt had been a good advocate for Israel and peace, happened to have been in the United States in October, 1980, the last month of the presidential election campaign. Weizman went to see Carter and was asked by the President to join him on one of his election trips. This got a lot of publicity in Israel. Begin was

quite upset by this alleged Weizman intervention in the American democratic process, as he put it. The Israeli view in general of Carter at this point was very ambiguous; he had been an extraordinary achiever at Camp David, but the last two years of his administration had been filled with enough elements of irritation between Carter and Begin, particularly on the settlements issue, that a sour taste had been left in the mouths of some Israelis. And we now know from good Israeli sources that Begin himself strongly hoped for a Reagan victory. In the Spring of 1980, during the primary campaign, just as New Yorkers were about to vote and sew up for Carter the nomination, a resolution on Israeli settlements, which *intra alia* called for the removal of all Jewish "settlements" in East Jerusalem, was tabled in the UN Security Council. Unfortunately, the State Department and our UN Representative voted in a fashion which allowed it to pass -- though Carter had given instructions to get all references to Jerusalem removed, or else cast our veto. There had been a communications breakdown between Carter and Vance and the UN Mission. The next day Carter tried to have the vote changed when he realized what had happened, but that cannot be done a day after a vote. The issue is one that is very sensitive in Israel, and for American Jews. Vance took the blame for the mistake, but then supported the U.S. vote when he testified later in Congress. Carter's day-late efforts to change our vote gave a public perception of vacillation; all these events gave Carter's Jewish supporters in New York considerable pause. Senator Kennedy, who was running against Carter, exploited the mix-up, won the New York primary, and thereby forced the President to battle through several more primaries in order to win the nomination. Had he won New York, the later primaries would not have been significant. Kennedy had used the UN vote to point out Carter's allegedly negative view towards Israel effectively and was able to beat Carter in New York. Carter never forgot that episode; in fact, his advisers ultimately blamed the New York Jews and Israel for his defeat, because both the President and his staff felt that had he won New York, then he would have had more time to prepare for and use his financial resources for the campaign against Reagan instead of having attention focused on more primaries. It also gave him the image of being a divisive figure in his own party.

Q: Who was the U.S. representative at the U.N. who cast the vote?

LEWIS: It was Don McHenry, but he was not really responsible. The failure was one of communications between the New York Mission and Vance and the White House. The resolution had been under negotiation for several days. It referred to Jerusalem as "occupied Arab territory". Carter had apparently given instructions that we would veto the resolution unless all references to Jerusalem were deleted. Somehow that instruction did not get relayed accurately to the Mission and in the final language negotiations, we accepted a phrase that did contain a Jerusalem formulation. That of course raised the hackles of the Israelis. Vance had authorized the vote. When Carter found out about it and with the Israeli eruption, he felt that his instructions had not been followed properly and he instructed the State Department to change the U.S. vote. Vance was called to testify the following week before a Congressional Committee and, although a loyal soldier, he essentially left the impression that he still thought that the language of the resolution was correct. Incidentally, this was one of the last events of Secretary Vance's tenure before the failed Iran rescue operation took place which led to his resignation. The U.N. incident undoubtedly helped to put Vance in a frame of mind that led to his resignation over the Iran rescue mission.

Begin and Carter met in Washington on November 13, 1980 -- right after the elections. It was a very bitter-sweet meeting -- polite and friendly on the surface, but Carter was seething on the inside. He still believed that Begin had gone back on his word on the settlements issue after Camp David and that he had been intransigent on many other issues as well. That was in addition to Carter's view that the U.N. resolution affair and Israel had somehow led to his defeat. So there were tension, but it was an extraordinarily graceful meeting because Carter put on a good front and behaved impeccably despite his private bitter views.

The new administration would have been expected to change Ambassadors in Tel Aviv, even though I was a career officer. I had always assumed that if Carter were defeated, I would be replaced. So after the election, I began to make plans to leave. It would have been a very sad time to leave because I felt that although there was still a lot of work ahead, there was a reasonable possibility of finishing the Camp David process and carry out the West Bank autonomy arrangements. I was so caught up and was so committed to the peace process that I hated to think about leaving at that moment. At some stage of the game, I wrote the customary letter of resignation which is submitted by every Ambassador to a new President. Those letters are usually written after a general request is sent from the State Department to all chiefs of mission. The President then has a free hand to accept or reject the letters. I tried to convey in my letter the feeling that if the new administration wished to have me continue, I would be delighted to do so. I also tried to explain why I felt that way. Only in late January did it became clear that would happen. So the period between November and January was suspenseful; I continued to conduct business, but I was far removed from Washington where the new administration was putting its team together. I knew some of the important figures in the new administration. Ambassador Robert Neumann, now with the Center for Strategic International Studies, was close to Dick Allen, who was to become the National Security Advisor, and to others in the new team, was asked to head the State Department's Transition Team. He had been our Ambassador in Afghanistan and I had been his deputy there for three years. I thought that might be helpful. As it turned out, he did not head the Transition Team very long because Haig, when he was named Secretary of State, had a clash with Neumann and disbanded the Transition Team. So Neumann's influence was not very great.

Q: Did you know or hear of any people who were anxious to become U.S. Ambassador to Israel?

LEWIS: As a matter of fact, I did hear of some. Whenever the Tel Aviv job becomes vacant, there are quite a few candidates, mostly self-anointed. I don't remember who the candidates to replace me were, but I remember that a couple of Jewish Congressmen were interested in the job. But as soon as Haig was well ensconced in the Department, and that could have been even in December, 1980, but certainly before the middle of January, 1981, I got the word informally that Haig had concluded that he would keep in place several career ambassadors in the Middle East including me. It so happened that a pretty good team of professionals was then in place in the area and the Secretary decided to keep it all intact. He nominated Nick Veliotos as the Assistant Secretary for the Near East. Nick and I had started out in Italy together in 1954 and he was one of my oldest friends in the Foreign Service. So I felt very comfortable with Haig's decisions and I thought that a good Middle East team had been put together.

Henry Kissinger was one of the visitors to Israel during this period between the President's

election and assumption of office. He arrived in Israel with his wife Nancy on January 3, 1981. The Israelis assumed that this was a sort of reconnaissance visit for Reagan. I doubt whether the President-elect viewed it in that light, since Kissinger was hardly ever consulted by him. But Kissinger was close to Al Haig who had been his deputy at the NSC a few years earlier. He may well have visited to take the Israelis' temperature on behalf of Haig and Reagan. I took him around to some interesting meetings. I had worked for Kissinger when he was the Secretary and I was the Deputy Director of the Policy Planning staff. He had mellowed slightly since that time, but not enormously.

I thought that Haig's decision to keep the Middle East team in place was a very good one. It made a lot of sense. Unfortunately though, the new administration decided not to take up Camp David as one of its major foreign policy threads. That is understandable; very few administrations are enthusiastic about the achievements of their predecessors. Even the phrase "Camp David" was rarely used by the new administration. There were other concerns that were much more important which explain why Reagan and Haig shied away from getting back into the negotiating process at an early date. In the first place, the Begin government was at that time in a sort of low ebb. Begin himself did not appear to be very energetic. Relations between the Israelis and the Egyptians had gotten quite frosty; there had been a prolonged period without further negotiating meetings on the autonomy issues. Carter had left the White House and the Israelis' priority turned to getting on good terms with the new administration and to solidifying their position in Washington before re-entering the negotiations with Egypt. The Israelis therefore were not too interested in moving very fast. Shamir, who was then the Foreign Minister -- he succeeded Dayan in 1979 -- went to Washington and met with both Reagan and Haig. This was during the week of February 20, 1981. Later on, Haig visited the area to become better re-acquainted with the region. During Shamir's visit, he evidently gave a pretty clear message that the Israelis were not in any hurry to resume the autonomy negotiations. In April, Haig came to the Middle East, starting in Cairo and then he came to Jerusalem. While in Cairo, I understood that he sounded out Sadat about re-starting the autonomy negotiations. Sadat apparently gave the idea a very cool reception.

By the time of Haig's visit, it was only one year before final Israeli withdrawal from Sinai was scheduled, according to the peace treaty. That was Sadat's preoccupation. He wanted to make sure that nothing interfered with that withdrawal. When Haig subsequently met with Begin, he sensed the same lack of priority for the autonomy talks. Moreover, tensions were building up on the northern border with Palestinian forays from Lebanon into Israel. On March 7, there was a very dramatic incursion; two Palestinians using motorized hang-gliders crossed over the Lebanon-Israel border in an effort to attack Jewish communities. Both were captured, but it was a dramatic illustration of Palestinian efforts to penetrate the border. The atmosphere in the North was getting increasingly tense, given the mixture of Lebanese Christians, Israelis and Palestinians occupying a small geographical area, along with the UN peacekeepers of UNIFIL. There were a lot of discussions, as we later learned, between the Maronite Christians militia leaders and the Israelis behind the scenes. These ultimately led to a *de facto* alliance that led to a war the following year. During the first half of 1981, the Lebanese Christians were provoking both the Syrians and their Muslim countrymen; they were expanding their territorial jurisdiction right under the noses of the Syrians who even then were deployed in eastern Lebanon. This situation was of far greater concern to Israel than the peace process, which had sunk to a pretty

low ebb. By the time Haig left Jerusalem that April, it was clear to him that there wasn't going to be any early opportunity to re-start the negotiations and that neither the Israelis nor the Egyptians were eager for the prospect. The Israeli lack of interest was only reinforced by the rising tensions on the Lebanon border, which preoccupied them and us for several months.

During Haig's visit, on April 5 he met for the first time with the whole Israeli Cabinet. First Haig and I met with Begin in his small private office, which was standard practice. In the meantime, the Cabinet was assembling in a conference room next door. This room is identical to the Cabinet room which is right above it. That meeting was fascinating; Haig gave the whole Israeli Cabinet the philosophy of the new Reagan administration. The Secretary was very sympathetic to Israel; he had greatly admired its military forces and had many Israeli friends from his previous government services. So he was regarded very sympathetically in Israel. Moreover, the new administration had begun with a view of the Middle East quite different from Carter. It saw the region almost exclusively through Cold War lenses. So while concerned about the Israeli-Arab problem, it viewed that situation as essentially a side show; Israel was our ally while many Arab countries were allied with the Soviets. Carter had addressed the conflict as a *sui generis* problem which was only in small part influenced by the USSR-US competition. Certainly, in the early part of the Reagan administration, the President and the Secretary and others viewed the Middle East through an entirely different set of prisms. Syria was clearly seen as a Soviet ally or satellite. That influenced U.S. views on Lebanon and the Syrian role in that country and led Haig to view the Lebanese situation in the same way that Begin did. They both saw bad Syria beating up on the poor downtrodden Maronite Christians, with the Soviet Union in the background trying to humiliate Israel, a U.S. ally. Haig, during his visit, said publicly in a press conference that a strong Israel could play a strong role against the threat of the Soviet Union and its many surrogates. That was music to Begin's ears; he saw the Reagan administration as the kind of U.S. administration that Israel had been seeking for a long time. It did not regard Israel just as a bother or a ward or a client, but it viewed Israel as a genuine ally against the Soviet threat. Begin saw the Soviet threat in the same way.

Haig also said publicly on that visit something about Lebanon which clearly put the U.S. and Israel in the same corner along with the Maronite Christians. Only a few days before his comment was made, some Christian militia forces were trying to build a road from Zahlah in central Lebanon to other Maronite areas, which would have encircled some Syrian forces. Syria reacted rather strongly against this plan; that was the beginning of escalating encounters between the Maronite Christians and the Syrians which took place over the next several months. These conflicts increasingly sucked in the U.S. administration as a mediator; it also deeply engaged the U.S. with the Israelis and the Lebanese Christians. Haig said, while in Jerusalem, that the U.S. viewed as unacceptable by any international standards the brutality used by the Syrians on the Maronite enclaves. In his private meetings, Haig was even stronger in agreeing with the Israelis about the Syrian threat. Haig had visited the region to obtain first hand information on the status of the autonomy negotiations and to establish relationships with the governments of the area. At the same time, the administration had decided and so announced a few days later, on April 21, to submit to Congress for approval an arms sales package to Saudi Arabia, which included five AWACs and some auxiliary fuel tanks for F-15s which had been sold a few years earlier -- in contradiction to the assurances provided to Israel at the time of the original sale that fuel tanks would not be sold. The fuel tanks gave the F-15s a much greater range. The decision to proceed

with this large sale to the Saudis had been made during the Carter administration; after the election, members of the Carter administration mentioned to their successors that the arms sales package would be difficult to get through Congress because of Israel's opposition and volunteered to send it then to Congress and take the onus, allowing the new administration to start with a clean slate. It was a rather gracious thing to do under the circumstances. But the Reagan team declined the offer and said they would look at it after it had taken office. When the new administration did take office, it found that a commitment to submit the sales package to Congress had been made to Saudis. The new team felt that its relationships to Israel were good enough that the Saudi package would be approved without too much opposition and therefore decided to proceed with the Congressional process. So Haig spent part of his time in Jerusalem briefing Begin on the administration's plans, pointing out its importance, the reasons why the new administration wished to proceed and why Israel should not object too strongly. The Israelis were not convinced, and the fight over that sales package went on for months in Congress, taking away a lot of the credit that the new administration thought it had picked up with Israel and its American supporters. It also cost the administration a lot of political chips to obtain approval of the sale. It was the first dark cloud on the Reagan administration-Israel relationships.

Q: Was the AWAC that much of a threat to Israel if they were in the hands of the Saudis?

LEWIS: You don't have to assume that the Saudis can use the weapon system themselves against Israel to stir up their fears. I should note that throughout my tour of duty in Israel, the issue of arms sales to Saudi Arabia arose periodically. Many were significant-F-15s, AWACs, and others. The arguments would always evolve in an almost set pattern; we would try to convince the Israelis that the Saudis could not conceivably be a threat; the Israelis would acknowledge that they didn't fear the Saudi government, but that once this highly effective modern technology was in the hands of any country like Saudi Arabia, there was no certainty that the equipment would not be operated by somebody like the Syrians. The Israelis would always produce "evidence" that would prove that if an Arab state-Israeli war were to break out, a benign Arab country might well be found in the anti-Israeli coalition or one might even transfer forces to the Arab combatant. We could never convince the Israeli that the arms bought by Saudi were totally non-threatening; they were debates within the Israeli military establishment about the issue and they didn't take the threat as seriously as they made it out to be when debating the matter with the Embassy or Congressmen or the President. But the military did have a concern, particularly about the most advanced U.S. military equipment falling in the hands of any Arab government. They would have preferred, interestingly enough, to see the best Soviet equipment in Arab hands because they always took the view that they had American equipment and therefore did not want potential Arab adversaries to have the same equipment, because that permitted the Arabs to train on it and to learn its capabilities as well as its limitations. The Israeli military felt that its equipment would be better countered by other American equipment than by Soviet arms which they felt was inferior. So the Israelis fought the AWACs deal, but were ultimately beaten on it with a major effort by the administration, unnecessary in some ways.

Let's return to Lebanon, where matters were heating up, especially in the center of the country between the Christian and the Syrians. On April 28, 1981, the Israelis shot down two Syrian helicopters in the Bekaa Valley; the helicopters were thought to be attacking the Christian militia in the area. This decision was a very important event in the modern history of the area. It was a

violation of a tacit "red line" agreement between Syria and Israel. In 1975, during the Ford administration, when Syrian forces first moved into Lebanon -- ironically, initially at the request of the Christians then in bitter conflict with the PLO -- the Israelis became very concerned about that development. Henry Kissinger mediated a secret understanding, that was never in writing, called "the red line" agreement. It essentially drew an imaginary line in southern Lebanon which would never be crossed by Syrian forces, thereby leaving a buffer zone abutting the Israeli border free of Syrian forces. As long as the Syrians did not cross the line, the understanding was that Israel would not confront Syrian forces in Lebanon. There were some other provisions in the understanding; one was that Israeli over-flights for observation purposes would not be interfered with by the Syrians. That permitted the Israelis to make aerial observations of events taking place in Lebanon. The agreement also included an understanding that the Syrians would not move surface-to-surface missiles into Lebanon because they threatened Israeli over-flights. Finally, the Israelis agreed not to attack any Syrian planes over Lebanon.

The shooting down of the two helicopters was certainly interpreted in Damascus and in knowledgeable circles in Israel as having been a violation of the "red line" agreement. Begin justified the action by saying that Israel had never agreed to let the Syrians take over Lebanon and annihilate the Christians. He had always viewed the Lebanon from a very acutely Christian angle; he identified the Maronite Christians as another small minority in the Middle East which was surrounded by Arabs with their existence at risk. He saw a natural affinity between the Christians and the Israel; both were in isolated positions. He was also very impressed with Camille Chamoun, whom he met secretly. He had also met Camille's sons and the Gemayel brothers -- Bashir and Amin -- all secretly when they were brought to Israel for meetings with Israeli leaders. Camille Chamoun had made a great impression on Begin as a great patriarch, a man of great strength and dedication to his people; they were of the same generation. Begin also became very fond of Camille's son, Bashir. When Begin authorized the shooting down of the helicopters he must have known about the "red line" agreement. He had been both Prime Minister and Defense Minister in the last half of 1980 and the first half of 1981. Someone must have briefed him on the agreement, but he did not give it the importance that the Labor Party certainly would have, since it had been in power when the agreement was negotiated. Begin's action resulted in the Syrian reacting by also breaking the agreement; they moved surface-to-air missiles into the Bekaa Valley. That was the beginning of the crisis escalation. Over the period May-June 1981, we spent an enormous amount of diplomatic energy trying to avoid a Syrian-Israeli war.

Once the missiles were in place, Begin started to call me in periodically to give me stern warning that unless the missiles were removed, the Israelis would destroy them. He hoped of course that we would persuade Assad through diplomatic means to pull them back. They did threaten Israel's ability to monitor what was going on in Lebanon and therefore were viewed very seriously in Jerusalem. Begin was also making public statements, giving threatening signals through the media. On May 4, I delivered a letter from Reagan to Begin in which the President asked Israel to hold off any military action against the missiles, in order to give the U.S. time to make an effort to reduce tensions through diplomatic efforts.

The following day, Reagan made a very shrewd move by announcing the appointment of Philip Habib as his special emissary for the region. Habib was to find a way to mediate the Israel-Syria

dispute in order to avoid a war. Begin agreed in a reply to the President to let some time pass to allow diplomacy to have a chance. (He was not anxious to get into war with Syria.) Habib began to shuttle in the area, traveling back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem. Begin first met Habib on May 11, when the latter came to Israel after having visited Syria where apparently he delivered a Reagan letter to Assad. Before that meeting, Begin had said to the Knesset that twelve days earlier, on April 30, the Israeli air Force had been ready to attack the battery of SAM-6 missiles that were poised on the Beirut-Damascus highway, but that bad weather had aborted the mission. That sent a strong signal to the Syrians.

Begin was a very interesting figure in this period. Not long after the beginning of the year, the Cabinet began to fall apart. There were some scandals; there was a lot of internal back-biting among his coalition; and Begin's popularity was sagging. He became so frustrated, especially by the internecine warfare within the Likud Party ranks which generated petty squabbles that everyone wanted Begin to referee, that he went into one of his periodic states of depression. He had been subject to a manic depressive syndrome for many years. During the down phases he became almost passive. He would come to the office and go through the motions, but there was no energy, he didn't pay attention to details as he usually did and became almost another person. We are now in late February and he was entering into one of these episodes. At the same time, the Cabinet was coming unraveled to such an extent that an election was called for the end of June. In late February, 1981, there was a poll that had the Labor alignment 20 percent ahead of the Likud, which was an unprecedented margin. Labor therefore was riding high, after having been out of government since 1977. It was very confident, while the Likud was disorganized and depressed about their election prospects. Begin ignored the situation; gave no leadership; showed no interest in the forthcoming election. The campaign was developed without his participation. He was depressed and distant. One got the impression that having almost finished his first term and having achieved peace with Egypt, he didn't really care about anything else. He came back to life temporarily to worry about the Lebanese Christians, but essentially Begin was often rather detached from events in this period of time.

Begin met Habib at the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv. Their relationships developed in a fascinating way. Phil Habib was quite an extraordinary diplomat -- very ebullient, street-smart, tough, having acquired many traits from a Lebanese-Jewish community in New York where he grew up. He handled Begin with consummate skill, deferring to him properly, while at the same time engaging him intellectually in a very effective way. He also exhibited the necessary warmth and empathy towards Israel that is required if you are going to be successful with the Israelis. For several weeks, Habib played the role of providing an excuse for Begin not to bomb the missile sites. It is clear in retrospect that, while he was initially very aggressive on the issue of the missiles, Begin was under strong restraints from his military and others in the Cabinet and perhaps even from his "second thoughts". It appears that a conclusion may have been reached that this was not a war that Israel need to be engaged in, but after having made such a public commitment to remove the missiles, it was very tough not to bomb them. Begin clutched Habib like a life-line since he provided the excuse not to proceed with the threats. We came to understand this very quickly and Habib played his role very well. He went back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem; he wasn't moving the subject forward very much, but he kept up the dialogue.

In May, 1981, the Histadrut, the large Israeli labor federation, had its election. Traditionally, Histadrut membership had been about two-thirds of the population and therefore its elections were sort of a preview of the general elections. All the predictions, based on the polls, were that the Labor Party which controlled the Histadrut, would just destroy the minority Likud representation. But it didn't happen; the Likud held its own -- didn't make any gains, but didn't weaken either. Somehow, when Begin saw those election returns, he was revived as if a spark of electricity had gone through his political body. Within a day or two, he had snapped out of the depression and he came out fighting. From then on until the end of June, he campaigned with extraordinary effectiveness both in the streets and later on TV. He had almost superhuman energy and was in a mood to brawl; he went after Peres hammer and tongs. The 1981 election turned out to be the dirtiest in Israel's history. It was the first election in which the Sephardic vote became a major, if not predominant, factor. The Moroccans and the other Sephardic voters, who had been members of the Likud for a long time, started going after Peres, the Labor candidate, at public rallies with tomatoes, insults and other disruptions -- very nasty. It became so violent that the Labor Party, which was by then essentially a middle and upper class Party despite its name, was so taken aback that it didn't know how to react to these tactics. Begin was not ostensibly encouraging these tactics, but his inflammatory oratory -- he was a great speaker -- egged his partisans on. By the end of May and early June, the polls had changed and the Likud was closing the gap rapidly. Just at that point, on June 6, the Israeli Air Force attacked and destroyed the nuclear reactor just outside of Baghdad. When that raid became public, it was another shot in the arm to Begin's campaign. He pulled ahead of Peres; during the last couple of weeks of the campaign, they were neck-and-neck right down to the wire. By the beginning of the last week, a sympathy backlash had developed for Peres resulting from the nasty campaigning and Labor pulled ahead again in the polls. The election was held on a Monday; Saturday night, Labor held its final rally in Tel Aviv in front of City Hall at the Kings of Israel square and at that time, the polls were showing Labor ahead by a couple of percentage points.

Then an odd event took place. There are indeed events that change the course of history and this was one of them. As of that Saturday night, the polls were indicating a Labor Party victory two days later. The final rally was huge; as is customary, there is a "warm-up" period of approximately an hour before the main speakers show up with singers and other entertainers keeping the crowd in a good mood. The Labor Party campaign managers had hired a well-known night-club entertainer by the name of Dudu Topaz to tell some jokes. During his act, he made a crack, which, although hard to translate, used the Hebrew word "chacherim", which in a rough translation refers to low-life, "neer do wells", "bums". Topaz said something like: "Well I am glad that there aren't any of those "chacherims" here tonight. We all know where they are". He was of course referring to the Sephardic mobs that had been attacking Peres. Begin was driving from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem that night, after the end of the Sabbath, to be present at the normal Sunday morning Cabinet meeting. He heard the Topaz remark on the radio; since he was such a brilliant political tactician, he immediately saw an opening. As soon as he arrived in Jerusalem, he gave a radio interview which was repeated several times over the next twenty-four hours. The essence of his remarks was to remind his Sephardic followers how the Labor Party regarded them; it had called them "bums" openly. This one remark, according to the polls, resulted in a change of four seats in the Knesset -- predicted to be Labor seats, but became Likud -- between Saturday night and Monday morning. By the time all the votes were counted, Likud had one more seat in the Knesset than Labor, which gave Begin the opportunity to form the coalition.

That is how Arik Sharon became Defense Minister. Begin had kept him out of the Defense Ministry after Weizman's resignation by keeping that portfolio for himself because he did not trust Sharon's political judgement -- for good reasons. Arik was pressing all the time to become Defense Minister in light of his distinguished military career. The Likud had won by only one vote; Arik controlled three Likud votes -- his own and two others. He threatened Begin that if he did not become Defense Minister, he and his two friends would "take a walk" and make the Likud a minority party. That forced Begin to give Sharon the Defense Ministry. Had Topaz not made that crack, Sharon would not have become Defense Minister; Begin would not have been Prime Minister; there would not have been a Lebanon War; there would have been no Sabra and Shatila massacre; and the whole course of the next five or ten years would have been different. Without these events, more peace after Camp David could have been a real prospect; the autonomy negotiations would have been renewed -- had the Lebanon war not eliminated all possibility -- and so many other hopes might have been achieved.

Some have argued that the air strike on the Iraqi nuclear reactor guaranteed Begin's re-election, but when I carefully reviewed the polling data for this period, it becomes eminently clear that the reactor strike only temporarily reinforced the change of direction indicated by the polls, and because of the backlash for Labor at the end, the strike was not the determining factor. The reactor strike did however have an enduring effect on the peace process, which at this time was in very low gear. For several months we had tried to persuade Sadat that it was time for another Begin-Sadat meeting in order to give the peace process a boost and bring the Camp David accords to complete fruition. Finally, Sadat had agreed, and he and Begin did meet at Ophira--now known as Sharm el Sheikh -- at the bottom of the Sinai Peninsula. Israel was still in control of that part of the Sinai; the withdrawal had not been completed. So Sadat came to Israeli occupied Sinai. The meetings were very pleasant; the two principals reached some agreements about restarting negotiations. They got along very well. Two days later, the Israelis hit the Iraqi reactor. The Egyptians felt totally betrayed. All over the Arab world, people added two and two and got five. All of Egypt's Arab enemies, which were quite numerous in these days, accused Sadat not only of groveling before the Israelis, but also of plotting with them just two days earlier to strike an Arab state. Many Arabs were already furious with Egypt for having broken the solidarity of the Arab world by making peace with Israel and many Arab countries were already boycotting Egypt. You could never dissuade the Egyptians or any Arabs from their conviction that either Begin had told Sadat in advance of the strike, or that he had deliberately ensnared him in the appearance of collusion by insisting on the date of the meeting and soon thereafter launching a strike. That suspicion of the Israeli leadership fed the old stereotypes of the "tricky, wily Jews" and had a very negative effect on Israeli-Egyptian relations for a long time. In fact, one might say that the relationship still suffers from that series of events; Mubarak has refused to meet with Shamir since Sadat's funeral in 1981. One reason, as we understand it, has been Mubarak's suspicion that Shamir would use the meeting to set the Egyptians up in some way; in other words, the Israelis would use the meeting to humiliate Mubarak as Sadat had been humiliated by Begin.

Q: Were there any warnings about Israeli thoughts on the reactor and the need to take it out?

LEWIS: There were a lot of clues at the time. I learned about the strike in one of the most dramatic episodes of my time in Israel. On a Saturday evening, my wife Sallie and I had been at

a party in Kfar Shmaryahu and we were then due to go to the Hilton hotel in Tel Aviv for dinner for the visiting head of City Bank, Bill Butcher. He had been in town meeting a lot of the financial leaders of Israel. The dinner was being given by the Minister of Finance. Before the dinner, I had promised to give Butcher a briefing on the Israeli political and economic scene. We agreed to meet at his hotel for that before dinner. As Sallie and I arrived at Butcher's hotel, we learned that Congressman Jack Kemp, now the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, was with Butcher. So in effect, I ended up briefing both, although I had already talked to Kemp. Butcher had a junior suite which had a sitting area separated by a low partition from the bedroom. We were discussing Israel's economy when a phone call came for me; the Embassy duty officer and my office had my schedule and knew where I would be. It was the Prime Minister on the other end, who said: " Sam, I would like you to convey urgently a message from me to President Reagan. About one hour ago, our Air Force destroyed the nuclear reactor near Baghdad. all the planes have returned safely. Please transmit that news as quickly as possible". I was sitting on the edge of the bed and I paused briefly. Then I said: "All right, Mr. Prime Minister, I'll get in touch with Washington right away. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the event". He said: "We will give a full briefing to your military people right away". So I hung up the phone and called the Embassy and asked my aide who was in his office, to come to the hotel immediately. I would meet him outside the door. I returned to the sitting area and I calmly continued the briefing on the intricacies and troubles -- which were great then -- of the Israeli economy. Sallie looked at me and she knew something was going on. I didn't mention the Prime Minister's message. Then there was a knock on the door; I went and opened it. Our military attaché and his assistant were there. We went out in the hall; shortly thereafter my aide appeared. The military officers were on their way to the Ministry of Defense for a special briefing. I wrote out a "Flash" cable to the White House with Begin's message. My aide took it back to the Embassy and sent it. The officers went to MOD and got the details which they reported to Washington through their channels. Then I went back into the hotel room, completed the briefing and went to dinner. It was supposed to be attended by five ministers, but only two showed up -- Modai, the Minister of Energy, and Sharon. Some others drifted in later. I told Sallie on the way to the dinner what had happened. She was sitting next to Sharon at dinner. As soon as they got to the table, Sharon grabbed Sallie by the arm and asked whether I had told her anything. She said: "Told me what?". He looked at her quizzically and said: "He did tell you, didn't he?". We learned later that Begin had summoned all the Cabinet members on Saturday afternoon to his house in Jerusalem without telling them what the purpose of the meeting would be. Once there, he briefed about the air raid, which had already begun, but he wouldn't let anyone leave the house until the planes had returned safely to their bases. He wanted to avoid leaks and to keep the Cabinet together while the mission was going on. That is why the invited Ministers trickled in so slowly to the dinner in Tel Aviv. At this point, the information was still secret and in fact there was a big internal debate within the Israeli high command as to whether it was better to keep it secret. If the Iraqis wanted to go public, that was one matter; there was a strong feeling that Israel should keep quiet otherwise. Also the Iran-Iraq war was going on and the Iranians had already tried to attack that reactor previously, but had been unsuccessful. So there could have been some ambiguity about the attacker, at least publicly. As it turned out, Begin and his colleagues were too full of pride about the extraordinary professionalism of the attack to keep quiet very long and the story leaked out rather quickly -- in about 24 hours -- and eventually it was officially announced by the Israeli government.

When I heard the news from the Prime Minister, it came as quite a shock. We had of course heard discussions of the possibility and therefore were not totally surprised. Almost a year earlier, I had been called in by Begin and the Defense people several times; the Israelis were deeply concerned about Iraq's developing nuclear capabilities. The American and Israeli intelligence communities were exchanging intelligence on the status of that reactor. There was a big disagreement between the American and Israeli experts about when the reactor might go into operation and might start producing what might be potentially nuclear weapons-grade fuel. Through the fall and winter, we exchanged intelligence and assessments, with U.S. experts feeling that completion was several years away while the Israelis were saying that it was one or two years away. We all agreed that the Iraqis were seeking to develop the capability for a nuclear weapon through the use of the production of enriched uranium from the reactor. The debate was about how far the Iraqis had come and how close they were to achieving that production. We tried through diplomatic channels to encourage the French and Italians to stop their companies from assisting the Iraqi effort. They were supplying the low enriched uranium which would fuel the reactor initially. We were not having much success. Throughout early 1981, there were some unexplained events -- a laboratory in France would blow up or a reactor core would be mysteriously damaged before shipment or a couple of scientists were kidnapped and disappeared. The assumption was that Israel was not just relying on our diplomatic effort to slow down the project, but were using their own clandestine means to try to stop it. But it kept going forward and as the winter progressed, I began to hear and relayed to Washington a rising Israeli refrain: "Either the US does something to stop this reactor or we will have to!". Tom Pickering, who was then the Department's Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology, came for a special visit in late autumn to share with the Israeli our best understanding of the status of construction of that reactor. We exchanged views on the progress of the project. It was an effort on our part to impart the seriousness with which we viewed the construction of the reactor and to forestall what eventually took place anyway. There were continual leaks in the Israeli press about the seriousness with which Israel viewed the Iraqi efforts. The Israelis were using a lot of different ways to signal us that we had better find ways to stop the project or else they would have to do it themselves.

All the messages on the reactor were of course "Top Secret" with very limited distribution. After Carter's defeat, as is customary, the government agencies prepare elaborate briefing papers for the transition teams to bring the new administration up to date on the outstanding issues. In the foreign affairs field, the key issues that will confront the administration in the first three months of its tenure are supposed to be identified. I had sent a whole stream of messages about our conversations with the Israelis, Begin's warnings and our sharing of intelligence information. I was concerned that this issue might be over-looked in the transition. So I contacted Washington informally to make sure that a full paper on this subject was being prepared for the transition team. The paper was prepared, but under very restrictive terms -- very few copies, very limited distribution. I assumed that the paper would go to Haig and that it would receive appropriate attention. However, there seems to have been a real bureaucratic "glitch" and the top people in the new administration were never made aware of this situation, even though both State and the intelligence community had full documentation. The transition paper wasn't considered in the White House at all. Moreover, about the turn of the year, the subject seemed to have disappeared from any conversations. The Israelis stopped complaining; they stopped calling me in; they stopped press leaks. The subject just disappeared. In retrospect, that should have been a clear tip

off. But we were busy with other matters that I discussed earlier, especially the Syrian missiles in Lebanon. We now know that Begin decided around the first of the year that the Israelis would have to attack the nuclear reactor; they couldn't wait for it to go "critical". His experts were telling him, as he explained to me later, that if the reactor were bombed after it had gone "critical" there was a real risk of nuclear material fall-out over Baghdad which would have killed a lot of innocent civilians. The reactor had to be destroyed before it went "critical". I think Begin was genuinely concerned about the prospect of civilian casualties. As the spring moved on, the Israeli experts were predicting that the plant could go "critical" as early as the end of the summer. Our people, on the other hand, were still predicting that this stage would not be reached for another two years at least.

The Israelis must have begun preparations for the strike around the first of the year 1981. They practiced the bombing runs on the Negev desert in secrecy. The whole episode has been written up subsequently in various memoirs, but the U.S. government somehow just lost sight of the whole issue in the first part of 1981, and I'm afraid I "went to sleep" about it also. There have been subsequent allegations that Al Haig was aware of the situation because the Israeli Chief of Intelligence, General Seguy, who was in Washington in February, had allegedly warned Haig. I recently asked Haig about this story and he insists that he had no knowledge of the situation and had never been briefed by any of the Israelis. So, when on June 6, my flash message reached the White House, Reagan and Dick Allen, then the NSC Advisor, were thunder-struck. The President had been a great friend and admirer of Israel during his life -- he had given speeches on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal and had a lot of Jewish friends -- and he liked Begin, although he had only met him once when he was Governor of California. He admired Begin's anti-communism and tough stance and there was a good deal of mutual admiration. Reagan couldn't understand how the Israelis could have taken this action without checking with the United States or talking or consulting with us. He was quite angry. After the attack, there was an uproar in the Arab world and at the U.N. and in the media world-wide. There was an immediate effort to condemn Israel in the Security Council. Haig was also surprised, but his professional admiration for the attack and his understanding of the security implications of the reactor were such that secretly he felt that it had been a good idea, although he couldn't say so publicly. He did his best to minimize the U.S. reaction to the air raid, but there was a considerable amount of political pressure developing in the United States and the President himself was quite angry. I learned all of this through a telephone call from a friend of mine on the NSC. I then realized that maybe the new administration did not know about the history; otherwise it would not have been so totally surprised. I sent a long cable to the White House, summarizing the history that led up to the air attack, including the diplomatic exchanges, the Israeli warnings and other events. I was told later that my cable was one of the few cables that was ever shown the President. He read it and said that it did put a different light on the situation and his anger was somewhat assuaged. Then there was a lot of scurrying trying to find out what happened to the paper written for the transition team and there were some scapegoats fingered. It was not a good time for certain people. As far as Reagan was concerned, this was his first indication that the Israelis were pretty independent and while they admired the U.S. and they liked him, they did have their own agenda, which meant that we would not always agree.

[August 6, 1991] (A continuation of the section dictated on July 25, 1991)

LEWIS: I would now like to expand on some themes that I discussed earlier. A number of people have asked over the years why the Reagan administration did not accept President Carter's and Ambassador Linowitz' advice and immediately appoint a new negotiator for the autonomy talks. This might have kept up the momentum of those talks, which by January 1981 had made considerable headway, although they had not yet come to the hardest issues. One of the reasons was politics; it had been Carter's Camp David, not Reagan's. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, the two administrations had a different perspective on the Middle East. In addition, the new Reagan administration was diverted from the Middle East in the early days of its tenure; when the new administration took office, it wanted to make sure that the peace treaty and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Sinai, which was scheduled to be completed by April, 1982, would proceed on schedule without any "explosions" intervening. Under the Treaty, the U.N. was required to field a peace-keeping force to separate the Israelis and the Egyptians after Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai was completed.

At the time of Camp David, we understood that there was considerable opposition to Camp David in the Arab world. The Russians were not all sympathetic to our bilateral efforts, as they correctly saw the Camp David process. During the Camp David negotiations, we added language to the agreement which would protect it if the U.N. did not do what it was supposed to; i.e., provide the peace-keeping forces. There was actually an exchange of letters to reinforce the accord language, by which the United States assured the two other parties that if the U.N. didn't provide the "peace keepers", we would assure the provision of the necessary troops and station them wherever necessary. As we had feared might happen, the UN Security Council did not approve the Camp David accords or the Peace Treaty, yielding to the threat of a Soviet veto. I believe that we didn't push the issue hard enough in the Security Council in order to force that veto; it would have been an interesting illustration of the Russians' alleged commitment to peace. But since all the Arab states, except Egypt, were also opposed to the agreements, the Carter administration waffled and didn't push the issue as hard as it should have, thereby relieving the U.N. from having to take any formal notice of this piece of history. The U.N. didn't even register the Accord or the Peace Treaty!

1981 arrived and only one year was left to the final phase of Sinai withdrawal and there was no UN peace-keeping force in sight. The administration therefore had to face the alternative as stipulated at Camp David. Ultimately, the United States put together what became known as the Multilateral Force and Observers (MFO) which was deployed to the Sinai where it still exists today. During 1981 and into 1982, a lot of diplomatic energy was expended to put the MFO together. Michael Sterner, who had been our Ambassador in Bahrain after having been a deputy assistant secretary in the NEA Bureau, was named the special negotiator to bring the MFO into being. The U.S. devised a tripartite agreement -- Egypt, Israel and the U.S. -- which brought into being a unique peace-keeping force, modeled on the U.N. forces in Lebanon and elsewhere, but substituting for the U.N. Secretary General an American Director General who was to be based in Rome, a military commander drawn from Norway and so on. Throughout the Spring of 1982, Secretary Haig, with Ambassador Sterner doing the actual negotiating, was pushing Israel and Egypt very hard to agree on the ground rules for this peace-keeping force. Incidentally, we achieved a major breakthrough on the financial arrangements which should be a precedent for U.N. peace-keeping efforts; since the forces were being inserted into the Sinai to the advantage of Egypt and Israel who wanted them to safeguard the Peace Treaty, both countries agreed to pay

one-third of the costs each, with the United States also paying one-third. So the costs of MFO has always been shared equally by the three parties.

In a sense, we were doing the U.N.'s work for it. I and some others were annoyed by this, but the problem was of course that the Security Council was ham-strung by the Russians and their veto. Also, as I said earlier, I don't think that the U.S. government pushed the issue hard enough. By the time the Reagan administration took office, it was too late to do anything in the U.N., even if the Reagan administration had wanted to, which was highly unlikely in view of its generally negative view of the U.N.

In June 1981, Sterner was able to announce that agreement on the MFO had been reached. The balance of the year was devoted to U.S. diplomatic efforts to find countries willing to send some military detachments to the Sinai. Initially, a lot of countries, including those that had often contributed to U.N. peace-keeping efforts like the Scandinavians, were very reluctant because this was not to be an U.N. operation. They didn't see the MFO as an appropriate vehicle for them. We had to send emissaries all around the world; we had to cash in a lot of "political chips" in order to get countries to contribute small forces. It was important that we have a true multi-lateral force and ultimately approximately fifteen nations did take part and are still part of the force today. By the latter part of 1981, we had pledges from Colombia, Fiji and one or two other countries, but the Europeans were being very reluctant. We wanted some European involvement and ultimately we managed to get force contributions from France, Great Britain and Italy, but only after much high level pressure from the Reagan administration. After we had exerted the pressure and had obtained reluctant participation by these European countries, the Israelis then gave us a lot of grief about these countries -- they didn't trust the French, in particular, and weren't enthusiastic about the British or the Italians either as neutral peace-keepers. As late as January 1982, Begin was still complaining about European participation and wondering whether he could really accept them. That of course insulted the Europeans a great deal when they learned about Israeli objections.

The whole MFO story -- its design, its implementation -- is a little known bit of history. It took a lot of energy in 1981 and it was a tremendous success; it was one of the great successes of American diplomacy, which is scarcely noted today because it has been so successful. The force is about 2,500 men. The Israelis insisted on a large American component because we were the only ones they trusted to stay in the Sinai if there were trouble. They always remembered the 1967 situation when the U.N. suddenly pulled its forces out of Sinai at the Egyptians' request, which opened the door to the 1967 war. In the MFO agreement, there is a specific reference to the fact that the force must stay in the Sinai unless requested by both parties to withdraw. That barred a repetition of the 1967 experience; nevertheless, the Israelis wanted a large American contingent. It was difficult enough to get the U.S. to commit to a contingent at all but finally the U.S. agreed to commit one airborne battalion -- roughly 1,000 men, which alternatively is drawn every six months from the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions. Over the years, these troops have gotten good desert training out of this assignment because the American battalion is deployed in the lower part of the Sinai toward Sharm el Sheikh, covering about the lower one third of the coast. Initially there was also a Fijian battalion and a third battalion made up of a number of other forces and there were some headquarters units. The Italians supplied three mine sweepers, which is the major component of the MFO Navy, headquartered at Sharm el Sheikh to patrol the

Strait of Tiran. It is a very interesting operation which has been going since 1982 with no incidents. There have been some diplomatic problems, but it is the most successful example of multilateral peace-keeping in a difficult part of the world. One reason that it works is that both Egypt and Israel want it to, but that would not have been enough by itself.

That issue was one of several that were being dealt with during this period. I was involved very directly with the design of the force and joined Sterner in many of his negotiating sessions. I was very much involved in the whole process up to launch date.

One other issue was the Syrian missile crisis which I mentioned earlier. Around June, 1981 Habib and his mission were diverted from the Syrian missile problem to trying to avoid a war between the PLO in Lebanon and the Israelis. He began to expend more and more of his energies on this problem. In early July, the border area heated up considerably. There were PLO rocket attacks on July 15, for example, on the cities of Nahariyya and Qiryat Shemona. There were three civilians killed and 17 wounded. That was a beginning of an escalation which went on for several days, during which the Israelis were retaliating with air strikes, with increasing force, in an effort to take out the PLO's Katusha rockets and long range artillery in South Lebanon. The PLO increased its bombardment of the cities and particularly Qiryat Shemona. On July 17, there was a heavy Israeli raid on PLO headquarters in West Beirut during which an estimated 150 people were killed. That raid triggered a Washington reaction because we were in the process of delivering some F-16s to the Israelis which they had earlier procured and paid for. The Reagan Administration decided to suspend deliveries as long as the air raids continued, which it considered a "disproportionate reaction". That, of course, infuriated Begin. Habib had been sent to the area to try to reduce tensions and to essentially mediate between the PLO and the Israelis in order to achieve a cease fire, at least. The U.S. could not officially speak to the PLO, so that Habib had to communicate with the PLO through the Lebanese and Saudi Arabian governments. That meant that he had to shuttle from Jerusalem to Beirut and back again to try to calm the passions without ever being in direct communications with the PLO. Although Habib was formally a Presidential envoy, he was reporting to Haig and to the Department. He did stay in touch with the White House and vice-versa, but as a disciplined Foreign Service officer, he knew that his main contact was the Department and the Secretary.

Early in June, as I have mentioned, the Israelis had struck the Iraqi nuclear reactor. That caused a big uproar in the world and in the U.N. which finally forced the U.S. -- very reluctantly -- to join in a resolution of condemnation of Israel, which was passed by the Security Council unanimously. The Israeli attack infuriated the White House and it ordered a suspension of aircraft delivery to Israel because these aircraft had been procured under the Arms Export Act which allowed sales only for the purposes of self-defense. Deliveries were suspended while the U.S. lawyers were studying the question of whether the attack was for self-defense. If they had found that Israel had been in violation of the law, the Act would have required the U.S. to suspend deliveries of all military material to Israel. The suspension of F-16 deliveries lasted through the second half of June and all of July. It became a tremendous issue between Begin and Washington. The Israelis were highly offended and angered by Washington's actions, particularly when at the same time, the administration was pushing a large sale of AWACs aircraft to Saudi Arabia which was pending Congressional approval. By early July, Washington was under severe pressure from American supporters of Israel and by Israel itself which resented

the way it was being treated. Finally Reagan decided that it was time to try to calm the rough waters and he sent Bud McFarlane, then the Counselor in the State Department and a close collaborator of Haig's, to Israel.

Bud arrived in Israel on July 11, 1981. His aim was to reach some kind of joint US-Israel statement which would paper over the dispute between our two countries over the air raid on Iraq and would permit the resumption of the arms deliveries. McFarlane had not had much experience in the Middle East and was very nervous about his mission, which was a tough one to be sure. I spent a lot of time with him when he first arrived; he stayed at the residence with us. We talked most of the night prior to his meetings with Begin the next day. Simultaneously, Habib and Morris Draper, his deputy, were flying in and out of town. So on Sunday, July 12, we had Habib meeting with Begin on one issue and McFarlane and I meeting with Begin on another issue! The subjects were different, but obviously complementary. Habib was trying to stop a war from breaking out in Lebanon and McFarlane was trying to stop a war from breaking out between Washington and Jerusalem. It was very interesting to be involved simultaneously with both emissaries' efforts throughout that weekend.

The initial McFarlane meetings with Begin were held on Monday morning, July 13. Habib had spent time with Begin the previous day. Monday afternoon, we met with Dave Kimche and other Foreign Ministry staff and Ambassador Evron and then returned to Begin's office that evening. It was a full day for Bud McFarlane. The end result of these meetings was very good because Begin and McFarlane agreed on some language for a public statement. Essentially, the two parties agreed that the misunderstandings that had arisen as a result of the air attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor had now been resolved to the satisfaction of both sides. The Israelis understood that statement to open the way for a resumption of the deliveries of the F-16s. Begin was masterful in these meetings and McFarlane was completely taken in -- that may be a slight overstatement. But the general impression among the Israelis was that Begin had taken McFarlane to the cleaners during the discussion; I must say that I did not totally disagree with that characterization. To be fair, however, Bud's charter was to smooth Begin's ruffled feathers and to move on with outstanding business; he did achieve those objectives.

Of course, three days later, the Israelis undertook a major air attack on the PLO headquarters in West Beirut, as I mentioned earlier. That raised the same legal issues again, just after McFarlane's departure, and the perception that relationships had gone back to calmer days. The Beirut raid triggered another announcement from Washington that arms deliveries would be postponed further. That infuriated Begin. Haig publicly stated that the resumption of deliveries would be affected by Israel's cooperation in our efforts to reduce the level of violence in Lebanon. That effort was being spearheaded by Habib, as I have said, who worked very hard. A major war in Lebanon might have drawn the Syrians in with unpredictable consequences. Meanwhile, Israelis had by this time reached the conclusion that they did not have an effective defense against the Katusha rocket. Initially, in late June, when the shelling began, the Air Force was very confident it could knock out the rockets quickly. And indeed, the rockets were being hit, but many were still being fired. Day after day, Katushas would land in Israel, particularly in the northern tier around Qiryat Shemona. Pressures from the population began to mount on Begin; the country was appalled by what appeared to be a total absence of defense against the rockets. It became obvious to Habib that Begin really did want a graceful way out of the

confrontation. He did not want to bomb the Syrian missiles because that might result in a war with Syria; there was no easy military counter-measure to the Katushas -- the Israelis could inflict heavy casualties on the PLO in Lebanon, but were not able to find either the long-range artillery pieces because they were being hidden very effectively or the rocket launchers which were very mobile. Katushas, manufactured by the USSR, are rather small and have a range of about 13-14 kilometers, up to 50 in the larger models. They could not be easily located. They would kill a person here and there, but they were primarily a psychological weapon because they forced the people around Qiryat Shemona and in the northern areas to spend a lot of time in the air raid shelters. Every night they would be in the shelters. The psychological strain was creating a huge political problem for Begin and the government. So Begin was encouraging Habib to continue his "shuttle diplomacy" while at the same time threatening to take dreadful actions. He was really hoping that Habib would be able to resolve the issue and ultimately Habib did work out a cease-fire between the PLO and Israel, a very unique achievement. Begin would of course never admit publicly that he had negotiated anything with the hated PLO and Habib was not meeting with them directly, but he had developed a formula by which parallel announcements would be made by both sides. On July 24, Habib was able to publicly announce, after a meeting with Begin, that he had reported to President Reagan that all hostile military actions on Lebanese and Israeli territories in either direction would cease. Begin said that the Israeli cabinet endorsed that Habib statement. There never was a written and signed document nor was there ever an agreed interpretation of that language. Therefore, during the ensuing year, there was a lot of wrangling during which the PLO asserted that the language was limited to prohibiting actions that might have taken place across the Lebanon-Israel border but that the Habib statement did not restrict them from attacking anywhere else. Israel, on the other hand, interpreted the language to bar all attacks on Israel proper or on Israeli interests anywhere in the world and on all Jews in the world. The American interpretation -- i.e., Habib's -- was that attacks across any of Israel's borders -- land and sea, from Jordan and from Lebanon -- would cease, but that actions outside that area were not covered. There was an attack by the PLO on a French synagogue in Paris later in the year which threatened the cease fire because of the Israeli interpretation. It was in any case a major achievement for Habib which got him a lot of credit with the White House.

I left Israel on July 14, 1981 for home leave. I had been in the country for four years and this was my second home leave. I did not return until late August and I left Bill Brown in charge of the Embassy. Bill Brown was my third DCM of the four that I had over 8 years. He came to Tel Aviv in 1979 and stayed until 1982. He had been the head of our special office in Taiwan, although he was a Russian scholar; he had also become a Chinese expert and linguist as well as one of the Foreign Service's small handful of Mongolian speakers. He was and is a terrific person -- a rock of Gibraltar in the difficult times that he was in Israel with me. He is now our Ambassador to Israel, following Tom Pickering, who went as our Ambassador to the U.N. at the beginning of the Bush administration. So he got his "trial by fire" during the 1979-82 period.

Q: Is the fact that Pickering is at the U.N. a great help to global understanding?

LEWIS: I think so. Tom has remarkable qualifications for the New York job, where he has performed superbly. He was our ambassador in Jordan when I was in Israel. Later, of course, he succeeded me in Tel Aviv. He therefore has a unique perspective on the issues that confront him. In any case, he is a very brilliant person. He has been a big help and may be even more help in

the period ahead since it looks like we are entering a period of negotiations between Arabs and Israelis.

After my return, I spent a couple of days in Washington, debriefing and participating in the usual kinds of meetings that one has when he is on home leave. Then I spent several weeks after that out of the action. I would return every once in a while because I would be called back. Initially, I had gone diving which was one of my favorite avocations -- I did that whenever I could sneak away to the Sinai. I had made arrangements to spend ten days of my home leave on a Cousteau society diving expedition in the British Virgin Islands. I did that almost immediately after returning to the U.S. But as soon as I returned from that, about August 5, I was told to hurry to Washington, where I was brought up to date on all that had happened since I had left. One of the things that I learned was that there was a new Israeli government following the elections at the end of June, which Peres and the Labor Party barely had lost, as I described earlier. Throughout July -- the cease fire negotiations, the flap over the suspension of F-16 deliveries, etc -- there had been a caretaker government. Begin was spending a lot of time trying to put together a coalition government that could get the support of the Knesset. He finally succeeded and his new government was announced on August 4, just as I was coming back from the deeps in the Virgin Islands. In the meantime, the MFO agreement had been signed and had named Ray Hunt as its first Director General. He was a terrific officer; he had been the Executive Director of NEA and was a superb choice for the MFO job. Unfortunately, a couple of years later he was assassinated in Rome by some terrorists in front of his apartment. He had no bodyguards and was identified as a high ranking American official. One of the radical PLO groups killed him to symbolize their opposition to the peace between Egypt and Israel. A major loss! Ray was succeeded by Peter Constable; now the Director General is Wat Cluverius who, as Consul General in Jerusalem, had been an active player in the negotiations in the time we are now discussing.

When I returned to Washington, I discovered that my future nemesis and not-very-close friend, Ariel Sharon, had been named Defense Minister in the new Begin government. I described earlier how he managed to get that job. His appointment was bad news. Also the religious parties got a lot of favors from the Likud, as they always do. They got more financial aid, they received a commitment that El Al would not fly on Saturday anymore, and a lot of other pledges like that. While in Washington, I went through a whole series of meetings with Haig, Walt Stoessel and other senior officials. I was brought up to date and gave some advice how the U.S. might react to the new government. I spent a lot of time with Nick Veliotis, the Assistant Secretary for NEA. The key personnel change was the Sharon move from Agriculture to Defense. Shamir remained as Foreign Minister.

On August 8, 1981 the Saudis announced in Riyadh the so called "Fahd Plan" which was a new Middle East peace plan. It was the first time that the Saudis had taken any peace initiatives. The plan is still interesting; although it was immediately rejected by the Israelis and never endorsed by the U.S., it was modified later at an Arab summit in Fez, Morocco, and it sounds very much like the position that most of the Arab states are taking today, ten years later, as they consider the round of peace negotiations which Secretary Baker is pushing and which might take place in October. The "Fahd Plan" contained eight points: 1) Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories including Jerusalem; 2) all settlements that were founded on the West bank after 1967 were to be removed; 3) guarantee of worship and rights for all religions in the Holy Places; 4) the

inalienable rights of the Palestinians; 5) compensation for the Palestinians who do not wish to return to their homelands; 6) guarantees of the right of the Palestinian people to their own state, with Jerusalem as its capital; 7) a U.N. mandate for several months over the West Bank and Gaza for a transition period while the Israelis withdraw and the Palestinians set up their own government and; 8) as the only gesture towards Israel, the right of the states in the region to live in peace. These points have been cited continually since 1981 and are used by many Arab spokesmen as evidence of the Arab acceptance of Israel as a sovereign state in the region. It could be interpreted in that fashion, but we should note that the name "Israel" never appeared in the "Fahd" plan. It is not surprising that the Israelis did not find the plan as a positive contribution to peace efforts, nor did the Reagan administration, although some of the professionals in the State Department were quite intrigued by it. They saw it as the beginning of a new and more realistic phase of Arab attitudes toward the area.

On August 17, 1981 Reagan finally approved the release of the F-16 aircraft to Israel. Secretary Haig, in a press conference, explained that the legal review had been completed and that an intensive government review failed to determine whether Israel's bombing of the Iraqi reactor was either defensive or offensive -- if the latter there may have been a possible violation of the 1952 arms agreement. That is how the deliveries were resumed. It reflected in essence the Reagan administration's decision to reestablish better relationships with Israel and the new Begin government. The administration had concluded that Begin would be in office for an extensive period and therefore we had to find a way to reestablish a sense of trust and understanding that had been quite frayed during June and July.

I might mention that there is still another current event that has a relationship to the 1981 period. Recently, the Democratic leadership in Congress announced that it would have a formal investigation of the "October surprise" -- i.e., the charge being that members of the Reagan election campaign staff may have requested the Iranians to hold the release of the Embassy hostages until after Reagan's swearing in. The charge included some allegations that Israel had been involved with the Reagan team in the supplying of weapons to Iran which had allegedly been promised. A newspaper story dated August 21, 1981, quoted senior State Department and White House officials who had worked in the Carter administration as saying that Israel had secretly sold to Iran American spare parts for their F-4 fighter bombers in October, 1980. That sale, which indeed did take place -- tires for the planes -- is one of the pieces of evidence being currently considered to support the Reagan team conspiracy theory because Begin had assured Carter in early 1980 and reassured him later that year that Israel would not ship any military equipment to Iran while U.S. hostages were being held in Tehran.

The last days of my home leave were spent in Washington talking about the big event of the fall, namely the first meeting between Reagan and Begin. Begin had been invited to come to Washington in early September. Nick Veliotis and I and others met on August 10 to plan for the visit. There were some in the White House and in the State Department who thought that Reagan should be quite tough on Begin in this first meeting to show him who was "the boss". The summer events had proven to Reagan's team that Begin would not be an easy person to deal with. On the other hand, there was great sympathy in the administration for Israel's security problems. We had lengthy discussions on how to treat Begin -- a subject to which I had devoted considerable time in 1977 at the time of the first Begin-Carter meeting. Ultimately, we laid out a

program intended to play up to Begin's love of ceremony, honors and sense of equality as the head of an allied government. I found that Haig especially, who knew Begin and rather liked him, was very much in agreement with me on what the visit should emphasize. Haig and I saw the Israeli problem from the same point of view; some people in NEA did not always share this outlook because they had less sympathy towards Israel and less understanding of what made the Israelis tick.

In addition to the Begin visit, we had to wrestle with the AWACs sale. For reasons that were never clear to me, the administration was following through on a commitment that Carter had made to the Saudis to sell them these very sophisticated planes. As I mentioned earlier, Carter had indicated to his successor his willingness to submit the sales proposal to Congress in the final days of his administration, but the Reagan team did not pick up the offer. So in the spring, 1981, despite its understanding of the delicate nature of the subject for Israel and its American supporters, the Reagan administration decided to proceed with the sale. It invested a huge amount of energy and political capital over the summer and early fall in obtaining Congressional approval of the sale. The Israeli government, despite its desire to establish good relations with the Reagan White House, decided to oppose the sale for valid defense reasons, as Israelis saw them. I never found their arguments very persuasive nor did a lot of people in Washington. The central Israeli argument was that an AWAC plane flying above north-west Saudi Arabia could monitor all activities on all Israeli airfields. The Israelis saw also the possibility of an Arab coalition in the future which could use AWACs to great advantage. The Israelis did not really fear the Saudis; they were much more concerned that American arms sold to Saudi might eventually fall into the hands of an Arab coalition; that was their main concern. They pointed to the historical fact that in every war it had ever fought, military equipment of one Arab country had been used in a war by other Arab armies against them. For example, the Iraqis and the Saudis had sent expeditionary forces in 1967. It is true that they didn't fight very well, but they participated. The Israelis assumed that if they were forced into a war with Syria, the Saudis might join again; for that reason, the Israelis didn't want them to have the best U.S. equipment.

The administration made an effort throughout the summer and into the fall to dissuade the Israelis from opposing the sale. We made all sorts of arguments; the administration consulted extensively with Congressional Israeli supporters, with AIPAC and with leaders of American Jewish organizations. Our theme was that the U.S. could have parallel relationships with Israel and Saudi Arabia and that Israel didn't have a better friend than Reagan who would never do anything to hurt Israel's security. The suggestion was of course that Israel stop its opposition. But the advice was not accepted and a tremendous amount of lobbying and political effort had to be mounted in order to obtain Congressional approval. That was finally obtained, but only at considerable political cost to the administration.

At the same time, efforts were being made to rekindle the peace process -- i.e., the autonomy negotiations. As I mentioned earlier, the Egyptians felt double-crossed because Sadat had met at Sharm el Sheikh with Begin only a few days before the Iraqi raid. During the summer of 1981, there was very little warmth between Cairo and Jerusalem. The U.S. was not pushing the autonomy negotiations, although we were anxious for the relationships between the two countries to warm up. We were looking forward to the completion of the withdrawal in 1982. The MFO negotiations had gone reasonably well. On August 25, Sadat and Begin finally met

again, this time in Alexandria for two days. The principal objective of the meeting was to reestablish reasonable relationships. We were not present, but learned about the meeting by being briefed by the participants -- Roy Atherton, our Ambassador in Egypt, by the Egyptians and me by the Israelis. It became quite clear to us that this was probably the best meeting that the two leaders ever had. They had finally managed to deal with each other, not as close friends, but with a degree of understanding, friendliness and genuineness which had not been in existence since the days immediately following Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. At the meeting, they agreed to resume the autonomy negotiations at the ministerial level in Cairo. Moreover, Sharon, the Israeli Defense Minister and Boutros Ghali, the Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, announced that they would sponsor four different joint committees to work out all the necessary arrangements for the withdrawal from the Sinai. All of these were good omens and suggested that relationships might be back on track, which also helped the new Reagan administration to have renewed confidence in Begin, who was about to come to the United States. The Reagan administration had been in office long enough by this time to comprehend that the Camp David process was worth preserving. This certainly had been Haig's conclusion. So there was about a month of hope in the early fall of 1981 about prospects for further advancement of the peace process. I was asked to come back from my home leave again -- I was then in Houston -- and to fly out to Israel to talk to Begin about the AWACs issue before his trip to Washington. I was to try to obtain agreement that the Israelis would stop their objections to the sale and I was also instructed to discuss his impending visit. So on August 22, I returned to Israel and met with Begin shortly before his meeting with Sadat. I met with him a couple of times in lengthy sessions. He was very gracious and friendly, but gave me again all the reasons why the AWACs were a danger for Israel. He didn't give the assurances that Haig wanted. I stayed in Israel until September 2 for a few days catching up on events and then I returned to Washington. The day before I left, I had a three hour meeting with Sharon who was as usual very testy, exuberant and full of himself. He had lots of plans for the pacification of Lebanon; he expressed the hope that the cease fire would hold, but if it didn't, he knew what to do about it. He also repeated his version of the settlements policy and expressed hope for closer cooperation with the U.S.!

I arrived in Washington just in time to spend several hours with Haig before Begin's arrival. I helped redraft the talking points and assisted with the planning of the Reagan-Begin meeting. If we had been paying closer attention to events, we would have been very apprehensive that Labor Day weekend. On September 3, while I was in the air, Sadat had become much testier and impatient with the growing domestic opposition. On that day, more than a thousand critics were arrested -- religious extremists, intellectuals, etc. All sorts of publications were banned; a number of religious organizations were disbanded. For the first time, Sadat had cracked down hard on his opposition. He only lived for a little more than a month after that day. It has been the consensus that his actions of September 3 triggered his assassination on October 6; that, of course, can't be proved, but the evidence is pretty compelling. The September events did receive attention in Washington, but perhaps not as much as they should have. I did talk to Veliotos about them and we were quite worried, but no one foresaw Sadat's demise.

When Begin arrived on September 8, I was at the airport to welcome him. We went through the usual official visit ceremonials. There were a number of meetings with Haig, three meetings with the President, meetings at the Pentagon. The ceremonial aspects were first class. The Reagan White House had decided -- correctly as far as I am concerned -- that his predecessor's White

House had been too casual and perhaps even too corny. So the new administration went all the way in the other direction and reinstated all sorts of pomp and circumstance. Official visits were especially elegant. Begin was very impressed by this kind of reception; in any case, he had a lot of admiration for Reagan -- a tough anti-communist. He may not have had the highest regard for the subtlety of Reagan's mind, but he certainly admired and shared his convictions and general purposes. Begin always felt that if matters were ever to become very difficult between our two governments, he could always sit down with President Reagan and convince him. The White House of course did not permit this one-on-one very often, so Begin didn't get many opportunities like that. He did get some on this first visit and there was a *tete-a-tete* meeting at the beginning.

I should say that just before Begin arrived, I had participated in a series of briefings with a variety of people. One of these meetings was a lunch session at the White House with the President, along with Haig and Veliotis. We were asked to give the President our views on how Begin might be handled. The President was very gracious and warm and seemed to be listening. He knew the basic issues and our positions. Begin was eagerly awaiting the *tete-a-tete* meeting which took place the day after our lunch with the President -- September 9. He saw the meeting as an opportunity to go into some detail about his feelings of the events of the last nine months. The President and the Prime Minister had been unable to meet earlier because the White House decided -- correctly, in my view -- that Begin should not be invited during an Israeli election campaign which might have given him some advantage over Peres. (I had informally recommended that position to Haig and the White House.) Then the summer came with all of its problems. So nine months had passed since the beginning of the Reagan administration during which there had been two or three major confrontations with Israel. So Begin saw the meeting as the opportunity to return Israel-US relationships back on track.

Begin and Reagan sat down in the Oval office with only their respective Ambassadors as note takers. Initially there was a lot of small talk, which was Reagan's forte. He was very funny and relaxed. Then Begin launched into a lengthy discussion on the relationships between the two countries, on Israel's hopes for peace, its frustrations about Egypt and the stalled autonomy negotiations and a lot of other issues. Reagan had been carefully programmed by his staff and only fifteen minutes had been allowed for the meeting. The White House staff didn't want him to be out of their control for any longer than that. Reagan took out of his pocket the famous 3x5 cards which had his talking points on them. He politely interrupted Begin and read his talking points which were simple and straight-forward and intended to reassure Begin about the relationship. The talking points did include a couple of items which might have brought a response from Begin. This interruption gave Begin the idea that a conversation between himself and the President had in fact been initiated. But the clock kept running and Reagan began to apologize very profusely, saying that the group that was in the Cabinet room could not be kept waiting. He then got up and led Begin into the Cabinet room where the rest of the delegations were indeed waiting for the principals. End of the *tete-a-tete*. For me that was a rather embarrassing moment. I had been used to the way Carter ran his meetings with Begin; he knew the material and didn't need any talking points and could carry on endlessly without coaching. Reagan on the other hand was tied totally to his talking points, which were written to insure that they could be delivered quickly. The schedule was also set up to prevent the President from having to speak extemporaneously for very long, if at all. When Reagan got up, Begin look

bemused but acted very graciously, although I am sure he was very disappointed because he had considered that meeting to be a major part of his program. Later, he made a couple of very guarded comments to me which indicated that he had not left this first meeting with any feeling that Reagan was a very strong interlocutor.

In the Cabinet room, the delegations were congregated. The Israeli group included Shamir and Sharon. There were a lot of staffers and the table was full -- one side for the Israelis and one side for the Americans. The big event of the visit was about to take place. This meeting set the tone for our relationships for the next two years and perhaps even until today. Begin had decided that since the two sides had finally met and since they held similar views of the bipolar world, of the PLO and of some Middle East issues, it was time to acknowledge publicly that the countries were allies. Begin had always regarded this alliance as an important goal. He was always disturbed by Carter's refusal to use the word "alliance" or allow it to be used by any official when characterizing the US-Israel relationship. Begin honestly felt that Israel had done a lot for the United States in the military and intelligence fields; he recognized that Israel might have been the junior partner, but it was a partnership nevertheless. He wanted the relationship to be seen as an alliance. That made easier for him to accept American assistance without feeling that it was charity; that was the psychological background. After Reagan graciously welcomed Begin in the Cabinet room, he asked him whether he would like to make any comments. Begin did and he launched in a *tour d' horizon*, describing the world as he saw it and the role the two countries had in it. He also explained what Israel's contribution was to the relationship of the two countries. Reagan was nodding, apparently agreeing with what the Prime Minister was saying. He was giving Begin positive feed-back without words. After Begin's comments, there was some discussion back and forth. Then Begin suggested that since the two sides seemed to be in agreement on the fundamental perceptions and issues, Israel thought it would be a good idea to conclude a written and formal agreement on the strategic relationships. Reagan looked around to his right and his left -- Weinberger was looking very grim by now, but Haig didn't appear concerned. So the President said that he thought this might be a good idea which was all Begin needed. Reagan's comment enabled Begin to pursue the issue further by suggesting that Defense Minister Sharon be permitted to brief the American side with some ideas that might give form to the relationship. Reagan agreed; so Sharon stood up with a set of maps of the Middle East and proceeded to give an absolute hair-raising description of the ways the Israeli Defense forces could be of assistance to the U.S. in contingency situations. It would have taken Israel as far East as Iran and as far north as Turkey. As Sharon made his elaborate presentation, which emphasized particularly Israeli capabilities as quick reaction forces that were highly mobile and agile, I could see Weinberger blanch visibly. His aides were equally upset. Everyone on the American side was shocked by the grandiose scope of the Sharon concept for strategic cooperation. It even included use of Israeli forces to assist the U.S. in case of uprisings in the Gulf emirates. When Sharon finished, not much was said; there were probably a few questions. Begin then suggested that if President Reagan agreed with the general outline of the Sharon presentation, the two Defense Ministers should be requested to work out the details. Reagan seemed agreeable and asked Weinberger to get together with Sharon to work out something. That made Weinberger the fall guy to get the United States out of this embarrassing situation; of course, Weinberger had no sympathy for the scheme whatsoever. He had always been very conscious of our relationships with the key Arab states, particularly the Arabian Peninsula ones. He was very concerned that any overt cooperation with Israel would jeopardize those relationships. He felt that way in 1981

and throughout his tenure as Secretary of Defense. He showed his positions in many ways, before and during and after the Lebanon war. But now he was stuck with a presidential request to do something about the Israeli proposal, which Reagan seemed to have accepted in principle. I should note that Haig quietly sympathized with the Israeli proposal.

After the meeting, Weinberger and Sharon negotiated and their staffs negotiated for a long period of time before the first strategic cooperation agreement was finally concluded. This was a memorandum of understanding on strategic cooperation. The Pentagon's objective in the negotiations was to say as little as possible -- nothing would have been the best outcome for them. They aimed for a written agreement that was so general and so empty of content that it could be defended. Furthermore, the Pentagon was intent on giving the agreement no publicity whatsoever. The Israelis, of course were just the opposite; they wanted a lot of detail and a lot of publicity. They wanted a real and binding document. Weinberger controlled the process and ultimately won out. Most of the negotiations took place in Washington; whatever was agreed to was finally signed on November 30, during a Shamir-Sharon visit to Washington in which I participated. To add insult to injury, not only was the agreement empty of practically all content, but Weinberger managed to have it signed in the basement of the Pentagon without any press present, so that it didn't get any attention. The Israeli press was fully briefed and made a big thing out of it, but there were no photographs of Weinberger signing this document with Sharon - they might have been used in the Arab world to undermine his position.

Q: Was Sharon aware of Weinberger's position from the beginning?

LEWIS: He became aware of it as events developed. It didn't take him long to understand. The result was that he became very disenchanted with the whole process. When Sharon realized during the sessions held following the White House meeting that Weinberger was very unenthusiastic about the Israeli initiative and after pushing for some resolution week after week, he would have washed his hands of the whole approach, but Begin was determined to have the U.S.-Israel agreement because to him that signed piece of paper was much more important than the content. He wanted a symbol of the alliance; so he forced Sharon to keep plugging away. The Labor Party -- the opposition -- was very much opposed to the idea of the alliance; they thought it unwise to limit, in a sense, the degree of cooperation in the military area by signing a meaningless agreement. It would have preferred an unwritten understanding which would have deepened the relationship in the following years. Moreover, of course, the Labor Party didn't want to see Begin get credit with the Israeli public for something that had no significance. The Labor Party introduced a no-confidence motion in the Knesset when the agreement was signed; there was a debate in early December. Sharon, while holding his nose, had signed the agreement against his better judgement only because the Prime Minister had insisted and then was stuck with the job of defending it against Peres and the opposition speakers. He explained how the agreement was all the things which he knew it wasn't; it was one of the few moments when Sharon showed discipline and carried out orders, which has not always been his style.

The Washington visit, from Begin's point of view, was a great success. He held some very positive meetings with Congress; Israel's friends asked him some very easy questions; there was considerable admiration expressed by Congressmen and others about the daring raid on the Iraqi reactor, which was much more popular in the Congress than with the administration. Begin

returned to Jerusalem feeling that he had established a solid relationship with Reagan. He felt that the "Arabists" in the State Department would no longer be in a position to undermine the new alliance which was evolving. Begin was somewhat premature in his views, unfortunately.

During September, 1981 there were some events that ensued from the Begin-Sadat meeting in Alexandria. They had agreed to renew autonomy negotiations at ministerial levels; they were scheduled for September 23 in Cairo. Dr. Burg, the Minister of Interior, was to head the Israeli delegation and Hassan Ali, the Foreign Minister, headed the Egyptian team. The U.S. didn't have a chief representative because Sol Linowitz had never been replaced by the new administration. Haig decided to ask the U.S. ambassadors in Egypt and Israel -- Roy Atherton and myself -- to serve as joint heads of the U.S. delegation. I went to Cairo for the meetings. We, collectively, achieved some very positive steps in those meetings. We concluded with a joint declaration which was really quite encouraging and seemed to get the autonomy negotiations back on the right track. We scheduled another meeting for a few weeks later. Roy and I succeeded in conducting some very useful mediation by penning some language that was acceptable to the other two delegations. The atmosphere was quite creative and serious. Sharon participated but didn't cause as much trouble as usual; he was still in the warm glow of the Washington visit; at the time, he still believed that he could work out a meaningful agreement with the United States. Therefore in September, it appeared that we had overcome the summer difficulties, that the peace process was going to move forward and that the U.S.-Israel relationships had strengthened. So September seemed the high point of the Reagan administration in its Israel policy.

Bud McFarlane came to Israel on September 20 right after Begin and Sharon had returned after their Washington visit. He was representing Haig to continue discussions with Sharon on strategic cooperation. I took Bud down to Sharon's farm in the Negev where we were guests at a stag dinner during which Sharon told his war stories. He buttered us up unmercifully -- he had tried to co-opt me for four years and had by this time understood that he was not convincing me. But he was nice to me and really worked McFarlane over. Bud was quite responsive. McFarlane also had meetings with people in the Foreign Ministry which were useful in giving a renewed push to the autonomy talks right before the Cairo meetings.

But on Tuesday, October 6, Sadat was assassinated. I remember that day very well. Sallie and I had gone to an Israel national tennis tournament at the Ramat Hasharon center. We had watched several matches and were doing so when I got a telephone call. It was the Embassy duty officer who had just received a "Flash" message reporting that Sadat had just been assassinated. Within a few minutes the word had spread through the crowd, which went into an extraordinary kind of a shock. It was as if the Israelis had lost a close relative. There was a tangible sense of loss and desperation everywhere. There was an Egyptian player in the tournament -- the first Egyptian professional who had come to Israel after the peace treaty. He was playing when the news came; he broke down and wept on the court and withdrew from the tournament; the tournament actually stopped then. The assassination was psychologically devastating. I knew that things were going to go off track very rapidly, but hoped that I would be wrong. The next day was Yom Kippur eve. There was a major funeral that day for one of Begin's oldest friends, Haim Landau who had been one of the original members of the Irgun. He had also been a Minister in one of Begin's first Cabinets. I had known him fairly well and went to the funeral. That night was the beginning of Yom Kippur when, in Israel, no one can travel by car; everyone walks. But I had to

get to Cairo to meet Haig and to participate not only in the funeral, but in a unique American political experience. The easiest way to get there was with the Israelis; they were sending a high level delegation. There was one embarrassing issue because Begin said immediately that he wanted to go to his friend's funeral. The Egyptians were very unhappy with that suggestion; they were already not overjoyed that there would be an Israeli delegation, but the presence of the Israeli Prime Minister was more than they could face. They toyed with the idea of telling Begin not to come because of all the Arab and Muslim delegations that would be there, even though they were at the beginning of being essentially ostracized by the Arab world -- there would be more later after their Sinai withdrawal; the beginnings were already being manifested in the fall of 1981. We did weigh in with the Egyptians by pointing out that their rejection of Begin would be at least awkward and might at worst have some very unhappy consequences. They backed down and Begin, Shamir and Burg flew to Cairo in a small Israeli aircraft. They invited me to go with them and I accepted. There were then essentially four of us on this small plane with the aircrew.

The American delegation was really extraordinary. It was headed formally by Al Haig, but President Reagan had also invited all the former American Presidents -- Nixon, Ford and Carter -- to go as part of the delegation. That was a unique event. Carter initially indicated that he might not accept; he would go to the funeral of his friend, but didn't like the idea of being in a delegation with Nixon and Ford. He was persuaded that if he went just as a private American citizen that that would be inappropriate and so he finally agreed to go as part of the official delegation. Kissinger was part of the delegation. This group of eminent personalities flew from Washington with Nick Veliotos, as Assistant Secretary, the chief ring-master. Roy Atherton was the host. Nick has told me a lot about the flights to and from Cairo and I have heard stories from others as well. For example, Carter and Ford had not spoken to each other before then. Nixon had not been in the public eye since leaving the White House as result of "Watergate"; he had gone through all the years of ostracism and had just started his fight back to respectability and public acceptance. This was the first time that he had been accepted in an official foreign affairs role; he was therefore going to make the most of it. On the way out, Carter and Ford were sitting across the aisle from each other in the Presidential aircraft VIP section, which was between the Presidential suite and the press and staff section. Veliotos told me that Rosalynn Carter was sitting by the window. She kept trying to divert Jimmy from Ford so that he wouldn't become involved with him because she still resented the way Jimmy had been treated during the campaign. But ultimately, Ford and Carter struck up a conversation and the tensions eased somewhat. Nixon was walking up and down the aisle telling jokes, being the life of the party. Kissinger was furious because he was sitting in the back, essentially with the press corps and the staff and not the center of the action. Al Haig occupied the Presidential quarters which holds a bed. There had been a lot of discussion about who would use the Presidential quarters; there were three former Presidents and only one bed and Haig decided that as head of the delegation it would best for him to take it; that would minimize the protocol problems. Henry was not amused by the whole situation and was very grumpy throughout the whole visit -- he did not cherish the "second fiddle" role. Jeane Kirkpatrick was also a member of the delegation along with several other dignitaries.

I had very interesting insight into Sadat's funeral. It was in any case one the most bizarre events of my life. I was asked to attend the funeral, not because there was any reason for me to attend,

but because Haig was heading the U.S. delegation and he wanted to consult with me about current problems, since he was not going to come to Israel on this particular trip. The night of September 9 -- the day before the funeral -- Haig, as head of the delegation, decided very nicely to host a dinner at the hotel just for the American delegation and for all the people in the Embassy who were working in support of the delegation, which included a lot of people. It was a lovely idea and a very nice evening, but it also very amusing. One person in the delegation was a nine year old boy who had written a letter many months before to President Sadat that somehow the Egyptian press had found. It had said some nice things about Sadat and peace. Therefore the Egyptian Foreign Ministry had indicated that they would like to invite the young man to the funeral. So he became part of the delegation and therefore attended the dinner.

The hotel room where the dinner was being given had in it a long table -- sort of a dais -- and several roundtables. Roy Atherton, the host, and Nick Veliotis, as ring-master, had done their best to seat the guests at the dais. When the guests went to find their places, Henry discovered that he was sitting next to Jeane Kirkpatrick, whom apparently he detested. So he stomped over to Veliotis and demanded that his place be changed. Nick and Roy huddled together and shuffled things around. Henry then goes to his new seat and finds that he is sitting next to the nine year old boy. Now he is really unamused by this new turn of events. He didn't think that he had flown 8,000 miles to have dinner with a nine year old. So Henry was quite disgruntled throughout the whole affair. After dinner, each of the three former Presidents wanted to say a few words. Haig spoke first, then Carter, Ford and Nixon -- after some discussion, it had been decided that they would speak in reverse order of tenure -- that is, the most recent President first. Carter spoke of his appreciation for Sadat and of his relationship with Sadat -- a very Carteresque, emotional and genuine speech -- a little syrupy, but nice. Ford gave a typical Ford speech -- absolutely appropriate and absolutely forgettable. No one could remember, after he sat down, one thing that he said, but it had all sounded fine at the time. Then came Nixon. He gave what I consider to be the most extraordinary after dinner speech I had ever heard. He started out by expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to be there and for President Reagan's invitation, mentioning the special nature of the occasion and talked briefly about Sadat. Before getting to Sadat, he very deftly established his seniority over the other two Presidents by talking about his many visits to many foreign countries, first as Senator, then as Vice-President and then as President -- covering a twenty year period. He was subtly reminding everybody how more experienced he was. Then he launched into a discussion of what he had always been most grateful for during those many visits; namely the support he had received from the Embassy staffs. He said that without Embassy people, he and others could not have done anything. He just went on and on about how wonderful the Embassies and the Foreign Service had been; how much of his success in life he owed to these wonderful Foreign Service people and especially the local employees without whom we could not run our operations overseas -- he even mentioned the chauffeurs who drove him around overseas. He gushed like that for about ten minutes. And then he said: "In all of these visits, there are the big state dinners and functions -- just one big event after another. How could the United States be appropriately represented overseas without the waiters that make the functions such huge successes?". The waiters who were there were of course all smiling. I thought Nixon was making a speech at a waiters' convention or before a waiters trade union audience! Eventually he got to Sadat and said a few things about him. But all the Foreign Service people who heard Nixon that night, remembered all the things he had said about them when he was President; there was considerable skepticism about his comments in the audience. But he put

on a real show which is hard to describe. Everyone was giggling and snickering. The speeches were followed by pictures -- lots and lots of photographs. The three former Presidents, the three former Presidents with Al Haig, the three former presidents with Henry Kissinger, etc. Then Nixon called all the waiters and has his picture taken with them; that was his codicil to his waiters' speech. It was an evening to remember!

That funeral delegation had some far reaching consequences because it was on that trip that Carter and Ford established their first connection. On the return trip, I am told, they began to discuss the possibility of doing some joint projects for good causes. From that, sprang an association which has sponsored a number of joint enterprises and appearances. And Nixon began his rehabilitation process. The funeral itself was accompanied by dozens and dozens of bilateral meetings between delegations. Begin and his ministerial colleagues walked along with the other hundreds along the streets. The Israeli attendance was a little sticky, but the Egyptians pulled it off very nicely. There was a tremendous tension about security; everyone was scared of the obvious possibilities, but fortunately nothing happened.

Haig met with Begin to discuss what could be done without Sadat to maintain momentum in the autonomy talks and on Israel-Egypt relationships in general. The most interesting aspects of the ceremonies, besides the dinner I described earlier, was the feed-back I got from the Israelis on the return flight to Israel. Begin, Shamir and Burg had had a separate session with Vice President, now President Mubarak, who had not been a very prominent player in the Camp David process. He had not been at Camp David and had not gone to Jerusalem with Sadat. The Israeli delegation had met him on visits they had made to Cairo, but they didn't know him very well. Therefore the initial measuring of Mubarak which had taken place during the ceremonies by the three Israeli Ministers was an important point in future developments. I was very curious to find out how they had reacted to Mubarak and what assurances, if any, they had been given about the peace treaty, the peace process, the autonomy negotiations and all the outstanding issues. On the plane that night, Begin was rather taciturn and went off to sleep soon after take-off. I was sitting opposite Shamir and Burg and had a chance to talk to them all the way back. They told me that Mubarak had said all the right things, had made all the right assurances -- the Egyptians would stick to everything to which they been committed, there would not be any change in policies towards Israel. Mubarak had said that he was loyal follower of Sadat's and that he would assume responsibility of carrying out his dreams for peace. But both Israelis made the same judgement about him: they did not think that he was up to the task of ruling Egypt. They did not question his sincerity; they wondered about his abilities. He was a military officer -- simple, direct. They thought that Egypt needed to have a "pharaonic" type of leader like Sadat to hold it together because it had tremendous internal and external pressures. Shamir and Burge turned out to be very wrong; Mubarak has proved to be a very solid and successful leader. He is cautious and careful; he is different from Sadat, but perhaps Egypt was ready for a different style from Sadat's. The night of our return, the Israelis were very worried about the change in Egyptian leadership. They were not surprised when, within a relatively short period of time, it became clear that Mubarak didn't want to invest any political capital in trying to move the Camp David process further. He was completely absorbed in assuring that the Israelis would withdraw from Sinai completely by the following Spring; everything else was secondary. He was even more worried about normalization of relations between Egypt and Israel than Sadat had been and about the attitudes of other Arab states toward Egypt.

There was another sad death in October, 1981 although it didn't have the same consequences as Sadat's assassination. On October 16, Moshe Dayan died of a heart attack. He had, for all practical purposes, been out of politics for a while. He had resigned from the Cabinet in the Fall, 1979 when he concluded that Begin would not fulfill the autonomy concept to the same dedication that he, Dayan, had committed himself and that he would not be permitted to exercise the leadership of these negotiations as he had hoped. He tried to run for the Knesset and had formed his own political party. He thought that he would do well; in fact, he only won two seats. So he became a figure of the past and was in his 70s when he passed away. He had been ill for almost two years; he had a cancer operation and had recovered quite well, although not completely. Although his health was poor, he was still active until his death. For Sallie and me, it was a very sad and poignant day when he died; we were very close personally to Dayan and his wife and had spent a lot of time with them, both privately and officially. I always believed that Dayan's restless, creative and unusual mind had been the key to the peace process, although we can't overlook Begin's determination and political judgements. But without Dayan's continual drive to find solutions to impasses, we probably would not have completed a peace treaty. When we went to his funeral in Nahalal in his old moshav in Galilee it was a very sad ending to an era. To have both Sadat and Dayan pass away in the same month -- Carter already having left office and Ezer Weizman having resigned from his office -- meant that the Camp David group had pretty much disappeared from power except for Begin. He was the only one left of the original triumvirate, but he had lost his two principal lieutenants. That was another reason why we never succeeded in the Reagan administration in moving forward on the negotiating track. Mubarak was not a Sadat; Begin was no longer the same Begin -- he had Arik Sharon instead of Weizman in the Defense Ministry, and Shamir instead of Dayan in the Foreign Ministry; and Reagan didn't have the same sense of commitment to Middle East peace as Carter had. Those personnel changes made for a very different environment. The month of October, 1981 was the end of the peace process for a long time, although we did not want to acknowledge it so at the time.

Q: After Dayan's death on October 16, 1981, what happened next?

LEWIS: Two days later, on Sunday, Sallie and I drove to Nahalal, the Moshav where Dayan was raised and where his oldest son, Udi, still ran the family farm. There we attended Dayan's funeral. There was an official American delegation led by Attorney General French Smith, but Dayan's death was a very personal sad occasion for the Lewises because both Sallie and I were very close to Moshe and his wife, Rahel. Dayan's first wife, Ruth, the mother of his three children also attended the funeral. The relationship between the two of them was quite strained. The Dayan family has been subjected to a great deal of written scrutiny. Both "yellow" and regular journalism covered it fully; in some sense the Dayans are a star-crossed family. Sallie managed to be good friends with both Ruth and Rahel, which was quite a tribute to her ability to get along with various people. Moshe's death brought all the players together, including two other children -- son Ossi, a Bohemian, rebellious actor -- and daughter Yael -- author, ex-journalist and now an active left-wing Labor politician in Israel. The cemetery was on a hill among a grove of trees overlooking the Galilee Valley, in which Nahalal lies.

The funeral was attended by the greats of Israel -- Prime Minister Begin, Ezer Weizman, who was married to Ruth's sister, Rauma. Dayan and Weizman were brothers-in-law through Moshe's

first wife; it was not a comfortable relationship between the two men. I had a number of opportunities to watch that relationship when one was the Foreign Minister and the other the Defense Minister. It was always very puzzling and sad that Dayan, who was considerably older and had been a hero long before Weizman was prominent, never took his brother-in-law very seriously; he considered Weizman as a "fly boy" -- a pilot, neer-do-well playboy. Weizman, on the other hand, almost hero-worshipped Dayan; he tried very hard when both were in the Cabinet to work closely with Dayan, only to be tolerated at best; Dayan never concealed his disdain for Weizman -- unfairly in my view. The end result was that the Foreign and Defense Ministries didn't work together very well at the staff level primarily because of Dayan's disdain.

In a Jewish funeral, the eldest son reads the *Kaddish*, the prayer for the dead. Udi, who was very estranged from his father, refused to perform. That was just one of the under-currents present at the funeral that afternoon. Nevertheless, I had a sense sitting on that hill-side that part of Israel's history was being buried. I also felt that a lot of the dynamism of the peace process had also passed away. It was a very sad afternoon.

A few days later, Egyptian General Hassan Ali arrived to continue the autonomy negotiations. There had been staff level negotiations before his arrival. Soon thereafter, ministerial level negotiations were convened again. Two ministerial sessions were held during the following month. As I mentioned before, Roy Atherton, our Ambassador to Egypt and I acted as co-chairmen of the U.S. delegation. Later Ambassador Wat Cluverius, who was the head of the U.S. working level team, joined us (he later became Consul General in Jerusalem and now is the head of the MOF (Multi-lateral Observer Force in the Sinai) in Rome). Only a little progress was made in these sessions and it was clear that all momentum had dissipated after Sadat's death.

At the end of October, the AWACs package, which had been the subject of the bitter political Congressional debate during the summer, was approved. In order to sweeten the blow for the Israelis, the Administration decided to extend some additional assurances that Israel's technological edge would be maintained. I delivered a letter to Begin in late October which reiterated U.S. support for Israel and recommitted the U.S. to maintain the military technological edge over the Arab adversaries. Nevertheless, the Israel Cabinet expressed regrets over the AWAC sale, but ultimately the controversy died out, even though the new Administration took a lot of lumps for having forced the package through Congress over Israel's objection. This was a period of "fawning" over Saudi Arabia. Earlier the Saudis had proposed their eight point peace plan -- the Fahd Plan; we had expressed the view that it included some positive signs. Reagan noted that it did include the fact that the Arabs recognized Israel as a sovereign nation to be negotiated with. Of course, that statement did not appear in the Fahd Plan at all; Reagan was merely expressing his impression of the briefings that he had received! That statement gave the Israelis some heart-burn. In the meantime, Israeli Ambassador Evron was warning Secretary Haig in Washington that our support of the Fahd Plan would completely sabotage the autonomy negotiations.

During my tour in Israel, as I mentioned earlier, I found that the only way to escape the constant pressure and to find some relaxation was to go scuba diving. I did that in early November when I flew to Sharm el Sheikh for four or five days of terrific diving at the tip of the Sinai. We drove back to Elat. On the way back, we stopped at a famous diving spot called the "Blue Hole" near

Dahab. It is huge hole in the reef in the shape of a cookie-cutter, about 100 yards in diameter; from the air it looks like a giant circular hole in the center of the broad, light colored reef along the shore. I am very proud of the dive I took at the "Blue Hole" that day and that is why I am going at some length to describe the environment. With me, was the Embassy's Naval Attaché, Pete Peterson, who was my frequent diving buddy. He had been a Navy Seal, although as a Seal, he had never done any deep diving; he had mostly dived close to the surface. I had dived to depths considerably deeper than he. Thirty meters (110 feet) is supposed to be the limit for sport divers; in fact, I have gone as deep as 75 meters -- well over 200 feet -- which is very deep -- as a matter of fact, much too deep. Pete had dived primarily between the surface and 20 meters down. With us also was a friend who is an underwater photographer, Jeff Rodman, now well known internationally for his work. He had never dived in the "Blue Hole" but he was an accomplished diver. I had dived there twice before and therefore I led the dive on this occasion. It is a fairly tricky dive and a very exciting one. This was the first time in my life that I had led two more experienced divers. We went down 40 meters into the blue cavern with the hole getting darker and darker. As you approach the bottom, you see the faint outlines of a huge golden arch. As you approach the arch, you see sunlight coming through it. You swim down to 48-50 meters and then you see the opening of the arch; you swim through the arch, through the outside part of the reef and then out into the open sea. The arch is a tunnel that connects the hole and the open sea. It is a very exciting dive. I wouldn't do it now, but it was great fun then. It is a dive that is done frequently, but there have been a number of casualties. About six weeks ago, three Israeli diving instructors were killed diving in the "Blue Hole"; their bodies were found three days later and I don't know the cause of their deaths. It is of course not unknown that experienced divers do crazy things before they dive like drinking beer or diving in the middle of the night by the light of the moon just to show their machismo. If you dive below 35 meters, you can have narcosis which is like being drunk. You lose your sense of self-control, you lose your orientation, your vision blurs (that has happened to me), you feel totally impervious to any danger and you will take crazy chances as the result of the nitrogen's effect on the brain -- it dulls your judgement. That is how people get into trouble; they dive too deep, ignoring rules they know well, then they may have a narcosis attack and lose their sense of judgement -- e.g., they will dive down instead of coming up. Equipment failure is a very rare phenomenon. The problems arise usually from very good divers behaving as they know they shouldn't or from beginners or from divers in very bad physical condition -- they get exhausted and are not able to perform as they should.

I have dived off Papua New Guinea and in the Caribbean; there are many interesting places in the world, but the tip of the Sinai is very special -- it is one of the top two or three diving areas in the world. It has more varieties of fish and corals and clearer water than in most other parts of the world. There are bigger fish elsewhere -- the Pacific, for example, but the Red Sea has the variety.

Diving is what permitted me to live through eight years in Israel; I would not have been able to last that long without it. The opportunity to slip away every two or three months to enjoy a few days of diving made the rest of time bearable; when you dive, you forget everything else. Divers don't discuss politics; they barely know who is the Prime Minister and know little about his views. They discuss diving and fish and it is a great change for anyone in a pressure cooker such as Israel.

I was in Cairo in early November for the last round for a long time of the autonomy talks. The discussions did not make any progress. During the whole month of November, there was a steady drumbeat of concern about Lebanon. The cease fire between the PLO and the Israelis was holding, as far we could see; there had not been any incursions across the northern border, but there had been an increasing number of attacks on Jews elsewhere. People were slipping across the Jordan border and the Israelis reported them to us as violations of the cease fire. The difference of opinion on the definition of the cease-fire was becoming increasingly dangerous. We were still trying to put together a multinational force to police the Sinai. The Israelis continued to balk at the idea of European participation in the force because they felt that Camp David had not been supported by Europe as vigorously as it should have. I kept repeatedly arguing with Begin and Shamir, the Foreign Minister, to little avail. November was a complicated period. Yet it seemed to be in, its own way, a deceptive time because matters were progressing normally -- there were no great crises, which in itself, was unusual.

At the end of November, the Fez Conference was held in Morocco -- an Arab League meeting which expanded further the Fahd Plan, but in fact, weakened it and made it even less interesting to the Israelis. On November 26 -- Thanksgiving Day -- Begin broke his hip in his bathtub, or getting out of his bathtub. He was in considerable pain and had to stay at home for several weeks, bed ridden. He brooded and worried; he became angry. I saw him on a number of occasions in his bedroom. We transacted some business, but he really was not in adequate physical shape particularly in the first couple of weeks to be able to focus very long on any subject. This accident had a significant impact on U.S.-Israeli relationships. I left the day after Begin's mishap to escort Foreign Minister Shamir on a visit to Washington. Sharon was there as well, trying to finish that ill fated "Memorandum of Understanding" on strategic cooperation that he and Weinberger had been drafting for months. It was finally signed on November 30. Shamir went to Washington to meet with Haig, Habib and others to discuss the Fez Plan, the Lebanese issue and the tension created between the two countries by Israel's overflights of Saudi Arabia. The Saudis had deployed tanks and some F-5s at a base near Tabuk in North-west Saudi Arabia, not too distant from Israel. The Israelis were always concerned by what types of planes were stationed at Tabuk because of the very short warning time for Israel that the proximity of the base would provide. Therefore, periodically, without any announcements, the Israeli Air Force would reconnoiter the base and photograph the planes on the base. The Saudis with their AWAC planes were now in a position to detect the Israeli flights, increasing the danger of air encounters because the Saudis might decide to challenge the Israeli flights. We therefore began to intercede with the Israelis to cease these reconnaissance overflights; they felt that they were not harming anybody, but were necessary for their defense. So this issue was on the Washington discussion agenda. Begin angrily rejected the right of the U.S. to raise the issue, although we always made our arguments quite vigorously. Another item for discussion was our continued urging of Israel to permit European countries to participate in the multi-lateral peace-keeping force; ultimately, Haig did obtain Israeli agreement after considerable discussion. The Israeli Cabinet insisted that all European countries that participated would have to formally endorse the Camp David accords and the peace treaty -- that was not an unreasonable demand.

While in the United States, I visited Boston to give a speech to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' annual convention. This group represented the liberal wing of American Judaism. Sallie was with me. My speech was a summary of the history of the peace process to date. I

remember the occasion well because while we were in Boston, it was hit with an incredibly large snow storm which snowed us in for the next day and a half in our hotel. We did manage to stomp out and use the subway a couple of times, but that was the extent of our ventures. I have never seen Boston or any other city as paralyzed as it was on those days; the only similarity in my experience was a snow storm in Washington which had similar effects.

Habib left the U.S. and went to Damascus to try once again to calm the choppy Lebanese waters. He also tried to soften Syrian violent opposition to the peace process between Egypt and Israel. After Syria, he went to Jerusalem, arriving in early December. In the following week, two extraordinary events took place. I was still in the U.S., having finally gotten out of Boston and having gone to New York and seeing some theater -- along with giving a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations on the Israeli situation. We flew out of New York, arriving back in Israel on December 13. I faced a big mess immediately. An extraordinary event had taken place on December 6, 1981 which was connected with the build-up prior to the Lebanon War. This episode was also directly related to events that took place upon my departure five years later, which I will describe in detail later in a special section dealing with the long-running confrontation between General Ariel Sharon and me.

When Habib got to Jerusalem, he brought many complaints from Assad concerning Israeli provocations in Lebanon. We were getting increasing evidence of rising tensions between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The cease fire was still in effect. During early December, my DCM, Bill Brown was in charge of the Embassy. On December 6, there was a meeting at the Foreign Ministry involving Habib, Morris Draper (Habib's Deputy), Bill Brown, Paul Hare (the Embassy's Political Counselor) as note taker, and Fred Raines, our Military Attaché on one side; and Sharon, the Defense Minister, Abrasha Tamir, the Defense Ministry's chief planner and almost alter-ego, a couple of Israeli military officers, Eytan Ben Tsur, the chief of the North American section of the Foreign Ministry, and Hanon Bar-on, the Deputy Director General of the Foreign Ministry on the Israeli side (Bar-on was the Foreign Ministry official we worked with most closely). There may have been some additional participants, but I have mentioned the key ones. The meeting was held at the Foreign Ministry for convenience because Habib was in Jerusalem and Sharon also was there for some other meeting. Shamir was not involved because he was in Washington and had not yet returned. There have been some suggestions made later that Shamir attended, but I do not believe that to be correct. I was briefed fully upon my return about the meeting by Brown, Hare and Raines of my staff as well as by Habib and Draper. I also read the detailed reporting cables they had sent to Washington.

At the meeting, Sharon launched into a diatribe on events in Lebanon, repeating over and over again that the cease fire wasn't working and that there had been innumerable violations. Habib argued about the interpretation of the cease fire; i.e. which activities it covered and which it didn't. At one point, Sharon reared back and said that he wanted to make some things eminently clear. He noted that the U.S. had complained vigorously when the Iraqi nuclear reactor was bombed by the Israelis, even though the U.S. had been clearly warned prior to the event. He then went on to say that he did not wish that there be any more surprises. He said that he was convinced, although the Cabinet might not be, that the solution to the Lebanon problem was to solve it once and for all by driving the PLO out of Lebanon, allowing the government to rule once again over its total country. He continued his presentation, always noting that the ideas

were his own and did not have Israeli government approval. His view was that Israel should conduct a major military operation in Lebanon, unless the "violations" ceased. He described in considerable detail what in fact became subsequently the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. It was not an operational plan; he never mentioned going as far as Beirut, but all the other key elements were presented. It was certainly clear that Sharon had a very large military operation in mind which would have driven the PLO out of Lebanon. It would have gone quite far north, driving the Syrians north of the highway between Beirut and Damascus and out of South Lebanon. All of these goals were clearly part of Sharon's plan.

Habib and everybody else was thunder-struck by Sharon's plan, although I think our Embassy staff were not quite as surprised, except for the fact that Sharon was being so open about his views. Maury Draper was absolutely stunned. Habib has been quoted as saying, "You flabbergast me", although that doesn't sound like Habib. What he probably did was to ask some questions such as what the Israelis expected to do with the thousands of Palestinians. Sharon is alleged to have responded, "We'll hand them over to the Lebanese. In any case, we expect to be in Lebanon only for a few days. The Lebanese Christians will take care of them". Habib reacted to the presentation in very strong terms. He said that the Sharon plan was absolutely out of the question. He said that it should not even be contemplated, particularly at that stage of history. He predicted that the whole region would react, probably starting another war. He was very upset and had angry exchanges with Sharon.

The Foreign Ministry officials who attended the meeting were also astounded. They couldn't imagine that the Minister of Defense would discuss with American representatives a military operation of such scope which had never even been whispered to the Cabinet. They wrote up their summary of the meeting very carefully and rushed back to the Foreign Ministry. They immediately called Yehuda Ben Meir, who was the Deputy Foreign Minister, who was a good friend of the U.S. and mine. He had been an American citizen; he was a sociologist; he was a member of the Knesset from the National Religious Party. Yehuda was thunder-struck as could be easily imagined. He reported what he had been told to Shamir -- that is why I am sure that Shamir did not participate in the Habib-Sharon meeting. Yehuda Ben Meir also briefed his two Religious Party colleagues immediately -- Education Minister Hammer and Minister of Interior Burg. Shamir did not react after being briefed. I feel confident that some one briefed Begin, although there is no documentation which speaks to the issue when and how Begin found out about the meeting. He may have read the Foreign Ministry's summary. Bill Brown, who was the acting ambassador, despatched an agitated message to the State Department; it had been drafted by Paul Hare. Habib sent a private message to Haig expressing extreme concern about the scope of Sharon's enterprise, even though Sharon had clearly said that the plan was only hypothetical, it was his personal plan and would probably not receive Cabinet approval. In retrospect, it was clear that Sharon had used the meeting with Habib to prepare the Reagan administration for a large Israeli operation in Lebanon which was likely to occur; he was trying to condition us to accept it when it went into effect.

Sharon's subsequent comments on the Lebanon war makes it clear -- he made his view clear in the meeting with Habib -- that he intended to get the PLO out of Lebanon, thereby safeguarding the northern border, enabling the Lebanese Christians to pacify the country and moving the Syrians out of south Lebanon, sufficiently removed so that they couldn't influence all events in

Beirut. In their book on the Lebanon war, Ze'Ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'Ari discuss the Habib-Sharon meeting quite accurately. Schiff is the leading military commentator in Israel. He wrote in 1985 that he had learned about the meeting a few weeks after it had taken place or about the same time that he had gotten his first inkling of the fact that planning for a war in Lebanon was well under way. It is important to note that at the time of the Sharon-Habib meeting, no one in the Cabinet, as far as I know, had any idea of the concept or even that Sharon was about to discuss it.

Q: Was the concept Sharon's own or might it have come from some options presented by Defense Ministry staff?

LEWIS: The concept was Sharon's. There was staff work to support it, but the idea was Sharon's. That is my belief.

In any case, the Habib-Sharon meeting of early December 1981 was an omen of a long diplomatic shadow that would be cast in the future. But there was another event about that time that was more immediately related to U.S.-Israeli relations. Begin, while laying in bed in pain from the broken hip, was listening to the radio and heard President Assad of Syria give a speech in which he rejected the notion of making peace with Zionists, not in a 100 years. Begin brooded about that comment and began to consider that if Syria were never to make peace, Israel should just annex the Golan Heights. The argument went that there would never be any negotiations about the area in any case, and if Assad were going to be so intransigent, why shouldn't Israel proceed with its legal incorporation? I returned to Israel on December 13. The Embassy staff had begun to pick up rumors on Friday, December 11 about something being considered for the Golan. Bill Brown filed a report alerting Washington to these rumors and suggesting the language of a very tough message that he could deliver quickly to the Israeli government before any action could be taken to annex the Heights. In fact, the annexation was announced at a Cabinet meeting on the morning of December 13. Begin actually left his house and this was his first Cabinet meeting after having broken his hip. He surprised everyone in the Cabinet by proposing that Israeli law be extended to the Heights. Technically, that was not the same as annexation but the extension of Israeli law to the area; it was the same formula that was used in 1948 on the status of Jerusalem; that was repeated in 1980 when the Jerusalem law was approved. This legal device has the same effect as annexation, but it is not so named. It theoretically, leaves the door slightly open to subsequent negotiations. The Cabinet was taken aback; Begin was at his most fiery; he denounced Assad. He said that it would be ridiculous not to proceed; it would show the Arabs once and for all that Israel could not be trifled with. At the time, the Golan Heights was occupied territory under military control. There were only 10-12,000 Druze inhabitants from Syrian days in addition to the more recent few thousand Israeli settlers. The Cabinet adopted Begin's proposal. I reached Begin by phone after the Cabinet meeting to attempt (without any formal instructions from Washington) to try to slow him down. It was useless. He was impervious to my arguments. The next day, very quickly before any national debate could develop, or perhaps more importantly, before the U.S. could respond -- which was clearly part of Begin's game plan -- Begin's proposal was put before the Knesset. There was a debate and then the Knesset approved the implementing legislation -- the law passed all three readings in the same day, which was almost unprecedented. It was approved by 63-21 count. The Labor Party boycotted the vote -- they abstained. That was not a very courageous act,

but it must be remembered that Labor had been responsible for the Israeli kibbutzim on the Golan. The kibbutz members on the Golan were nearly all Labor supporters. Furthermore, there was a compelling security argument because the Golan was a threat to Israel as shown in the 1950s and 1960s. The Labor Party leaders had always been as tough on the Golan as had the Likud, even though the two parties differed on the West Bank and Gaza. In any case, Labor abstained and did not oppose the Begin proposal because presumably to do so might have left them politically exposed.

The Cabinet and Knesset actions created a fire-storm in Washington, as I had warned Begin they would. There was real anger in the White House. Haig felt double-crossed. Meetings were held to decide on a U.S. response. One of the arguments that had been made by Secretary Haig in support of the Israeli "strategic cooperation" concept, which impelled Reagan to ask Weinberger to take on the task of negotiating with the Israelis, was that once such a formal strategic relationship was in being, events such as the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor would not take place; the assumption was that the Israelis would consult fully with us before taking any aggressive actions. The Haig thought had been implied by Begin and Sharon, if not actually expressed. The Israelis had never made any commitment of that kind, at least not in so many words. They never had promised to consult with us before taking any actions, but we had good reasons to infer that the new relationship would be a closer working one and that as strategic allies, we could reasonably expect the Israelis not to surprise us with an action as far reaching as they proposed for the Golan Heights. That was the White House view and the staff there felt completely double-crossed. The Administration tried to think of an appropriate response which would not weaken Israel's defense capabilities but would get Begin's attention. Finally, Washington decided to suspend implementation of the new "strategic cooperation" agreement, signed only two weeks earlier. The agreement would stay in suspension while a full review of Israeli actions was undertaken with the Israeli government. My friends in Washington said that the ground rules had to be straightened out with Begin so that in the future we would know how to deal with each other. I received a message from Haig which I was to deliver to Begin in which the suspension was announced. It also raised serious questions about the application of Israeli law on the Golan Heights. The message was polite, but we knew that it would not be well received by Begin. But Washington honestly felt that this kind of message was in order to try to convince Begin that he couldn't take actions of this kind unilaterally and with impunity. The alternative courses of action, such as suspension of military aid, would undermine Israel's security. The policy option chosen was the softest, but clearest message that Begin might understand. Begin had put personal great store in this strategic cooperation agreement.

I called the Prime Minister's office for an appointment. I went to see him, although he was still convalescing after his release from the hospital. He was still in bed and not mobile, although greatly improved from the time of his operation. He still had some pain. I took Paul Hare with me as the note-taker. On December 20, we went to Begin's residence in Jerusalem at 9:30 a.m. When we reached the upstairs bedroom, we were met not only by Begin and his assistant, but also by Sharon, Shamir and a couple of others. They were all glowering. Begin was sitting in a chair with his foot up. He was sitting next to a table covered with papers. By this time, Begin already knew about the suspension because it had been announced in Washington two days earlier. He had plenty of time to consider his reaction. The Haig letter had been sent to Begin earlier. I wanted to make sure that Begin understood that we were not canceling the agreement,

but only suspending it pending further discussions. My talking points started with that issue.

When I entered the bedroom, it was clear that Begin was in a lot of pain; his face was drawn. He greeted me very cordially; as always he called me "Sam". He told me about his physical condition in answer to my question about his health. He discussed his wife, who was not well. It was an obvious effort on his part to separate his comments on the U.S. action from his relationship with me. His outrage would be with Reagan and Washington. After about five minutes of small talk and pleasantries, he stiffened, he sat up straighter, his face became steely. He reached for the stack of papers on the table and put them on his lap -- he never looked at them. Then he began his lecture. He first said, very somberly, "I have, Mr. Ambassador (when he was angry, he always called me "Mr. Ambassador" so that I always knew when I could expect a blast), a very serious, personal private message to President Reagan which I want you to transmit immediately". So Paul Hare takes out his notebook to record Begin's message. Begin launches into a lecture that lasted about one hour and ten minutes non-stop. His comments were completely extemporaneous. He never looked at a note. He gave a *tour de force* of Israel's relations with Syria, including all the perfidies that Syria had perpetrated, including the attacks on Israeli territory, the Yom Kippur war and how Israel occupied the Golan Heights in the first place during the 1967 war. He talked about the Israeli casualties, the Holocaust. It was a typical Begin performance when he was in good form; he was at his most scathing. He reviewed the history of "the alliance" with the United States, emphasizing how he and Reagan had reached a most important agreement which would make the U.S. and Israel allies in the future. He then noted that suddenly, without justification, the U.S. had "canceled" the agreement -- he insisted on using the word "canceled". I tried to interrupt to clarify the U.S. action and was just brushed aside. The highlight of the Begin performance was the colorful language used; that became well known subsequently. He said something along these lines' "Do you think that we are teenagers to be punished, slapped on the wrist? Do you think Israel is a vassal state of the United States? Are we just another "banana republic"? Let me tell you, Mr. Ambassador, that this is not Israel!". He went on this vein for 70 minutes and although I tried, I was unsuccessful in interrupting. At the end, I managed to talk about five-ten minutes, trying to clarify the U.S. action which was a "suspension" pending discussions between the two countries to clarify what each could expect from the other. I pointed out that the Israeli action was a strange surprise to spring on an ally, but Begin wasn't having any of it. So we parted. Paul went with me downstairs so that we could return as quickly as possible to Tel Aviv to send a reporting cable -- Tel Aviv being about an hour's drive from Jerusalem. As we walked down the stairs, I looked into the living room of the residence. The whole Cabinet had assembled there along with the Chief of Staff, the Chief of Intelligence -- the high command of the Israeli armed forces. I decided to enter the room and chatted with a couple of them. They did not seem to know why they were there, but they were waiting for Begin to hold a Cabinet meeting. I took my leave, somewhat uneasily. As I left the residence, I ran into a herd of journalists, who had been summoned, as they often were in swarms whenever I came out of the Prime Ministry; there was always a battery of journalists waiting for me. They asked me what had happened and I told them that the Prime Minister had given me a message for President Reagan and that I was on the way to Tel Aviv to send it. Then I left and got into the car with Paul. We started down the hill and had gotten down about half way down when we turned on the news. We heard the Prime Minister's press spokesman giving in English for the foreign media a summary of what Begin had told me, including all the colorful phrases. The briefing was rather lengthy, about fifteen minutes, and very accurate, practically word for

word.

The White House was furious at this broad-side attack, not only because of its treatment of the U.S. Ambassador, but more importantly for the tone of the attack on the United States. The temperature of the U.S.-Israel relationships plummeted to sub-Arctic levels immediately. I found out later what the Cabinet meeting that I had stumbled into was all about. That is an interesting story in itself. Years after the fact, it became clear that Begin's anger about the suspension of the Memorandum of Agreement resulted first in his lecture to me, but also in the first proposal to the cabinet for a Lebanon invasion. Sharon had asked all the military leaders to attend because he had been asked by Begin to brief the Cabinet on the whole operation called "Big Pines" -- the full version that eventually took place. Although in very much greater detail, it was essentially the plan that Sharon had presented to Habib as his "personal" idea two and half weeks earlier. It was however, the first time the Cabinet had ever heard of it at all, except Shamir who had been briefed by Foreign Ministry staff after the Habib-Sharon meeting.

At the Cabinet meeting, Begin was still angry and livid; he was all fired up. They carried him downstairs to the living room where he chaired the Cabinet meeting. I am told that he asked for Cabinet approval of the Lebanon operation to be initiated at whatever moment seemed to be appropriate in light of PLO actions. The Cabinet was thunder-struck and a number of them asked Sharon a lot of questions. Simcha Erlich, who was the Liberal Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister and a well known "dove", and others, raised serious questions about the whole concept. During the discussions, it was Sharon who defended the operation; Begin apparently just listened to both sides. After a while, it became clear to Begin that he didn't have a majority ready to vote on the proposal. So with a lot of anger, he closed the debate, adjourned the meeting and was taken back upstairs. That was the first of several Israeli Cabinet meetings on the "Big Pines" proposal. Each time, it was deferred or not approved; there was enough opposition to forestall Begin and Sharon from bringing the proposal to a vote lest they seriously splinter the Cabinet. There were at least two or three other occasions between January and June during which inconclusive Cabinet discussions were held. After a while, Begin and Sharon concluded that their Cabinet colleagues were "weak-kneed, lily-livered faint hearts" who could not be persuaded to accept the total proposal. At that stage, Sharon recast the nature of the operation and convinced Begin that the Israelis needed only to project their force 50 kilometers into Lebanon to clean out the PLO artillery and Katusha rockets; thereafter, the Cabinet discussion until the war started was about a much smaller and less frightening operation than had been originally presented. It became, for discussion purposes, only an incursion, slightly larger than the one that took place in 1978.

Not only was the U.S. angry about the substance of his lecture, but I was personally furious at Begin for the manner in which he handled the "private" message to Reagan including a serious breach of diplomatic protocol by giving me a message that had been transmitted "immediately" when in fact the press was to be briefed before I could even return to Tel Aviv. I should add parenthetically that the mechanics used by Begin tells us something about the Prime Minister's extraordinary memory. I understood later that before the "Big Pines" briefing, Begin started the Cabinet meeting by recounting, from memory and without notes, precisely what he had said to me upstairs. His lecture to me was in English; his description of events to the Cabinet was in Hebrew. His press secretary made notes of his comments to the Cabinet, went outside to brief the

press in English, and despite the double-translation, the press got almost a verbatim version of what I had heard. It was a technically extraordinary feat. In any case, I was thoroughly angry with Begin about the way he had toyed with me and the United States.

Senator Percy happened to visit Israel right after Christmas. Percy had been briefed on recent events, had met with Foreign Ministry staff and was greatly concerned with the drift of the situation, particularly about the cooling of U.S.-Israel relations. At the same time, he was also angry with Begin and the Israelis as we all were. Moshe Arens who was to be the Israeli Ambassador in Washington hosted a dinner for Percy on the night of December 29. Before that dinner, I took Percy to see Begin at the latter's residence. They met for more than an hour with me essentially taking notes. Toward the end, Percy, while trying to stay cordial, was attempting to convince Begin that he needed to take into greater account, U.S. -- both administration and Congressional -- feelings in matters such as the recent events. When Percy finished, I said, "Mr. Prime Minister, there is something that I wanted to talk to you about before we leave. It concerns me personally". I then really laid him out for the handling of the "urgent and private" message to the President. I described in unmistakable terms what normal diplomatic practices were and how he had violated them. I told him that I felt that I had been treated like an idiot by his performance. For the only time in my recollection of my relationship with Begin, he apologized; he really was quite contrite. He said he had never considered events in that light; it had never crossed his mind that he was violating diplomatic protocol. He was so intent on getting his point across publicly in the most dramatic manner that he just didn't consider the potential negatives. He was so contrite, which was so unlike Begin, that I will never forget it. Percy was the only witness.

1981 ended with U.S.-Israel relationships in a deep freeze.

Q: That brings us to January 1, 1982. What happened next?

LEWIS: As the New Year dawned, I received a message requesting that I return to Washington for consultations. Our Ambassador to Egypt, Roy Atherton, received a similar request. We were to return to the U.S. to discuss what could be done about the autonomy negotiations and the peace process. I was also to discuss the perilous state of U.S.-Israel relations. I returned on Sunday, January 3. I spent all day Monday in a series of meetings with the NEA Assistant Secretary, Nick Veliotis, and his staff. We discussed various ways to re-start the autonomy negotiations which had been postponed since the November round at the Israeli request. By this time, it was clear that both Israel and Egypt were far more preoccupied with the completion of the peace treaty. Egypt was especially concerned with the final withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai by the end of April as provided by the treaty. The autonomy talks were of second priority. The U.S. administration, and Secretary Haig specifically, had not yet completely abandoned the notion that the Camp David process should be pushed. He was of the opinion, however, that the focus would have to be on the peace treaty and the withdrawal of Israeli forces, although he also would have liked to keep the autonomy talks moving. He said that he would visit Mubarak and Begin to see whether he couldn't get the two parties to continue their negotiations, particularly the Israelis. I had discussions with Haig, the White House staff, the Pentagon, CIA and other places in Washington. I was principally interested in getting a sense of the inter-agency view of Israel at that stage. Everybody was mad at the Israelis because of the

Golan affair and Begin's comments about the United States. At the same time, there was rising concern about Israeli plans for Lebanon. Habib's reports on his conversation with Sharon had been taken very seriously in Washington. No one, however, had any idea about slowing Israel's momentum; the Palestinians were restive. The situation was very tense.

In response to a question on January 9, the Department's press spokes-person said that we were unwilling to reestablish strategic cooperation with Israel because of the Golan Heights matter. We wanted clarification of the situation before we would end the suspension of the agreement. Haig left for the region the following day. He first visited Cairo, where he said publicly that Mubarak had given him a clear and firm commitment to intensify efforts to reach agreement on the autonomy talks. I later was given to understand from Haig, via Harvey Sickerman, his special assistant who was with the Secretary, that in fact when Haig left Cairo, he knew from Mubarak that the Egyptians wanted to put the autonomy talks on ice; they wanted to concentrate on getting the Israelis out of the Sinai. Haig's comments were actually a smokescreen.

When Haig reached Israel on January 14, he met with Begin, Sharon, Shamir and others. In his meeting with Begin, there was some discussion of the autonomy talks. The Israelis were much more anxious to keep them going than the Egyptians; they pressed Haig to urge Mubarak to join in. They wanted us to intervene on their behalf with Mubarak so that the Egyptians would make a high level commitment to the autonomy talks. But Mubarak was elusive; he had other more important issues to attend.

The main subject of the Haig visit was Israel's intentions toward Lebanon and associated with that, what was to be done about the Golan Heights. The meetings were not entirely satisfactory on either subject, but Begin did give some assurances that Israel would not attack anyone in Lebanon without clear provocation. He urged the U.S. to do everything possible to make the cease fire effective and to warn the Syrians not to complicate matters. When Haig returned to Washington at the end of January, he did tell the press that he didn't believe that any autonomy agreement would be concluded in the near future. He did not give any indication of a diminished U.S. interest in the issue. This period was a busy time for the Embassy. There were a lot of visitors -- Congressional and others.

Toward the end of January, Haig decided that he would make one more trip to the region. He asked Atherton, Cluverius and me to meet him in Geneva, prior to his arrival in the region. So on January 26, I flew to Switzerland and met that evening with the assembled group. The next morning, I flew back to Israel with the Secretary and his party which included Richard Fairbanks, the to-be appointed U.S. representative to the autonomy negotiations. Fairbanks had been the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs and was well connected politically with the Reagan team. I thought at the time that he was a strange choice to replace Phil Habib; he had little experience; he was a lawyer; he was active, smart, self-confident, but no Middle East experience and little diplomatic experience. I learned much, much later that Fairbanks' appointment, although somewhat cynical, was very sensible. Haig knew nothing was going to happen on the autonomy talks for many months, but he didn't want to admit that the process was dead because that might create tensions between Israel and Egypt. He knew Mubarak didn't want any action and that Begin was increasingly preoccupied by other issues such as Lebanon and Syria. Fairbanks was appointed essentially as a holding action, keeping the position as negotiator

filled, and to tour around the region periodically to give the appearance of diplomatic action. It was never intended to be a serious appointment. Nevertheless, Fairbanks was with the Secretary on his January, 1982 trip; it was an opportunity for the Secretary to introduce him to the Israeli and the Egyptians. That would give him some status. Fairbanks was insecure and knew that he was not equipped for the job, but he played the role adequately, particularly since little was expected of him.

Towards the end of January, troubles erupted in Syria. Assad's forces were attacked by Muslim fundamentalists in a number of cities. These were serious terrorist-guerrilla operations against the Syrian regime. The end result was that in a matter of a few weeks, Assad sent the Army into Homs, Hama and Aleppo. The Army shelled these towns and in Hama especially it leveled the town. In the process, according to the information we received, 20-25,000 people were killed by the Syrian Army -- mostly, if not all, women and children -- the families of the Muslims. The Muslim Brotherhood was effectively squashed and their rebellion was over. The cities became ghost towns; they have never been rebuilt in the same way. It was an excellent illustration on how to extinguish a rebellion with cold blooded brutality. Assad was in very bad health at the time and his regime was quite shaky, but he held on tenaciously. The Israelis took very careful note of Assad's action and later made prominent mention of the lack of international reaction to this brutality in contrast to the international comments on Israeli behavior in the West Bank and Gaza.

Fairbanks was not formally appointed as the U.S. representative until the Haig party returned to Washington. Mubarak went to Washington in early February for reassurance that we would insist that the peace treaty would be fully implemented. There was an increasing amount of nervousness in Egypt that Israel, in the final analysis, would refuse to withdraw completely from the Sinai. Indeed, Sharon had been making suggestions along these lines, which made the Egyptians very nervous. In mid-February, Fairbanks made his first official visit to Israel. It was very formal and little was accomplished. He did test the waters.

Q: Who supported Fairbanks?

LEWIS: He had the same team that Habib had been working with. In the absence of any active negotiations, Fairbanks went around and consulted, trying to find any means to get the autonomy negotiation started again. Everybody was polite, but no one really cared. There were still at this time a lot of exchanges between Cairo and Jerusalem; Shamir and Sharon both went back and forth. There were a lot of efforts being made to agree on the final withdrawal details.

In early February, Sallie and I visited Jordan at the invitation of Dick Viets, our Ambassador in Amman. He had been my first DCM in Tel Aviv (1977-79). It gave me an opportunity to become better acquainted with the Jordanians; I had been there once before when Tom Pickering was Ambassador. I again found King Hussein and his people very eager to talk to me about the Israelis; the Jordanians were always anxious to know what the Israeli leadership was like and what it thought. I had a long lunch with the King and General [Sharif Zaid] bin Shakar and later I met with the Crown Prince and other Jordanian leaders. They were very nervous about events in Israel and particularly about Israeli intentions in Lebanon. The King was convinced that a plot was being hatched which would include an attack on the Palestinians which would once again

complicate his life by driving some of them back into Jordan; in light of the Jordan-PLO history, that was a troublesome prospect. He wanted to know to what extent the Sinai withdrawal was likely to take place, although he did indicate some skepticism. All Jordanians were suspicious of Israeli intentions, particularly on withdrawal.

Sometime in February, Shamir had visited Cairo with the express intent on making arrangements for a Mubarak visit to Israel. He had never been there and the Israelis were anxious to expose him to their country. Unfortunately -- I believe at Begin's initiative -- the Israelis assumed that if the President of Egypt would come to Israel, he would come on an official visit and would visit Jerusalem. Sadat had set that precedent, but Mubarak was too faint-hearted and was greatly concerned by Arab reactions. Therefore, he postponed the trip making his reasons eminently clear -- he did not use some vague diplomatic formulations, which would have been much wiser. Instead, he made it clear that he would not come to Jerusalem. Once the issue had been raised, the anti-Egyptians and those who were sensitive to Jerusalem's status, immediately advised Begin that no one should be welcomed in Israel on an official visit unless they visit Jerusalem. Begin fully agreed. In effect, they shot themselves in the foot by insisting on a Jerusalem visit, thereby eliminating any possibility of a Mubarak visit, which still hasn't taken place although we are now in 1991. This issue remains a very sore subject between Israel and Egypt.

The spring of 1982 was filled with disagreements on the cease-fire in Lebanon -- its extent and application. We continued to try to smooth matters over and to stave off trouble. There were an increasing number of incidents outside of Israel between Palestinian elements and Jews, with each one being considered by Israel as a major violation. The Israeli press increasingly beat the war drums, using each one of these "major violations" as an excuse for the policy of cleaning out the threats from South Lebanon. On April 3, an Israeli diplomat, Jacob Bar-Simenthal was assassinated in Paris; the PLO was blamed. That Spring, there was also an attack on a Jewish synagogue in Paris during which a number of people were killed. These incidents did inflame Israeli views toward the PLO. Cap Weinberger had planned a trip to Israel during this time, but on April 5, Shamir gave a very fiery speech at Bar-Simenthal's funeral, saying that Israel would strike at the PLO without reservations if these acts of terrorism did not cease; the next day, Weinberger canceled his trip, although I don't know how closely the two events were connected. State had recommended the cancellation because it was felt that Weinberger's presence in Israel could only complicate matters. Throughout April, we were increasingly focusing on the final Sinai withdrawal arrangements which had become more difficult with every passing day. Sharon was becoming more and more obstreperous; he was accusing the Egyptians of not fulfilling all of their treaty obligations. Both Begin and he were discussing publicly the need for Egypt to meet all of its commitments before Israel met all of its. A "chicken" game was developing and we were extremely concerned that the whole treaty would fall apart at the last minute because the Israelis would not complete their withdrawal. In retrospect, we were probably overly concerned; I am convinced that Begin never had the slightest doubt about fulfilling Israel's treaty commitments, but he was determined to squeeze as much out of the Egyptians as he could; it was clear that they were not meeting all of their obligations. Begin was a tough bargainer and may have bluffed us into being more concerned than we needed to be. He certainly did worry us; we were also concerned about developments in Lebanon which appeared to be increasingly likely to lead to a major clash; so we had two major concerns on our hands simultaneously -- the situation in the area could have been greatly upset by either, not to mention both. We had a scare in mid-

April when we spotted Israeli troop movements near the Lebanon border; we had intelligence warnings all the time. I went to see Begin to show our concerns and he assured me that no decision had been made to attack Palestinian targets; that did not mean that such a decision might not be made. The atmosphere was tense; I had repeated meetings with Begin and Sharon -- sometimes together. Since December, Sharon had become increasingly difficult to deal with; he was abusive; he didn't listen; he made no effort to try to resolve real or perceived problems; he was defiant; essentially, he was sticking his thumb in our eyes every time he got a chance. He kept repeating, "Don't think we will surprise you; if these Palestinian acts continue, we will clean them out". He was in fact making his view clear that we would have to swallow what ever Israel decided to do. Both Washington and I continued to send warnings, argued and rebutted, although I must say that the Embassy was not getting a lot stern messages from Washington to support our position. I believe that Haig had concluded as early as January/February that at some point, the Israelis would be sufficiently provoked that they would invade Lebanon and clobber the Palestinians. Haig didn't really like the PLO and therefore may have considered the Israelis' idea not so bad.

In the middle of April, another unanticipated event occurred which raised tensions a great deal. An American-Israeli, Aaron Harry Goodman, went crazy and shot his way up unto the Dome of the Rock. He was an Israeli soldier. He killed two Arab guards, wounded a number of worshipers. There were protests during which rocks were thrown. It was a terrible mess. Goodman was indeed out of his mind. The Arab world seized the event as an opportunity to show how unreliable Israel was in safeguarding the Temple Mount. Tensions rose drastically. We made some tough public statements in Washington, but we soon understood that the act was that of a madman. No one else seemed or wanted to understand that. There was a major debate in the Security Council. Israel was condemned by all sides which put us in the position of both defending and denouncing Israel. On April 12, Nick Veliotes, who was in Israel on a brief visit, returned to Washington and on his recommendation, the Administration decided to appoint Deputy Secretary Walter Stoessel as a kind of trouble shooter. He was to go to Israel and Egypt to try to ease some of the tensions that were generated by the Israeli retreat from the Sinai. His appointment was intended to get us over this rough period because he was a high level official.

The problem was that Cairo was dragging its feet on the treaty violations that Israel alleged; some in Israel were talking about not completing the Sinai withdrawal. Stoessel's job was to mediate and to make sure that the complete withdrawal would take place. He had never been involved in Middle East affairs, but was an old pro, a fine person and an experienced diplomat. He was very gracious, proper and formal, while warm at the same time. When he came to the region, he essentially put himself in Roy Atherton's and my hands. We worked very closely with him during the following couple of weeks. He met with Begin, who took a liking to him. Stoessel essentially shuttled between Cairo and Jerusalem. During his visit, we worked out some language for an informal memorandum of understanding, covering the points at issue. That documented was negotiated with both sides and became a cover for the political leadership. It in effect made the United States the guarantor of all that was to happen. Begin over-ruled Sharon, who was arguing that complete withdrawal be delayed. Begin, as I said, had complete withdrawal in mind all along, but needed a senior American mediator to help him in his internal arguments. Sharon had raised so much fuss about these alleged treaty violations that Begin needed this help. Many of Sharon's allegations were insignificant in any case, but he seemed

determined to thwart the treaty, although I do not know why. It may have gone back to the questions which stalled the Taba negotiations for so long. Sharon and others, including Begin, were always very unhappy about the fact that at Camp David the Israelis had to agree to total withdrawal from the Sinai. They gave up airfields and settlements near the border. They had to give up the last inch of territory. There was considerable criticism in Israel of Begin and Sharon and the administration after Camp David for accepting total withdrawal because that policy might set a precedent for the Syrians and the Golan Heights and for the Jordanians and the Palestinians and the West Bank. The argument went that once it was agreed to withdraw entirely from the Sinai, then there could be no compromises for any other occupied territories. Sharon apparently had bought that argument fully and was therefore determined not to evacuate the Sinai completely. Begin was also sympathetic to the argument, but was ultimately governed by a sense of honor which bound him to a treaty that he had signed. Both would have preferred to find a way not to return all of the Sinai, even if they were just small pieces that were under dispute; they thought that might be helpful later when other agreements had to be negotiated with other Arab countries. That is how the Taba affair began. Sharon staked out about 14 different points along the demarcation line where there was disagreement between Israel and Egypt on where the boundary should be. Sharon was determined not to give on any of these areas at issue. Ultimately, the negotiators put off the settlement of these border disputes; that allowed the withdrawal to be completed. That was Stoessel's achievement. It was hard work, late nights; we worked in the Consul General's offices in Jerusalem since we were working with the Israelis in Jerusalem and needed a secure phone to talk to Atherton in Cairo. At one point we had the Israeli negotiators, including Eli Rubenstein and David Kimche, come to the Consulate General which is something that they had never done. The Israeli government has never recognized the existence of that Consulate General and therefore is reluctant to deal with it at all. That attitude stemmed from the *Corpus Separatum* concept of 1948 which suggested that we didn't recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; that is why our Embassy is in Tel Aviv. That concept created great "angst" for the Israelis; they were unhappy that our representation in Jerusalem was a Consulate General and not an Embassy; they have never quite recognized the existence of our representation. But in 1982, the Israelis were so anxious to get the withdrawal issue resolved by April 25 that their Civil Servants -- the professionals with whom we worked closely and well -- actually came to the Consulate General for the first time. Not only did they visit the CG's residence, but they actually went upstairs to the offices and were present as we spoke over secure lines to Cairo -- just as the Egyptians were with Roy at the other end of the line. At that point, Stoessel was in Cairo, hammering out the language on the informal memorandum that was to serve as the bridge for withdrawal. The Israelis were very curious about the Consulate General; what it was like, how it looked. They had never been inside. They admitted that it had never occurred to them that they would be there; sometimes diplomatic requirements must override political sensitivities.

The Stoessel shuttles were completed on the night before the final withdrawal as to take place, which was April 25. Stoessel had returned from Cairo at 1 a.m. on the morning of the 25th. He slept in Jerusalem for about four hours and had his first meeting of the day at 7:30 a.m. I met him there having driven up from Tel Aviv early that morning. We met with Begin at 8 a.m.; Stoessel had a *tete-a-tete* with Begin which was important to the Prime Minister because it gave an impression to his political colleagues that there had been a private message for him from the Egyptians -- which in fact there hadn't been. But it helped him to close the loop in the Cabinet.

The private meeting was followed by a Cabinet meeting with Sharon *et al.* There had to be a signing ceremony for the document that closed the Sinai withdrawal chapter which dealt with how the disputed areas were going to be handled. The Egyptian Ambassador to Israel, Saad Mortada, had been authorized to sign on behalf of his country so that the signing could take place in Israel. The ceremony which was to take place on the 25th kept being delayed; around 1 p.m. we sent the Israelis' final text to Atherton in Cairo. We then waited for Egyptian approval; withdrawal would not start until the document had been approved by all parties. The 25th passed and we still didn't have the Egyptians' reply. Technically, the peace treaty had been violated, which is something we all wanted to avoid -- except maybe Sharon. So we moved the clock back as is often done in international conferences. Eventually, the Egyptians replied positively and the Ambassador was authorized to sign the document. Shamir was spending that night at the Plaza Hotel; we, the Americans and Ambassador Mortada, took the document to the hotel from the American Consulate General where we had all been waiting. Shamir was asleep; so Mortada signed and left the paper with us to get Shamir's signature! The Egyptian Ambassador was a very cooperative diplomat. At 1 a.m., we did get Shamir's signature although it was dated April 25. We then turned the clocks back to their right times. Stoessel flew back to Washington and the Israelis began their withdrawal from the Sinai. But the whole episode was a cliff-hanger.

One of the most difficult parts of the withdrawal was the movement of the Israeli settlers from the Sinai. That was one of the more dramatic episodes of the whole affair. Israeli TV gave it full coverage. Sharon, as Defense Minister, had to send the Army to drag the settlers, one by one, away from their homes and back into Israeli territory. They fought like tigers, attacking their own soldiers who had to use foam; all of this appeared on TV. Many settlers from the West Bank went down to the Yammit -- a settlement in the Sinai -- to help the people there to defend themselves from the Israeli army. much of the fighting stemmed from the provocative actions of the West Bank fanatics. It reminded me very much of the worst scenes we had in this country during the anti-Vietnam demonstrations. It was terribly traumatic for an Israeli Army to be attacked and to attack some of the finest Israeli youths, who were all wearing their yarmulkes. The pictures had a great psychological effect on the Israeli population. It seared the Israelis' public soul; I believe it was calculated to do so. The leaders of the groups that defended Yammit were cynically determined to make the withdrawal of the settlers so painful to the government and the public that it could never be repeated on the West Bank or other areas if withdrawal would be required from those areas in the future. It did have that effect; the forced withdrawal and the subsequent demolition of Yammit by the Israeli Army were not soon forgotten and is still remembered today. Sharon insisted on the destruction of the settlement, despite the fact that the Egyptians had indicated a willingness to pay for the buildings. Sharon spuriously argued that it was too close to the border and that it would be much safer to have just a ruin there so that it could not become a terrorist base in the future. Sharon rejected the Egyptians' offer and Begin for some reason supported him. Yammit was an exception; the settlements further south along the Sinai coast were turned over to the Egyptians intact and due compensation was paid. Yammit was turned over in ruins, after the population had been dragged out screaming and kicking. But it had the effect that Sharon hoped to create. Today, Israeli public sentiment about forced evacuation is governed by its memory of Yammit. I doubt whether anything like it will ever be repeated. There may be voluntary evacuations, but no forced ones, especially if the Army is required.

Otherwise, the evacuation of the Sinai went very smoothly. The pull-back was executed on schedule; all the detailed agreements were followed to the letter. Parenthetically, at about this time, Begin took a couple of demonstrative steps which in fact said that Israel had withdrawn this time, but would never do it again. For example, he gave a speech in the Knesset on May 3 in which he said that after the interim period specified by the Camp David agreements, Israel would assert its claims for sovereignty to other territories as authorized by the agreements. He was putting all on notice that Sinai was not a precedent for other occupied territories. The Knesset voted 58-54 in favor of a Begin proposal which opposed any dismantling of settlements which might result from future peace negotiations. The Knesset also approved Begin's proposal that after the interim period Israeli sovereignty should be extended to the occupied territories. That just a demonstration of Begin's defiance and bitterness about the Sinai withdrawal; the action had an effect on the Egyptians and other Arabs. The Cabinet passed a resolution which rejected any efforts not to hold future autonomy talks in Jerusalem -- the Israeli position being that if they were to be held in Cairo, they should also be held in Jerusalem, not in Herzliyya or other cities. That just increased the difficulties of having autonomy talks in the future.

These actions were just part of a large Israeli campaign to minimize the Sinai withdrawal and harden the Israeli position on other matters. It was driven by the bitterness and frustration felt by the Israeli leaders. It certainly made it clear to Egypt that the chances of completing the Camp David accords were very slim, if at all. Egypt got the Sinai back, but the Israelis were making it clear that it was not a precedent for the West Bank or the Golan. That was the tacit statement being sent by these statements.

On May 21, Sharon went to Washington. This was the climactic moment before the Lebanon war. It was the last chance for us to block the invasion. We now know that during the preceding three months, as I have said, Begin and Sharon had brought the Lebanon plan before the Cabinet at least a couple of times, but did not obtain a consensus. Then Sharon laid before the cabinet the more modest plan, which called only for an incursion to a depth of fifty kilometers, to eliminate the Katusha rockets which were indeed a threat to the Israeli towns close to the northern border. The Cabinet was lulled into approving that "limited" operation as necessary. It left the timing of the operation to Begin and Sharon, presumably depending on further Palestinian incursions. But the gun was cocked when Sharon arrived in Washington. It had not been fired yet. Sharon's purpose for the visit was to sound out Haig and to make an assessment of possible U.S. reaction which he was to report to Begin upon his return. The question was, "Could Israel "get away" with it without any massive American reaction?". I went back to Washington on May 24 to participate in the Sharon meetings; I did not assume that the meetings would go smoothly. I had long before concluded that the Lebanon war was one that was just waiting to take place. The chances increased with every Palestinian attack.

But I had never fully understood how committed Sharon was to his original plan. All the press leaks, of which there were many, discussed only the more modest plan. Our intelligence had not picked up any indication that the press was not correct. We knew that the Cabinet was divided, with a number of Ministers opposing any Lebanon operation.

While in Washington, I met with Charlie Hill, Larry Eagleburger, Nick Veliotis, and Secretary Haig to discuss how Sharon might be handled. Sharon had a meeting with Weinberger in the

morning which was a stand off -- very formal, but with little substance. In the afternoon of May 25, we met in the Secretary's conference room on the Seventh Floor. Sharon made a presentation of his bellicose views of the Lebanon situation -- the Palestinian threat, Israel's unwillingness to allow further violations of the cease fire, Israel's interpretation of the cease fire. Sharon made the same statements that had been made several times previously, "We are not going to surprise you. We are putting the U.S. on notice. We are not looking for trouble, but we can't accept current conditions much longer. So don't be surprised if we respond in a massive way to these dastardly attacks". Haig clearly followed the line that we had agreed upon. Sharon had taken the maps out so that he could show what might happen if the Palestinians didn't desist. The maps of course only showed the southern Lebanon area. Haig repeatedly said that we considered the situation very dangerous; that we did not consider the cease fire to have been violated; we believed that Israel had a legitimate right to self-defense, but that international sentiment had to be considered. Haig's view was, which I believe was supported by Reagan, that any country had the right to self-defense. The U.S. would therefore not tell Israel that it couldn't do so, preemptively if necessary, although he didn't use that phrase. But all actions and reactions had to be weighed against a framework of proportionality. Haig emphasized that if Israel were threatened or actually attacked, its response would have to have international understanding that it was proportionate. That was the central message to Sharon which was given several times during the meeting. Sharon was never told that Israel could not or must not strike at the PLO, but he certainly should have understood that anything like we now know he was planning was totally unacceptable. The conclusion that Ze'Ev Schiff -- a writer -- and others drew -- namely that Sharon had gotten a green light -- was incorrect. One might argue that he got an amber light, but certainly not a green light, at least not while I was present. Unfortunately after this meeting, Haig met privately with Sharon. I have to assume that the Secretary used the same line. Although it is conceivable that there might have been some other nuances, I find it hard to believe. Haig may have shown more sympathy for Israel's dilemma in private because he was in fact sympathetic to Israel's problems with the PLO and the Syrians.

After the meeting, Veliotis and I met with Hill and agreed that the Secretary had not delivered the message in sufficiently tough terms. For us, it raised a serious question on how Sharon would describe the meeting to Begin after his return to Israel. When we had a chance to meet with Haig, we suggested that he write a letter to Begin stating in clear terms what the U.S. position was, so that Sharon's report couldn't be distorted. Nick and I drafted such a letter which Haig signed and I carried back to Israel. The letter was very clear; it followed the policy that had been given to Sharon in good strong terms. Subsequently, from a number of sources, we found out that when Sharon got back he went to see Begin and reported that the Americans would not bother Israel and that Israel should proceed to do what it had to do. The U.S. would make some noise, but wouldn't take any adverse actions. We would swallow Israel's attack. When Begin read Haig's letter, he had Sharon's oral report and therefore leaned to Sharon's interpretation. Objectively, one would have to conclude that at this stage, the only way Begin and Sharon could have been dissuaded from their venture would have been for Reagan to write a very tough letter which would not have left any doubt in any one's mind that the U.S. would react forcefully and strenuously if Israel invaded Lebanon. Such a letter would have had to convey clearly that if such event would occur, the U.S. would suspend all assistance, etc.; in fact, it would have had to contain a real *ultimatum* of the kind we have never delivered to Israel, even during the Lebanon war. I did deliver one *ultimatum* to Begin at a later point after the war had begun to warn about

making any further attacks on the Syrians. It was, however, written in very polite language and didn't include any specific threat beyond the general one that our relationships would be adversely effected, which carried some meaning, but lacked specificity. Even an *ultimatum* of that kind probably would not have been sufficient in May, 1982; there was too much momentum behind Sharon's operation. If we had been willing, we might have sent a real red light, but it was not realistic to expect that, given the U.S. politics, the history and the relationship. It was not the kind of message that any American President, at least since Eisenhower in 1956, had ever given Israel and may never do so. In any case, Sharon returned to Israel and matters unraveled quickly. I returned on May 29 and delivered the letter. Begin read it and said he understood, but reiterated the standard arguments about the PLO increasing threat which could not be tolerated much longer.

On June 4, Shlomo Argoff, the Israeli Chargé d'Affaires in London, was attacked by an assassin, shot in the head and almost killed. He is still alive, but in a vegetable state. It was a very sad event. The PLO denied all responsibility; the slim evidence that does exist suggests that the assassin probably belonged to another Palestinian group -- an extremist gang like Abu Nidal -- and not the main line PLO. But it was certainly a Palestinian attack. On the next day, the Israelis bombed Beirut and the PLO headquarters very heavily with quite a few deaths. Then PLO signed its own death warrant. Arafat, despite a considerable number of warnings not to provoke the Israelis, apparently felt he had no option because of his honor and the morale of his men. He ordered his men to fire on Kiryat Shimona and other northern settlements with Katusha rockets and artillery. That caused retaliatory Israeli air strikes; the PLO then increased their counter artillery fire. I must say that I have never understood what might have been going through Arafat's mind at this moment. It was clear by June 4 and 5 that Israel was just waiting for an excuse to invade Lebanon. Nevertheless, the PLO responded in such a way to make an invasion inevitable -- it may have been that anyway, but the PLO through its actions made it a certainty. The invasion began on June 6. That was the beginning of the Lebanon war, a war which didn't reflect well on anybody -- not on the Israelis, not on the PLO, not terribly well on the U.S.. We knew it was coming, we tried to stop it, but our efforts were not sufficiently threatening. They were not halfhearted, but they were inadequate for the challenge -- no major and very tough *ultimatums*. We couldn't put any breaks on the PLO. The Lebanon war was a tragedy for all concerned -- the Palestinians, the Lebanese and for Israel. It led to a national crisis which in many ways has never been resolved.

Q: *How did Shultz become secretary of State?*

LEWIS: At the time of Haig's resignation, Shultz was teaching at the University of Chicago. He had been a member of Nixon's Cabinet -- Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Treasury and Director of OMB. He had been considered for Secretary of State at the beginning of the Reagan administration. There was a story, which I consider fairly credible, that Shultz had been selected to be Secretary upon the recommendations of Reagan's "kitchen cabinet". Reagan had called Shultz and offered him a Cabinet position, but apparently was quite vague about which job it was. Shultz, based on press leaks and other rumors, assumed that Reagan was referring to Secretary of Treasury or some other position in the economic sphere. That didn't interest him, so he turned down the offer politely without being aware that it was the Secretary of State position that he was refusing. That is how Haig became Secretary of State. There are several people who

give credence to this story although I don't have any first hand knowledge about it. In any case, Shultz was well known commodity in Washington. He was an excellent choice. He was one that I eventually became to regard very highly and to work with easily. I also had a good working relationship with Al Haig; in fact, I think that he was a better Secretary of State than history has credited him so far. His personal style just didn't fit in with the Reagan team; Haig was his own worst enemy in the way he tried to exert his own leadership. That did not fit with a management style which was not very clear about responsibilities; the White House staff could not accept some one who tried to assert his primacy over an area of responsibility as Haig was accustomed to doing.

In any case, by early July, 1982 I was back in Israel after two trips to Washington in June, one with Begin. Haig was trying to run Middle East policy from his house as Shultz hadn't yet been sworn in and Haig was still technically in the job. Shultz was finally appointed in mid July. We had problems in New York in the U.N. Security Council which was considering resolutions calling for PLO limited withdrawal from Beirut and for Israeli forces from Lebanon. The U.S. vetoed such resolutions because we were, at that stage, still supporting the Israeli contention that the PLO had to leave Lebanon before a modicum of order could be restored to the area. The news out of Beirut suggested a very nasty situation. The press was hammering the U.S. administration, accusing it of having approved the Israeli invasion. On June 30, at a press conference, Reagan denied that rumor, even while the Israelis launched an attack on West Beirut from a distance with artillery shells. The President added however that we agreed with the Israeli position that all PLO forces had to withdraw from Lebanon. The Israelis had told us repeatedly that they did not wish to enter West Beirut and wished that we would find some way to force the PLO to withdraw. There was an increasing level of discussion about the desirability of an international peace-keeping force to enforce the cease fire.

Q: Wouldn't that not have required a larger force than is usually despatched?

LEWIS: Of course. There wasn't much enthusiasm for the idea anywhere. There was already a U.N. force in south Lebanon -- UNIFIL. Some suggested re-deploying UNIFIL to the Beirut area to separate the combatants. The U.N. certainly didn't leap at that suggestion because it didn't feel it would get sufficient cooperation from either side. In Beirut, the fighting had come to a stalemate because the Israeli shelling was not achieving the objective of forcing the PLO out. The PLO was well dug in and it was increasingly apparent that something more had to be done to root the PLO out. The Israeli Army always had some reservations about entering West Beirut, as I noted earlier. It did not cherish the prospect of urban warfare even though it had handily defeated the PLO in the previous few weeks even though the PLO forces fought more tenaciously than expected.

Morris Draper, then the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau for Near East Affairs responsible for Israel-Lebanon-Syria geographic area, had been working for the past year as Phil Habib's alter ego. Draper was in Beirut in July trying to work with the Lebanese government to persuade the PLO to evacuate. Habib may have been there as well; the two worked together at times and separately at others. I believe that Habib may have been in Beirut and had asked Draper to go to Jerusalem to try to convince the Israelis to stop their shelling of the city. That sort of shuttle diplomacy set a pattern for activities which took place over much of the summer,

1982. Habib was trying to work out an arrangement which would have the PLO evacuate Beirut and would have brought the conflict to an end. Phil worked out of our Embassy in Beirut. As time wore on, he became less and less even-handed; he became increasingly an Israeli critic, influenced no doubt by the continual Israeli shelling of Beirut. Although the attacks were to be targeted on the PLO, undoubtedly the whole population suffered, including Habib. He must have been shaken at the continuing sight of smoke plumes from artillery shells and bombs from planes; his vantage point inside the American Embassy in Beirut gave him an entirely different perspective from ours; he could see the war through Lebanese and PLO perspective. Because of our diplomatic niceties, no U.S. official was permitted to enter Lebanon to observe the war from the Israeli side. We watched the war through newspapers and television; that was entirely different than seeing it as Habib did from our Embassy in Beirut.

Habib saw the continual break-downs of the cease fires; he noticed the creeping forward progress of the Israeli forces; he saw the effects of the bombings and the artillery fire on innocent civilians. The cumulative effect of these observations increased Habib's anguish about Israeli policy. Periodically, he or Draper would visit Jerusalem following a very dangerous escape route from Beirut. They usually took a helicopter to an American carrier which was just off the Lebanese coast; then they would fly to Cyprus to connect with a flight to Jerusalem. Either Habib or Draper would meet with Begin or Shamir or Sharon in an effort to convince them as tactfully as possible to cease their military activities so that diplomacy might be given a chance. Habib and Draper felt that if the Israelis would stop their incessant bombardments, then they could get in touch with the Palestinian leadership. They thought that if given a breathing moment and an opportunity for a dialogue with the PLO, they could convince the PLO to evacuate. But as long as military pressure was being applied, there was no way for the Americans to meet with the Palestinians -- it was just too dangerous to be on the streets. Furthermore, the Israeli shelling was causing so much agony that no diplomatic discussions could possibly be contemplated. In effect, Habib and Draper were saying that the current Israeli policy was counter-productive. It was usually Draper who carried the message; if he didn't, then there would be indirect messages relayed through telephone conversations over secure lines that lasted for an hour or two at a stretch between Habib or Draper and the Operations Center in the Department of State. Usually, Habib would talk to Charlie Hill, then the acting Deputy Assistant Secretary and the designated liaison between Habib and the Secretary's Office. Hill would listen to Habib, both the factual reports and the anguish about Israeli actions; in general, Habib's message was that some one had to get the Israelis to stop their military activities. These phone calls would result in periodic instructions to me to call on Israeli officials and try to get them to cease and desist. Sometimes Washington would call Ambassador Arens in and give him the same strong message that we wanted a halt in the shelling of Beirut. The pattern of an anguished Habib reporting at great length to Washington followed by some kind of demarche delivered either in Washington or in Jerusalem began at the end of June and continued through the summer until the PLO finally withdrew.

There were several times during July when it appeared as if the PLO was prepared to withdraw. They were asking for all sorts of guarantees and assurances, primarily from us; they wanted to leave some forces to protect the refugee camps. One of the problems was that there were no countries that were particularly interested in becoming PLO hosts, especially the military forces. That brought the U.S. into the unusual role, stemming from Habib's mediation efforts, of trying

to find a haven for the PLO. American embassies in the region were making discreet inquiries of their host government whether they would be willing to accept these PLO fighters. There were no takers because these "immigrants" would prove to be nothing but trouble either domestically or internationally. Egypt, for example, whom we considered to be a logical safe-haven, didn't want any part of the PLO. Mubarak was crystal clear that although he had great sympathy for Arafat and the PLO, he was not about to get the PLO out of the mess they had made and was not about to jeopardize his peace treaty with Israel. I think we were talking about 4-5,000 men; it was not a gigantic number, but it was substantial. Ultimately, the U.S. was instrumental in finding other homes for these troops -- they were actually dispersed throughout the region, some to South Yemen, some to Tunisia, some to Syria on the Beirut-Damascus highway in convoys. We were instrumental in assuring safe passage and preventing the Israelis from firing on the trucks which they watched drive by. Much later, Arafat himself with his senior staff ended up in Tunis. Some moved north in Lebanon to Tripoli so that not all PLO forces evacuated Lebanon. That is what triggered later fighting between the Syrians and their surrogates and the PLO which eventually resulted in the PLO being completely ejected from Lebanon. We in fact arranged for Arafat's safe conduct out of Tripoli and he probably owes his life to the U.S. diplomats who were responsible. I presume he has remembered that fact although gratitude is not always a common virtue in the Middle East.

I have described in general a lot of the daily activities during this period of the Summer of 1982. I was very busy, trying to stay synchronized with policy developments in Washington. After Shultz took office, the atmospherics changed substantially. Many people in Washington were getting fed up with the Israeli maneuvering and continuing Beirut bombardments; increasingly Washington was doubting Israeli good faith and the bonds of trust between the two countries was weakening. I shuttled frequently back and forth between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem; when I didn't call on the Israeli leadership in person, I was on the phone to it.

Q: What was Arens doing in Washington during this period?

LEWIS: He was being fairly starchy, but handled himself well in a rather difficult situation. One of the sad aspects of this period was the tensions that mounted because of the issue of a peace-keeping force. When it became clear that there was insufficient support for the idea of moving UNIFIL north, we finally agreed to join with the French, the Italians and the British in sending forces to the area, which would act in a coordinated fashion although each under its own flag. These troops were to serve as a temporary shield for Beirut, screening it off from the Israeli forces. These forces were to establish a free zone which could eventually be used as a withdrawal route for the PLO. We and the Israelis were during this time at considerable odds about the facts. What we were told about the situation around Beirut was seldom in agreement with our own observations were as reported by our Embassy in Beirut and the Habib group. Of course, they were being provided information by the Lebanese and by the Palestinians neither of whom were neutral observers of the fighting. To this day, I do not know how much deliberate misinformation we were fed, how much was correct and how much was just information which had been filtered through the fog of war. I do know that there was a lot of factual disagreement between the combatants about what was actually happening on the ground. There was also a lot of finger pointing.

The sympathy of the administration, which up to early July, had been strongly pro-Israel, increasingly shifted towards the Palestinians. That was not a formal policy shift, but the tenor of the instructions emanating from Washington changed as did the Washington reaction to events in Lebanon. There was a growing sympathy for the Lebanese and the PLO, who turned out to be considerably more tenacious than any one anticipated. We reacted as we normally do when there is an under-dog; we sympathize with it. That was true even among those who were well disposed towards Israel. My own reactions changed as well; you could not be involved in those very trying days without feeling frustration and anger. The Israeli mood was also changing; they were showing frustration with the United States particularly once the multi-national peace-keeping forces were deployed. They gagged at the sight of an American force, an alleged close friend and ally, stationed in Lebanon for purposes which were somewhat inimicable to their own perceived interests, although some Israelis saw our intervention of potential benefit. It did not help that our military refused to have any contact of any kind with the Israeli Defense Force even though they were in close proximity. There was considerable discussion of the danger of uncoordinated overflights as well as potential for other accidents. So there was a lot of tension on the military side in light of this close proximity of forces especially since we for policy reasons refused to have any contacts with the Israeli military.

Habib during this period traveled around the area to Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel trying to develop a coordinated plan to convince the PLO to leave Beirut and to get the Israelis to join a real cease fire during which the PLO might depart. He would come to Jerusalem with all sorts of proposals and formulas. In the meantime, Arafat was meeting with the press in Beirut putting on a very defiant air; he seemed to believe that he would not have to evacuate Beirut and that his position was salvageable. There has been a lot of discussion about how he developed this perception. There are some credible reports that at the beginning of his troops' retreat from south Lebanon, the PLO had become completely disorganized under the Israeli pummeling. There are some indications that by late June the PLO was ready to leave Lebanon through Beirut port. But at a critical moment while this issue was being debated, Arafat received a message from Saudi Arabia which reassured him and led him to believe that the U.S. would intervene and prevent Israel from over-running the PLO in Beirut. This message was received while the first cease fires were being declared. The Israelis have often alleged -- and there is some evidence to support their contention -- that Cap Weinberger, who was never sympathetic in the slightest with the Israeli invasion and therefore at odds with Haig and later with Shultz about our Israeli relations, while paying a visit to Saudi Arabia at about this time, had said to the Saudis that President Reagan would never permit Israel to enter and occupy West Beirut. This may have been transmitted to the PLO giving them the sense that it could count on the United States to stop the Israelis at the last second. It is clear that from the panic stage that followed in the immediate aftermath of the Israeli invasion in late June, the PLO recovered and in fact took a very pugnacious and unrelenting stance. It took six-eight weeks of fighting before they eventually left Beirut. During this period, the Israelis slowly applied increasing military pressure and eventually damaged much of West Beirut in the effort to root the PLO out. In retrospect, if we in fact conveyed the wrong signal, either intentionally or inadvertently, that may have been one of the major causes for Beirut's great damage and suffering. Had the PLO not thought that we would come to their rescue at the last second, they might well have fled Beirut shortly after the Israeli invasion, thereby sparing Beirut and its inhabitants from a few weeks of hell.

As I said, during June and into July, Habib was pleading with the Israelis to cease their bombardments so that the PLO might withdraw. Sharon became the focus of our frustration and anger because we held him accountable for all the cease fire break-downs, for the shelling of Beirut, the misinformation, the alleged double-dealings, etc. As I mentioned, Habib's argument was always that if the Israelis would only cease and desist for a few days, he could put a deal together which would end up with a PLO withdrawal from Beirut. Israeli intelligence, which was quite extensive and which was based to a considerable extent on Phalangist sources as well at its own, was portraying an entirely different mood in the PLO leadership. It described that group as defiant and almost euphoric because it was attracting so much world-wide attention. Furthermore, Israeli intelligence described the PLO as convinced that it could outlast the Israelis or that in the final analysis, the world would save them. This perspective led the Israeli army to disagree with Habib's assessment; it was convinced that the PLO would retreat only if Israel would maintain and indeed even increase its military pressure so that the PLO would understand that it had no option except evacuation. This disagreement about PLO intentions and perspectives gave rise to U.S.-Israel tensions about the validity of Israeli military policy in Lebanon during July and August. Our dialogue with Israel became very bitter and spoiled American-Israeli relationships at senior levels.

Q: Do you have any hypothesis about whether the Weinberger's comments in Saudi were made on purpose? Or were they the expressions of an unsophisticated, inexperienced man?

LEWIS: My guess is that the remarks were not made intentionally, but rather a reflection of the policy disputes that were then raging in Washington. Furthermore, this was a period when the foreign policy tiller was not in very firm hands. Haig was on his way out, Shultz was not yet in the job, Reagan was a laissez faire President and every Cabinet member was marching to his or her own drum beat. The NSC was weak, failing to coordinate foreign policy effectively. I suppose that if Weinberger had actually expressed the thoughts that are now being impugned to him, may well have believed that Ronald Reagan would not have permitted in the final analysis that the PLO to be expelled. But the Weinberger comments, if indeed they were made, were mischievous in their effect; there is no doubt about that.

Habib was in Jerusalem once again towards the end of July. In the days preceding his arrival, there had been considerable dialogue about the Syrians. Israeli jets had attacked and destroyed three Syrian SAM sites in the Bekaa Valley as well as Palestinian targets in and around Beirut. While that bombardment was going on, Arafat was meeting that same day with a group of U.S. congresspersons: Mary Louise Oaker (D-Ohio), Peter McCloskey (D-CA) -- he left Congress soon after that. After the meeting with Arafat, the American delegation came out and proudly waved a statement which they had gotten Arafat to agree to withdraw if Israel accepted certain U.N. resolutions about Palestine. McCloskey insisted that this agreement signified PLO recognition of Israel which the Americans considered a great triumph. McCloskey came to Israel after his meeting with Arafat and tried to sell this interpretation to Begin and the Israelis, but he was not very successful. In the first place, they didn't agree with McCloskey and secondly, the Congressman was not very popular in Israel to start with. The Israelis felt that the American delegation had been duped by the PLO.

We looked at the statement that Arafat had agreed to and we agreed with the Israelis that it did

not represent any change in PLO position. But McCloskey and his colleagues were, or wished to be, convinced that their meeting with Arafat was a significant progress towards peace.

On July 27, while Habib was meeting with the Israeli leadership, Senator Paul Tsongas was in Tel Aviv. I was moving from one set of meetings to another. That day was also notable because the Israeli jets bombed a residential area in Beirut. The Lebanese authorities declared that 120 people were killed and 100 more wounded in the raid, most of them being civilians. The U.S. responded to this raid by suspending indefinitely shipments of cluster bombs to Israel; there had been considerable pressure to take this step for some time and that particular bombing finally forced Reagan to take the step. We said that we had done so on policy grounds and not as a matter of law, i.e. a finding of violation of the military assistance laws.

As July passed, Habib was trying to get PLO agreement to withdraw. Another cease fire had been declared. On July 29, the U.N. Security Council voted 14-0 on a resolution demanding that Israel cease its blockade of West Beirut, which had been in effect for several weeks. This was the Israeli way of avoiding entering West Beirut; they had hoped that a cut off of supplies might force the Lebanese to insist that the PLO leave. That was viewed as a very callous policy by much of the world, including many Americans. So when the resolution came up in the Security Council, we abstained, thereby permitting the resolution to be passed. That U.S. action came as a blow to the Israelis. By this time, Reagan's comments about the Lebanese situation took on a much harder edge. He decried the bloodshed in Lebanon and called for an end to it. He was particularly critical after an August 1 Israeli raid that was particularly destructive.

At about this time, a suitcase filled with explosives went off in the Munich airport injuring seven innocent bystanders. So the tensions were rising on all sides.

At the beginning of August, I returned to Washington to participate in meetings that Foreign Minister Shamir was holding there. He had been despatched to Washington to try to improve the coordination and understanding that had seriously deteriorated during July. I had meetings with Shultz and Eagleburger; I attended a meeting that Arens had with Eagleburger. I had a session with Judge Clark, the NSC advisor. It was not a pleasant consultation because by this time, the Washington mood was generally very anti-Israeli. I met Shamir at the airport on August 1. The next morning, I had an early session with Shultz prior to his meeting with Shamir.

After the Shultz briefing ended, Nick Veliotis and I shared a car to the White House where we took part in a 15 minute "pre-brief" for the President, then sat in on the 1 ½ hour Reagan-Shamir meeting. It also included numerous other White House aides, Shultz, Weinberger, etc. Though polite, the meeting was pretty tense - and essentially a stand-off. Reagan's skepticism about Israeli intentions was clearly growing apace.

We then returned to the State Department for another hour-long Shultz-Shamir session, followed by a working lunch on the Eighth Floor. Shultz was for the first time getting to understand how immovable Shamir (and the Israelis) could be. Both men were on their diplomatic best behavior, but neither was at all persuaded by the other's arguments - which centered on how best to get the PLO to evacuate Beirut - by constant military pressure, or by Phil Habib's negotiating tactics.

I then accompanied Shamir to the Pentagon where Cap Weinberger worked him over much more combatively - with little effect. Shamir parried Weinberger's bitter complaints about Sharon's military moves with his own counter criticism of the "insulting" way the U.S. forces in the MFO were behaving toward the IDF - as if the U.S. and Israel were enemies!

Returning to State, I met with Shultz to fill him in on the Pentagon meeting and to share impressions of the day's sessions. Neither of us were at all encouraged. Fred Iklé then picked me up to give me a lift to Ambassador Moshe Arens' residence for the dinner Arens was hosting in Shamir's honor. The usual cast of political supporters of Israel and some friendly journalists; the usual rather forced toasts to eternal U.S.-Israeli amity. A rather subdued mood.

Tuesday, August 3 and Wednesday, August 4 were eventful indeed. By the time I caught the plane for Tel Aviv at 7:40 p.m. Wednesday evening I was running on empty!

Accompanied Shamir to meetings on the Hill with Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee on Tuesday morning; then I left Shamir to his customary round of private meetings with Jewish supporters from the Congress and various Jewish organizations, his press briefings for the Israeli and American press corps (separately, of course), etc. (All these events being absolutely SOP for high-level Israeli visits.) I went by to see Bud McFarlane at the NSC, then talked with Jeane Kirkpatrick and subsequently joined her for her meeting with Shamir. Finally returned to State for other meetings and what turned out to be an all night vigil in the Operations Center!

The news from Beirut was getting increasingly ominous. Israeli air strikes and artillery fire seemed to be growing in scope and intensity. Phil Habib weighed in by phone with increasingly angry demands that we contact Begin. George Shultz had joined Veliotis and me in the Op Center at a console to speak directly with Phil. At his direction I tried to reach Begin, to no avail. Shultz then had me rouse Shamir from bed at his hotel (by phone) and he laid it on the line sternly to Shamir - making clear that these Israeli actions were completely contrary to the soothing reassurances which Shamir had given the President and Shultz earlier in the day. He demanded an immediate explanation from Begin. Shamir protested that he had no information about any new military assaults - but promised to get ahold of Begin immediately. (It was by then after midnight in Washington but early morning in Israel and Lebanon.) We sat impatiently in the OP CENTER waiting for him to call back. When he finally did so around 1:30 or 2:00 a.m., he told Shultz (with me on the line) that he had reached Begin, who had immediately consulted Sharon, and that Begin insisted that our information must be incorrect since Sharon had checked and found "nothing unusual" going on in Beirut! At almost that moment, Phil Habib called in an angry eye witness account of seeing the Israeli planes bombing West Beirut targets at that very moment! Shultz's U.S. Marine Corps background kicked in at that point; his face turned almost purple as he told Shamir just what Habib was personally watching; he also told him to set the Prime Minister straight and see to it that the bombardment ceased forthwith... We stayed in the Op Center the rest of the night and eventually the reports from Beirut began to show some positive effect of these three way exchanges. Shultz's personal initiation into the frustrations of dealing with Begin/Shamir/Sharon in the heat of crises (long-since all too familiar to me) was a very unhappy one. His view of Begin's credibility was strained to the limit, only slightly attenuated by my urging him to recognize that Sharon's propensity to mislead Begin

should not be underestimated.

Veliotes and I had a skull session with Shultz at 5:00 a.m. - then at 7:15 a.m. we all assembled in the White House basement in the Situation Room with Reagan, Bush, Weinberger, Clark, McFarlane, Kirkpatrick, assorted Generals, and numerous other White House and Pentagon representatives for an impromptu NSC meeting on the Beirut Crisis. It lasted until 11:40 a.m., intermittently (though most of that time without Reagan); I met privately with Bill Casey during one of the breaks to discuss some planned CIA activity in Israel. The mood was pretty grim all around. Bush and Weinberger led the charge in favor of cracking down hard on the Israelis; Jeane Kirkpatrick made an eloquent defense of the Israeli rationale for keeping up military pressure to persuade Arafat that he had no option but to abandon Beirut - the objective we all were seeking. Reagan seemed prone to accept Jeane's arguments; she obviously was a favorite of his. McFarlane made delphic, somewhat ambiguous interventions. Shultz said relatively little in the large meetings, though I gathered that he had expressed his views separately to the President and I doubt they were very complimentary to Israel.

After a few more meetings at State, I headed for the airport. It was abundantly clear that the Begin government's standing with the Reagan Administration had taken some heavy hits. There were more to come.

I got home Thursday afternoon and the next few days were more or less normal - i.e. late nights on the secure phone to Washington, back and forth to Jerusalem, press backgrounders to try to checkmate tendentious leaks from the GOI about alleged mistakes and miscalculations by Habib in his indirect mediation between the PLO and the Israeli Government (carried on via intermediaries in the Lebanese Government), briefings for a visiting group of retired U.S. generals, meetings with other Ambassadors, attending the Alvin Ailey Dance Company's performance at Caesarea's ancient Roman theater, etc, etc, etc. The usual merry-go-round.

On August 10 I had a private meeting with Begin at his residence in Jerusalem. It was testy. The PLO still hadn't agreed to depart and Sharon was pressing for more IDF action. Phil Habib flew in from Beirut that evening and we stayed up much of the night thrashing out how he should approach Begin to try to get across just how damaging to Phil's efforts were Sharon's military moves. We spent 2 ½ wearying hours with Begin the next morning (Wednesday). Phil then returned to Beirut and I to Tel Aviv/Herzliyya, believing that the Israelis would now keep things relatively quiet while Phil finished negotiating with Arafat.

A massive air attack on Beirut on August 11(?) resulted in an angry telephone call from President Reagan to Prime Minister Begin. It followed a call that I made to Begin earlier during which I had read him the riot act without waiting for any instructions. My call had angered Begin, but had already triggered a command to the Israeli Air Force to cease the bombardment, well before Reagan's call with his "ultimatum" to stop the bombing, or else! (Since I had already reported by secure phone the results of my early call to Begin, I've always been suspicious that Reagan's subsequent call and the publicity given to its tough tone by the White House was all something of a piece of theater!) In a cabinet meeting that morning, an angry Begin had taken away Sharon's unilateral authority to order any major military operations; thereafter they required the Prime Minister's approval. That would suggest that Begin did not know of the Beirut

air strike until after the fact.

Habib was reporting from Beirut in very angry tones that he was just about to complete the negotiations for the PLO withdrawal when the air attack came; it had completely disrupted the delicate status of the negotiations. On August 13, the PLO finally provided Habib a list of 7100 troops who would be withdrawn from Lebanon; it also proposed a time table for the withdrawal. On August 14, Habib flew to Tel Aviv, where I met him and drove to Jerusalem with him. The following day, early in the morning, before the regular Israeli Cabinet meeting, Habib and I met with Begin, Sharon and others. Habib presented the withdrawal plan, which drew a lot of carping reservations from Sharon. Begin agreed to submit it to the Cabinet; it was discussed there later in the morning. With Begin's blessings, the Cabinet accepted the plan in principal, subject to some further refinements in the details. At the same time, the Cabinet withdrew Sharon's demand that Israel had to have a name-by-name list of every member of the PLO to be evacuated from Lebanon. Habib had also relayed a proposal that a multi-national force be deployed into Lebanon to supervise the evacuation. That generated a lot of discussion, but was finally accepted by the Israel government. A couple of days later, the PLO and the Lebanon government approved the same evacuation plan; the Israeli Cabinet met again on August 19 and gave its final approval.

Interestingly enough, during this period of high tensions and drama culminating in the withdrawal agreement, our Embassy was going through the periodic change in key personnel. As is often the case, there is no relationship between the personnel assignment process and the political situation on the ground. Bill Brown, my outstanding deputy for three years, was transferred back to Washington and was being replaced by Bob Flaten. So during this very tense weekend, we were giving a farewell dinner for the Browns and a welcome dinner for the Flatens and going through the usual change of personnel ceremonies as if nothing else were happening. In reality, I was shuttling back and forth to Jerusalem with Habib trying to wrap up the PLO withdrawal negotiations. I hated to give Bill up at that stage because there was still a lot of work to be done before the PLO would finally evacuate. He had been an extraordinarily reliable and strong right hand. I had known Bob Flaten for a long time and had a lot of confidence in him, but he was not thoroughly knowledgeable on current Israeli affairs, having just completed a tour as coordinator of Afghan programs. He was a real expert in Afghan affairs; we had first met when I was DCM in Kabul in 1971 and he was the Afghan desk officer in Washington. I worked with him then very closely and had a very high regard for him, but the timing of the change in DCMs in Tel Aviv could not have been much worse. Bob had served in Tel Aviv a few years earlier and therefore knew something about Israel-Palestinian affairs, but it was not current knowledge. Nevertheless, we managed to survive the change in the middle of all of the excitement. I even managed to play some tennis that weekend and had lunch with the President Navon at Caesarea, where he was vacationing. He was quite disturbed by the manner in which Begin was handling the PLO issue; he talked very frankly to me about Begin's stubbornness, Sharon's disruptive tactics and other concerns that he had.

To add to all the turmoil, this was the weekend before our son was leaving to go off to college. He had just had spent four years at and just graduated from the American International School and was departing for James Madison University in Virginia. This was just another example of the continuing juggling act that a Foreign Service officer has to perform to be faithful to his or her public duties and private responsibilities.

The deployment of the first contingent of the multi-national (French, Italian and American) peace-keeping force that had been established took place during this week. The cease fire, although tenuous, was holding and the last details of the evacuation were being settled. On August 20, 800 Marines were ordered to land in Lebanon from their off-shore carriers. On the 21st, the PLO began its evacuation; 400 of its troops boarded a ship for Cyprus. The French forces landed at about the same time. The process moved forward relatively smoothly, except for a couple of near catastrophes. None were reported by the media, but they did give rise to considerable anxiety for us in the area.

One of the crises occurred on Sunday evening, August 22. Contrary to the arrangements negotiated, the PLO had decided to take some heavy weapons and vehicles with them. Side arms were all that were supposed to be taken by the PLO. In any case, the first PLO contingent showed up, flags flying, at the Beirut harbor under the watchful eyes of the multi-national forces and further away, of the Israeli army. This PLO group had thirteen jeeps, armed with mounted machine guns, with it which it wished to take to Cyprus. Sharon and the Israeli army objected strenuously. We thought that the whole arrangement might come apart over these jeeps. There was a lot of telephoning between Beirut (Habib), Jerusalem (the Defense Ministry), Tel Aviv (me) and eventually the PLO agreed not to ship them out. We undertook to take custody of the jeeps and agreed to ship them to another country where they would eventually be returned to the PLO. As I recall, those jeeps wandered around the Mediterranean on an American war-ship for weeks thereafter before we finally managed to dispose of them. This was just an illustration of the lack of statesmanship on both sides which caused us as intermediaries to burn a lot of midnight oil unnecessarily.

But there was a much larger crisis on the 22nd which almost caused an exchange of fire between the Israeli Navy and the American Navy. That was an occasion which is usually seen by history in a footnote as it should be, but it could have been taken up several pages if events had proceeded differently. The Israeli Navy, which was hovering just off the Lebanese shore observing the PLO withdrawal, seemed to be menacing the evacuation although it had not taken any offensive action. The American Naval Force which was navigating in the same seas found the Israeli presence unacceptable and a potential barrier to the smooth implementation of the evacuation agreement. There was concern that the Israelis might sink some of the transport vessels once the PLO troops were on board and the ships were on their way to Cyprus. I received word that I was to request that the Israeli withdraw their Navy. I called the Prime Minister; he was outraged by my request. He insisted that it was essential that the Israeli forces be permitted to observe the process so that they could assured that it met all the conditions of the agreement. Our Navy then threatened to sink the Israeli ships; I was entrusted to relay that policy to the Israelis. You can well imagine the ensuing flurry of phone calls that this statement of intent generated. Begin, Washington and I were on the phone almost continuously. I could not be in direct contact with the American fleet commander; I had to communicate with the Navy through Washington. A stalemate developed; Begin was furious and offended and not about to order his Naval units to withdraw. Our Navy appeared almost anxious to demonstrate its fighting capabilities. The tensions between our respective armed forces were already high; this demand by our Navy did nothing to lower them. Eventually, I constructed some language which was to serve as an understanding between Israel and the U.S. and submitted it to Begin for his approval.

The language was artfully drafted to save his face and that of our Navy. Begin finally agreed to it and issued a brief statement of confidence in the multi-national force. Soon thereafter, the Israeli ships moved slightly and our Navy withdrew its threats. So by Sunday night, the crisis had passed, but it had been a very tense afternoon during which some outbreak of fire might well have taken place. Everybody took a very macho position which made the outcome unpredictable. I have often reflected what history might have said had the American and the Israeli navies exchanged fire particularly since both were present in the area to observe the evacuation of the PLO forces and to insure compliance with an agreement. Because most of the negotiations on this event was done telephonically -- much over the secure phone to Washington -- the written record is very small; my instructions were provided by Washington over the phone. The whole episode is also another illustration of the fact that despite all the modern communications available to diplomats, that despite the ability of a Secretary of State to be in another country in hours, that despite the predilection of heads of state to communicate directly with each other, there are still times when an Ambassador is needed and needed urgently.

Q: Did it turn out that there had been some independent action by the U.S. Fleet commander?

LEWIS: I think there was probably a little muscle flexing going on, but I am not sure to this day how many of the commander's demands were determined on the spot and how many were authorized by the Pentagon. The whole episode received little notice, mostly in the Israeli press. Everyone played it down; it served no one's interest to highlight it.

The evacuation was completed on August 22. The ships used were Greek chartered ships, hired by the PLO and escorted by the navies of the three multi-national forces. The ships had to navigate through the Israeli screen which had been set up just outside the harbor. The PLO was certain that the Israelis would try to sink the ships and therefore were pressuring the Americans and the French to provide close protection. I don't believe that the Israelis ever intended to harm the PLO ships, but I can certainly understand the PLO's concern. The PLO left with heads high, flags flying while marching down to the harbor, trying to make the evacuation look like a great victory. The Israelis were very busy taking pictures from the hillsides with telescopic lenses trying to capture the image of each PLO fighter for future intelligence purposes.

On Monday, the 23rd, the Lebanese Parliament elected Bashir Gemayel as President of the country. The vote was 57-5 which was clear evidence that Gemayel's allies, the Israelis, had made it very difficult for the Muslim delegates to reach the Parliament building where the vote was taken. That vote was also an indication that the joint Israeli-Phalangist strategy had succeeded. The PLO had been expelled and Gemayel was now President. Both Sharon and Begin were counting on the new President to bring Lebanon into some sort of alliance relationship with Israel while at the same time cleaning up the remnants of PLO presence which might still have been left behind.

The U.S. Marines took up their positions in the port area on August 25. The French and the Italians had been the main multi-national forces during the evacuation. The total multi-national force was about three-four thousand strong, scattered throughout Beirut in strategic areas. They were there essentially to protect the PLO who had insisted on such a force to ward off any Israeli attack. It was part of the agreement that Habib had worked out with the PLO and the involved

governments. Throughout the summer, the Israel were insisting that Egypt should rejoin the autonomy negotiations which had been essentially suspended when Israel invaded Lebanon. Mubarak had said on several occasions that he could not resume those negotiations as long as Israeli forces continue to be deployed in Lebanon. He had even raised the stakes by suggesting that autonomy negotiations could not really resume until the United States itself accepted the principal of self-determination for the Palestinians. Israel was determined, as soon as the PLO had been expelled from Lebanon, to put pressure on us to pressure the Egyptians to resume negotiations. Begin made his positions clear to a Congressional delegation that was visiting Jerusalem during this week.

Habib visited Israel on a couple of occasions during this period. This coincided with the 66th annual convention of Hadassah which met in Jerusalem. That brought thousands of American women and I was asked to address them one evening. On the 26th, Sharon left for New York, with the political situation in the area presumably on track. His main purpose was to put his political relationships with the American Jewish community back on track in the United States. That community had become alienated from Israel in light of the invasion; they were not happy with the pictures of the Beirut shelling which were widely seen in the U.S. The number of casualties that the media reported had been caused by Israeli actions did not sit well at all. Sharon also went to Washington and met with Weinberger and Shultz. Those meetings were followed by a White House announcement that Weinberger would visit the region: Lebanon, Egypt and Israel. Sharon, in his American TV interviews, was saying that since the PLO had been expelled from Lebanon, it was now possible to bring some stability to the area with the cooperation of the moderate Palestinians on the West Bank, who would no longer be burdened by the heavy hand of the PLO. That had always been one of Sharon's strategic goals. Egypt continued to refuse resumption of negotiations as long as Israeli troops were in Lebanon.

In the meantime, during the whole month of August, Washington was undertaking highly secret planning for a major peace initiative. Right after Shultz had become Secretary in mid-July, he and the President had concluded that once the PLO had been evacuated from Lebanon, it would be important to refocus everyone's attention on the peace process by restarting negotiations which had been suspended. Shultz instructed some of his staff to quietly and secretly develop an American initiative. I knew that this process was going on because while in Washington In July, I had the opportunity to discuss it briefly at least; I was given the chance to review and comment on some early drafts, but the whole exercise was on a very close hold. There was no time table for the beginning of the initiative, but plans were being drawn up. I was relatively comfortable with what I had seen and heard. As I said, the initiative was being worked on secretly during August while the struggles continued in Lebanon. I was receiving some very cryptic briefings over the secure phone from Charlie Hill, but the conversations were not comprehensive enough for me to have a clear picture of the staff's proposals nor did I have any sense of the timing. I was unaware and not informed that Nick Veliotes, who, as Assistant Secretary, was in charge of developing the initiative proposal, had consulted King Hussein of Jordan. In fact, I believe that Veliotes secretly visited Amman unbeknownst to me. Veliotes had been our Ambassador to Jordan and therefore knew the King quite well. He apparently got the King's agreement to enter the peace negotiations based on the draft initiative that Nick discussed with him. But nothing was said to the Israelis, contrary to long standing written commitments that we would not undertake any major initiatives on the peace process without consulting Israel. Washington was greatly

concerned that if the Israelis had known about the initiative, they would leak it prematurely and would thereby sabotage the whole effort. Furthermore, it was Washington's view that unless King Hussein became seriously interested it would not have been worth launching the initiative; he was viewed at that time as the key.

So while the Israelis were focusing on the restart of the autonomy negotiations, even though the Egyptians were not a willing player, we were concentrating secretly on a new peace initiative. I was almost totally in the dark about that effort as were the Israelis. When I later found out about what was going on, I was very upset. I discussed my unhappiness with Shultz and Veliotos. I understood their concern about the possibility of leaks and the possibility of an preemptive sabotage effort by the Israelis. Nevertheless, the Washington tactics left me out of the loop and deprived it of some advice that I could have provided about how to handle the initiative in Israel when they wanted to launch it. I was not convinced that the idea of an initiative was a good one at that time, but I am convinced that after it was launched, it had been presented in the worst light and at the worst possible moment. I think had I been consulted earlier, we might have avoided some of detrimental consequences that the initiative produced.

In the meantime, in Israel, Begin was delighted with the PLO troops' expulsion. He decided that after a very stressful summer, he could take a short vacation. He had never taken a vacation since becoming Prime Minister four years earlier. That he was ready for a vacation then was a clear indication of how worn out he was by the end of the summer. So he and Mrs. Begin went to Nahariyya on the coast south of the Lebanon border. They rested in a small house. They had intended to spend about a week there during the last part of August. That seemed to be a propitious time for vacation especially since Bashir Gemayel had been installed as President of Lebanon, the fighting had ceased and the PLO had been expelled.

On August 31, a Tuesday, I received an "Eyes Only, Top Secret" message from President Reagan which I was to deliver to Begin. The message contained what became known as the "Reagan initiative", which was the product of the six weeks of planning I described earlier. I was instructed to deliver the letter immediately to Begin. I was also given some talking points which I was to deliver orally. I was told that the initiative would be unveiled to the public in the near future and that therefore it was extremely important that I see Begin immediately and get his reaction and hopefully his acquiescence. What the U.S. government was obviously doing was going through the motions of consulting with Israel. I later learned that similar messages had been sent to our Embassies in Cairo, Amman and Riyadh. All the Ambassadors were requested to deliver the letters and the comments immediately and to report reactions immediately. We were told that the President intended to make his new plan public in a speech to be delivered within 72 hours. We were not to give any impression that the plan could be modified, although of course we would listen and report reactions. I called Begin and apologized for interrupting his vacation, but that I had to see him about a most urgent matter. He said that he was very tired and wondered whether the matter could not wait for two or three days. I told him that I had personal instructions from the President to see him immediately and he finally agreed to see me. So I got in a car and drove to Nahariyya which was about two hours north of Tel Aviv. I left about 3:15 in the afternoon and got to Nahariyya at about 5 p.m. Begin ushered me into his sitting room, very politely. He wore a sport shirt, which for Begin was extraordinary since he almost always wore coat and tie. Alisa brought us a cup of tea and we talked a little about the success of the

Lebanon operation. Begin was in a good, relaxed although tired mood; he was obviously very satisfied with recent events. Then I gave him the President's letter which he read. I then mentioned that I had some oral points which I was supposed to deliver. He asked me to proceed which I did. While I was talking, he kept looking at me, with an expression that was getting sadder by the moment. When I finished, he just looked at me for a couple of minutes and then said: "Sam (sigh), could you not have let us enjoy our victory just for a day or two?". Then he pulled himself together and more formally said: "Mr. Ambassador, I have listened carefully and I am extremely upset by your message. It is entirely contrary to all of our understandings with your country. This initiative is not in accordance with the Camp David agreements; in fact, it is a violation of those agreements. Of course, I will consult with my Cabinet and then I will give you a response. I do need a little time for that process". He went on for several minutes in this vein and became increasingly angry as he talked. He was not happy with the content and the implications of the President's letter. He was obviously upset by the lack of any indication that the initiative was being developed and by the absence of any prior consultations. In my talking points, Washington had included the point that we were consulting simultaneously with Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The mention of this last country really set Begin off. He was especially furious that on an issue that involved first and foremost Israel and perhaps also Jordan, that Saudi Arabia, which was not a central player, was being treated in the same manner as Israel. He was also upset that we had apparently already consulted the Jordanians -- my talking points included something along the lines that "we have reason to believe from our contacts that the King of Jordan will be favorably disposed" to this initiative. That certainly tipped what we had done and Begin did not take it very well at all. But the part of the process that really set him off was our approach to the Saudis simultaneously to my conversations with him. He took that as a diminution of Israel's role. He then recounted many of the summer's events; it was a long and very unpleasant conversation. Begin vacillated between anger and weary resignation about American policy. He took on an aggrieved mood of bitterness and of being treated unfairly. The timing of my visit could not of course have been worse; I interrupted his first vacation in four years. So the Begin's response was negative both for official and personal reasons. By the time I left him, it was quite clear that Begin would recommend to the Cabinet that the American initiative be rejected forcefully, but he said that he would take the matter up with the Cabinet. He did request, as I mentioned, that the President give him enough time to convene the Cabinet. That would be time consuming since he would have to return to Jerusalem and convene the Cabinet and have a thorough response. Begin asked me to pass to the President his plea that the speech be deferred at least until the beginning of the following week or five or six days hence. I told Begin that I would report his request, but that I had no way of knowing whether the President could wait that long. I was aware of the Washington concerns about premature leaks. He pointed out that he thought that we owed him at least that much time to consider Israel's response. So I dashed back to Tel Aviv and spent the evening writing my report. I strongly urged that the speech be delayed long enough to allow Begin to consult with the Cabinet. I also called Washington on the secure phone and elaborated on my written message.

The initiative was handled in a manner which was bound to produce a disaster. It was almost so ordained. Israel may well have rejected the substance of the initiative in any case, but a more sensitive process of consultation may have avoided the vituperation and bad feeling that in fact occurred. Those side effects could have been avoided. The basic problem was that the Israelis had been concentrating on Lebanon all summer; that issue had not been yet finally resolved.

There were still Israeli troops in Lebanon and there were some messy residual problems yet to be resolved with the new Lebanese government. It was not very likely that the Israeli government, psychologically, would be prepared at that stage to deal with a major American peace initiative which concerned the West Bank and Gaza. There were of course central and difficult problems in those areas, but the time was certainly not propitious to raise them since the focus of the government was still on Lebanon. So the rejection of the initiative was most likely, but it didn't have to happen with such rancor.

The first person in the NSC who read the cable was probably Geoffrey Kemp, the Middle East expert who worked for Judge Clark, the NSC advisor at the time. I am not clear that Reagan ever saw my cable or anyone else's for that matter. I assume that the President was briefed. But as far as I could tell the tactics for the initiative were being orchestrated by Shultz and Veliotis in the State Department.

The next day, Wednesday, Begin called a meeting of the Cabinet to be held the next day in Jerusalem. In the meantime, Weinberger had landed in Beirut the previous day and was to travel to Israel as his next stop. On Wednesday afternoon, I met with Shimon Peres in Tel Aviv at the Dan Hotel; it was the day before the Cabinet was considering the President's proposal. I briefed Peres privately on the initiative which was based on the Camp David agreements and included important policy objectives that we continue to espouse to this day. For example, we said that we did not support an independent Palestinian state, but we would also not support the annexation by Israel of the West Bank and Gaza. The proposal used phraseology drawn from the Camp David accords, but in certain areas, went beyond those understandings; those were the statements to which the Israelis took great exceptions. There is no question that the initiative was a genuine effort to jump start the negotiations and it obviously had been drafted with a lot of care. The details of the plan were less an issue than the matter, the timing of its presentation and the diplomatic activity that surrounded it. Although a well crafted statement of U.S. policy and a good vehicle for restarting negotiations, it was tactically ill-conceived; it might have had the intended effect had it been floated at the right moment and with better preparation.

On the other hand, the talking points were not well thought out. They became a major part of the tactical problem, at least in Israel. The talking points were basically drafted to convince the Jordanians to enter the negotiations. They were couched in language intended to appeal to King Hussein. Shultz, a careful man of great integrity, did not wish to employ a very normal diplomatic practice; that is when talking to different governments on the same subject, a government will argue for the same substance, but the language to be used is different depending on in which capital the discussions are taking place, in order to tailor the approach to maximize the appeal to each interlocutor. In the case of the Reagan initiative, however, Shultz insisted that same identical talking points be used by all American Ambassadors when presenting the proposal to all Middle East governments. He obviously wanted to avoid being accused of double-dealing. But some of the phrasing of these talking points set Begin on edge. That was another reason that our presentation was tactically deficient and stirred a negative reaction far greater than the substance should have.

The next evening (Wednesday), while I was awaiting the Israeli response, Weinberger arrived at about 5 p.m. Sharon, as Weinberger's counterpart as Defense Minister, was to host a large

reception, as was normal, at the Tel Aviv Hilton. I took Weinberger there. We were sitting down having some food and drinks -- this was about an hour after our arrival -- when one of my staff members brought me cable that he had just picked up at the embassy. It was a message that I was to deliver immediately to Begin, before the Israelis could formulate their formal response. Washington, in this message, was telling Begin that not only could it not delay its unveiling of the initiative, but that the President would make his speech that evening in Washington (the evening of September 1, which would have been early Thursday a.m. in Israel). So the message that I was to deliver was about six hours away from the moment the President would unveil his initiative. I was told that I should tell Begin that the speech could not be postponed because some of its substance had already leaked out and therefore the President would have to speak at the planned time.

At that moment, I decided that I would not drive to Nahariyya, which would have taken two hours, to deliver the message. Instead, I called Begin and gave him the essence of the message and had the full text delivered by messenger. Of course, Begin was outraged. His Cabinet was not to meet until the next day in Jerusalem, so that he was still on vacation in Nahariyya. When I described Washington's message he became very angry, bitter and cold. He made the point that this was no way for friends to treat each other; he did not feel the Israelis did not deserve this kind of treatment. Begin asked me to report to the President that he was very upset, but that nevertheless, he intended to convene the Cabinet the next day and provide an official Israeli response. Of course, I think the die had been cast by that time and I had no doubts about what the response would be.

Soon after my call to Begin, the Israeli information system went to work. There had been some small leaks in the press about the initiative, but no major effort and some of those leaks may well have originated outside of Israel. But the next morning, the press was filled with extensive and tendentious coverage of the initiative. These were obviously authorized and stimulated by the government. By this time, the Embassy had received the full text of the President's speech as delivered in the early hours -- Tel Aviv time. The speech was essentially an elaboration of the letter; there was no reference to the talking points. But the press stories covered the talking points extensively; it had obviously been fully briefed. The tendentious nature of the process -- i.e. that Jordan had been consulted earlier than Israel and that Saudi Arabia had been consulted simultaneously (all of the aspects that galled the Israelis) -- were made public and were available to the Cabinet while it was considering the initiative. The Cabinet was meeting in Jerusalem; I was with Weinberger meeting with Sharon before the Cabinet meeting; then I attended Nahum Goldmann's funeral on Mt. Herzog in Jerusalem. Then I accompanied Weinberger on a number of visits to such facilities as tank factories and then on a helicopter trip to the west Bank and the Golan Heights. Weinberger and I ended up in Nahariyya late that afternoon after the completion of the Cabinet deliberations, a Begin press statement and the preparation of an angry rebuttal to Reagan. After he did all that, Begin had returned to Nahariyya to finish his vacation. So late on that Thursday, September 2, Weinberger and I spent a couple of hours until 7 p.m. with Begin. Weinberger caught the full brunt of Begin's displeasure; he got it in spades and I was delighted to be essentially a bystander. Begin listed at great lengths all of his aggravations with the United States and how it had behaved. The list included American treatment of the IDF in Lebanon which would have been characteristic of enemies rather than allies, how we had colluded with the PLO, how we had been plotting a betrayal of Camp David behind Israel's back, how we had

consulted with Jordan first and then with Saudi Arabia. It was a great two hours!

Then Weinberger and I flew back to my house by helicopter where I was to host a stag dinner for the Secretary of Defense. I had invited many of the leading Israeli military and politico-military personalities, including Sharon. It was quite an evening; not very pleasant. There was another aspect of this series of events that must be recorded. Unbeknownst to me at the time and only learned later, Begin had, after my first meeting with him Tuesday night, when I gave him Reagan letter and briefed him, met in Nahariyya with Bashir Gemayel, the Lebanese President. Gemayel was one of Begin's protégés and an ally; a relationship that had developed secretly over the previous few years. Gemayel had brought a few close advisors and Begin had invited some Israelis including Sharon. The meeting was secret and attended by very few on both sides. Begin reportedly greeted Gemayel quite brusquely which was very uncharacteristic. He essentially told Gemayel that Israel had now won him the Presidency and had ridden his country of the PLO fighters; it was therefore time to sign a peace treaty. Begin had every reason to believe, based on the years of relationships with Gemayel and the Phalangists, that the Lebanese would now be prepared to sign a peace treaty once Gemayel had taken office. But by now the restrictions of being President had become clearer to Gemayel. He had to find ways to reconcile the Muslims who had assisted him in the expulsion of the PLO. So Gemayel, although quite polite, tried to tell Begin in unmistakable terms that such a treaty would need time. His message became quite clear soon to his Israeli audience. He gave all the reasons why he had to proceed cautiously, he told them he was not in a position to set a date, he mentioned all the political fence-mending that he had to undertake first. This Lebanese position soon got under Begin's skin; he became furious. He then addressed Gemayel in very demeaning and authoritarian terms; he was obviously very upset that his Lebanese allies were not being compliant. He obviously felt betrayed because the Israelis had done so much for the Phalangists and the Christians. That session in Nahariyya changed Gemayel's views of the Israelis; he viewed them as much more sinister than he had before. All the Lebanese were shocked by Begin's behavior to their new President. In fact, I understand that even the Israeli delegation was quite shocked. Dave Kimche was one of the Israelis present at this meeting and he told me sometime later that he was really embarrassed as were others by Begin's tone and demeanor towards Gemayel. Those who participated in the meeting and who later learned of my meeting with Begin just beforehand are convinced that Begin's mishandling of his meeting with the Lebanese -- particularly his nasty attitude towards Gemayel -- may have been in large part caused by his anger at Reagan in reaction to my presentation a few hours earlier. The interaction between these two events is an interesting historical sidelight. I think that even if Bashir Gemayel had not been assassinated soon thereafter by a bomb at his headquarters, those who know the Phalangists well are convinced that the Begin-Gemayel relationships would never have been smooth after their meeting in Nahariyya that night. A lot of bad feelings were developed that night by the Phalangists which would be shown later.

On Friday, September 3, I accompanied Weinberger to a meeting with Foreign Minister Shamir. Afterwards, Weinberger made the obligatory stop at Yad Vashem and then toured Jerusalem with our Consul General. I went back to my office at the Embassy to catch up on the work that had piled up during that harried week. Weinberger then held a conference with editorial writers at the Cultural Center. We then flew down to Sharon's farm south of Ashdod for lunch. Sharon was very proud of his farm and often tried to get dignitaries to visit it so that he could be seen in

his country squire mode; he used to butter people up that way and exercise his quite formidable wiles which he could do well when he chose to be ingratiating and attractive. He could be very engaging and that is the persona he displayed to Weinberger that day. He hoped to convince our SecDef that Israel was now in control of the situation and that together with the United States it was now possible to push the Syrians out of Lebanon and to bring the West Bank and Gaza inhabitants to negotiate on an autonomy regime because the PLO was not in the neighborhood any longer. The lunch went on for a long time -- all afternoon as a matter of fact. There were a lot of war stories with Sharon relating all his military exploits. Weinberger handled himself with great style; he was extremely well controlled even during Begin's outburst and the meetings with Sharon, though I am sure, from my knowledge of the man's views, he was hardly taken in by the Israelis; he was not, I am sure, very sympathetic towards either leader.

We returned by helicopter early that evening at about 7 p.m. I went to the office to draft my reporting cables and got home about 10 p.m. that night for a very late dinner. As I mentioned earlier, the Israeli Cabinet had rejected the Reagan plan as a deviation of the Camp David accords. Begin had insisted on drafting the Cabinet statement himself to make sure that it was sufficiently nasty and tough. He made sure that the words would be offensive to us and he succeeded. The cabinet went out of its way to highlight its determination to continue settlement activities on the West Bank; the Reagan plan had called for some kind of cessation. It was the same argument then as it has been up to today. Since 1977, whenever the Israelis get mad at the United States, they proceed with the establishment of a few more settlements just to make the point that they can not be commanded -- they are the masters of their own ship and not a U.S. vassal. While the Cabinet was taking its hard-line stance, Peres issued a statement saying that the Reagan plan could be the basis for a dialogue; Arafat, from Tunis, said that the PLO had neither accepted or rejected the plan. Both statements made Begin even angrier. The State Department issued its own press release rejecting Begin's allegation that the U.S. had violated any commitments about consultations. The press in general and the leadership in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Europe reacted relatively positively to the proposal.

But the pivotal event was about to take place in Fez, Morocco. I learned later that the main stimulus for the timing of the release of the plan by Washington was an Arab League summit meeting that was about to convene in Fez. In the wake of the PLO expulsion from Lebanon, State Department was convinced that the U.S. had to take an important initiative which would show some sensitivity of the Arab point of view. The Department was concerned that unless some preemptive action was taken, the Arab League meeting would reject any further cooperation with the U.S. in seeking a Middle East settlement, as it had done in Khartoum in 1967. That was the main reason for the urgency to reveal the plan publicly. It had the hoped for effect. There was a lot of discussion and criticism of the U.S. at Fez for its alleged bias and perhaps even collusion towards Israel and its Lebanese invasion. Nevertheless, the Reagan plan was sufficiently intriguing to enough members of the League, including Jordan and the PLO, that we, after some vigorous lobbying, were able to head off any formal rejection by the League. Instead the League approved its own eight point peace plan that had been proposed by the Saudis -- the so-called Fahd plan. We found some solace in that plan since it included some features that were close to our position; indeed, even some Israelis saw some merits in the Fahd plan. Unfortunately, the Saudi plan was modified by the League; although the Fez declaration was silent about the Reagan plan, it did not reject it; it merely supported its own approach which was

totally unacceptable to Israel. But we achieved our objective by forestalling any Arab League rejection of the U.S. as a peace maker.

Maury Draper, who had been with Habib during the negotiations with the PLO, now became in effect the main negotiator. Habib had worn himself to a frazzle and had returned to Washington. There Reagan received him with the honors he so well deserved, for it was indeed Phil who was the key player in the PLO's departure from Lebanon. Phil was not only tired, but also ill. He left the area shortly after the PLO's withdrawal and then stayed in the U.S. for the next couple of months. Draper carried on the work of the American delegation and he and I met Shamir on September 5, a Sunday. We also met with Sharon. We discussed what had to be done to begin the Israeli withdrawal; Sharon reviewed his game plan with us. Shamir told us as well as the press, that there would be no more autonomy talks until the Lebanese situation had been settled to Israel's satisfaction. Both Shamir and Sharon were very tough in the aftermath of the Reagan plan process, although at least Shamir, as always, was polite.

Congressman Steve Solarz was also a visitor over the Labor Day weekend. We hosted him for dinner and Bob Flaten, Paul Hare and perhaps a couple of other staff members and I talked with him until about 1 a.m. briefing him on the recent events and discussing his program. Whenever Steve visited Israel, which was frequent, he worked an 18 hour day and his control officer always needed some leave after Steve's departure to recuperate from the visit. That was also true of some of the rest of us because Solarz insisted on having 18-20 appointments per day; he was always fully up to date, interesting and useful, but he obviously had an extra set of glands that would leave us worn out by the end of his stays. On this particular Labor Day, we had enough work already; we didn't need Steve, but there he was.

On the same day that we were meeting with Solarz, September 6, Washington issued a statement under Shultz' name which was an effort to try to pacify the Israelis. The statement included a provision that any Israeli-Arab agreement would have to include a totally demilitarized West Bank; that was intended to reassure the Israelis that when they withdrew from the West Bank, the vacuum would not be filled by foreign forces. But in the atmosphere then existing, this U.S. position did not win many friends in Israel.

On September 7, the Israelis issued their own public statement calling for Lebanon to sign a peace treaty in order to guarantee the security of its borders; Israel would not fully withdraw until such treaty was signed. Lebanon's rejection of such treaty would force Israel to institute a special security zone in Southern Lebanon; that is of course what happened and that situation still holds today.

On September 8, while conditions in Beirut remained very unsettled, Reagan announced that the American contingent which was part of the multi-lateral force would be withdrawn beginning in two days' time. On the same day, the Arab League announced its peace plan in Fez, which required Israel to withdraw from all of the territories, including Jerusalem; all the settlements were to be dismantled; and there were a number of other provisions all unacceptable to Israel. The Fez declaration also acknowledged the PLO's absolute right to represent the Palestinians and to govern the West Bank once a Palestinian state had been established on the West Bank with Jerusalem as its capital. It is obvious that the Fez plan was not well received by Begin and his

Cabinet. The next day, in response to Sharon's ultimatum to Lebanon about the peace treaty, Shultz said in Washington that the U.S. would support an Israel-Lebanon peace treaty only if Lebanon accepted it voluntarily and not under Israeli pressure. That was just another volley fired in the public arena between the US and Israel; it was just one more indicator of the deteriorating relationship between the two countries. Begin, in the meantime, was accusing American officials and journalists of interfering with Israel's internal affairs by writing articles critical of him and his policies.

At the same time, Israel destroyed some SAM missile sites in Lebanon which just heated up the atmosphere some more. The U.S.-Israel relationships were just getting tenser. On September 10, the U.S. Marines began their withdrawal. Begin again accused us publicly of interfering with Lebanese-Israeli relations. Characteristically, he gratuitously added that we should remember that Israel was not Chile and that he was not Allende. During this period, Mubarak announced, and this was an interesting comment, that he preferred the Reagan plan to the Fez plan; that was well received in Washington. So for a couple of days, public statements were volleyed back and forth, none of them intended to dampen ardors on any side. The Jordanian reaction to the Reagan plan had been guarded; it was not as positive as I am sure Washington had hoped, but at least the King didn't close the door. We kept urging the Jordanians to support our plan by pointing out the advantages of our approach.

This period was filled for me by a lot of activities related to visitors, including a couple of Congressional delegations, and diplomatic requirements. I saw many Israelis and talked to them about the state of affairs. I was on my last legs; I had not a moment of respite during the whole summer, which had been more hectic than usual. I was worn out; so I decided to take a few days off as soon as I could. I wanted to take off Thursday afternoon, September 16, and take a long weekend in Crete with my wife. I was just going to forget about Israel and concentrate on something else. By his time, Bob Flaten had been in Israel long enough to be handle day-to-day activities of the Embassy.

On Tuesday, September 14, Jordan issued a very encouraging statement in which King Hussein praised the Reagan plan as positive and constructive. The King did say that he couldn't negotiate with Israel unless he had the approval of the other Arab states, which gave the statement an equivocal tone. In the evening of the same day, a bomb exploded in the Phalangist headquarters in East Beirut; I learned about that the following day, early in the morning at around 5 a.m. from a phone call. I was told that Bashir Gemayel and six others had been assassinated by the bombing. Immediately thereafter, as I learned somewhat later, Sharon, upon hearing of the event, ordered his forces stationed outside of Beirut to move into West Beirut to try to maintain order. The troops were also to complete the rooting out of any PLO fighting remnants which Israeli intelligence had reported had been left behind after withdrawal. This was a clean up operation that Gemayel had promised the Israelis that his Phalangists would undertake on their own. But after Gemayel's assassination, Sharon assumed that the Phalangist would not follow through and therefore ordered his own forces into Beirut to prevent the 2,000 PLO fighters he insisted were still remaining and hiding in civilian clothes from exploiting the assassination and from further destabilizing the political situation. It has never been fully proved, but the Lebanese investigations pointed clearly to the Syrians as the perpetrators of the bombing. That seems a logical conclusion since Gemayel was clearly anti-Syrian and was determined to cooperate with

Israel in pushing Syria out of Lebanon. So it was in Syria's interests to eliminate Gemayel. The actual planting of the bomb was done by a Lebanese adherent of the Syrian Socialist movement - a left-wing, pro-Syrian political party. He had been working with Syrian agents for a long time. The Lebanese were never able to put together all the evidence necessary to make the Syrian connection crystal clear, but all the indications certainly tended to confirm Syrian complicity.

We were very concerned with the Israeli forward movement into the city, in part because our rationale for withdrawing the multi-lateral forces only a week earlier had been the assumption that Israel was going to withdraw from Lebanon in the near future; we certainly did not anticipate a further occupation of Beirut. Moreover, Habib had made some commitments to Arafat and the Syrians during his negotiations for the PLO withdrawal that if the PLO fighters were withdrawn, no harm would be done to the PLO civilians who remained in Lebanon. Habib insisted to the end he had acted on the basis of Begin's statements to him about Israel's intentions, and that these commitments had been exaggerated by the PLO. I am sure that was the case. There was probably some implied U.S. commitment, however, which probably led to President Reagan's and Shultz' feelings of guilt after the Sabra and Shatila massacres.

Draper, who had arrived in Jerusalem on the afternoon of September 14, received notification of the bombing soon after I did. He and I met with Shamir and later with Begin to discuss what might happen next in Beirut in light of the devastating blow to Israel's expectations, not to mention those of the Lebanese. The latter had put great faith in Gemayel because he had begun a healing process to bring all the various factions together and had by this time managed to gather considerable popular support from both the Muslims and the Christians.

Draper and I were not told by Shamir or Begin or Sharon that the Israeli forces were moving into West Beirut, although during the day, our intelligence began to pick up the tell-tale signs. Draper helicoptered back to Beirut that afternoon; he returned to Jerusalem unexpectedly the following afternoon - Thursday -- the day when I was packing to go off on vacation. For a period after the Israeli forward movement we were receiving angry messages from the White House to be relayed to the Israelis demanding explanations for their military actions which we felt were a violation of prior commitments. The Israeli Cabinet issued a statement Thursday afternoon saying that their troops would be withdrawn from Beirut only when the Lebanese army was in a position to guarantee the security of the city. Arafat, who was in Rome at the time, demanded that the multi-lateral force be immediately returned to Lebanon to protect the Palestinians who had been left behind. Begin claimed that the IDF had moved into Beirut only after it had been fired upon by Muslim militia, I don't believe that there was sufficient evidence to warrant that excuse.

At 5 p.m. Thursday afternoon, September 16, I joined Maury Draper in a very tough meeting with Sharon; we were trying to persuade him -- always a rather feckless proposition -- to withdraw the IDF troops then in West Beirut. We argued that the Lebanese army was perfectly competent to maintain order and that the Phalangists certainly also had some muscle still. It was a very nasty meeting; Sharon was disdainful. He was bitter and furious about Gemayel's assassination since with that event his hopes of a having an ally in Beirut had died. He treated Draper in a very condescending fashion. There were some very mean exchanges; it was a most unsatisfactory meeting from our point of view. We did agree that Draper would meet the next

day with Shamir and Sharon and if necessary also with Begin. I talked to Begin by phone a couple of times after the Sharon meeting, making the same points. I didn't get much of a response.

I went home to pack for my vacation. The next morning, Sallie and I flew to Athens and then on to Crete. I was absolutely worn out. We had no idea of what would happen next. But I must say that in retrospect, I should have stayed in Israel. As it was, I was gone during the climactic events of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. We were in Crete driving around in a rented car, out of communication.

Word of events trickled back to Tel Aviv on Friday, September 17. The rumor was that Phalangist troops had entered the PLO camps the previous evening, about 5 p.m. or exactly when our meeting with Sharon began. He must have known at the time that the Phalangists were about to enter the camps; he didn't say a word about it. The Americans did not learn about it until mid-day the next day by which time I had already landed in Crete. Draper was seeing Shamir in Jerusalem when the word filtered back. When the first reports reached Shamir, he apparently called Sharon on the phone; Draper was with Shamir at the time. Sharon apparently gave Shamir some double-talk. Shamir's report had come from an Israeli journalist; he had been told that something dreadful was occurring in the camps. The journalist had called Shamir for further information; Sharon denied to Shamir any knowledge, or at least put him off with a misleading comment. Shamir never followed up after his conversation with Sharon. We knew about these events when the Kahan Commission later investigated the massacres. Shamir did not look very good in that report because he had not pressed for further information although he had received additional reports later in the day. Sharon knew well what was going on. What Begin knew and when he knew it is still subject to some debate; his awareness of events was never fully resolved by the Commission.

Sabra and Shatila were populated mostly by the families of the PLO fighters that had been evacuated. There may well have also been some PLO fighters who had stayed behind; there certainly were some who had burrowed themselves into the city. Sabra and Shatila were the two large refugee camps on the outskirts of Beirut and the centers of the Palestinian population of long standing.

Our Embassy tried to get a hold of me in Crete through the Greek police, using our Embassy in Athens. The staff started its efforts the minute the first rumors of the massacre reached them. It took the Greek police two days to find us on Crete, which says something about the Greek police. Frankly, I was not too unhappy because I did get two days' vacation that way. When we were finally found, we took the first plane out to Athens and back to Tel Aviv. I got back to Israel the following Thursday night, so that I actually had seven days' respite. That week was consumed for others by the Sabra/Shatila massacre and the beginning of the ensuing complications in relations with Israel, Lebanon and the PLO. In fact, the massacres started an incredible chain of events that would last for weeks and weeks.

I don't want to recall the Sabra/Shatila events in any details because history has well covered what transpired. The Phalangists just decided to "clean up the PLO problem" as agreed upon with Sharon. Allegations have been made that they were encouraged by Sharon, although he has

steadfastly denied them, particularly during his libel law suit against TIME Magazine. The Phalangists moved into the camps Thursday evening and essentially went through them mowing Palestinian people down, including women and children. There never had been much love between the Phalangists, who were Christians, and the Palestinians, most of whom were Muslim, of whom several hundreds were killed. It was a horrible sequence of events.

The IDF were not in the camps; they were near by in positions which over-looked the camps. It is still not clear how much the IDF troops knew or understood what was going on until the next morning; the evidence is contradictory. It is clear that Sharon was well aware of the Phalangist plans; his troops outside the camps could possibly have been unaware. The IDF was certainly not doing the shooting, but were close enough to stop the slaughter if ordered to do so. In fact, the IDF did not interfere until the following afternoon, after we found out about and brought great pressure on the Israelis to stop the massacres. This issue was the key to subsequent arguments about Israel culpability and Sharon's personal responsibility.

The end result of the refugee camps' events was that the Reagan White House was horrified once informed. The staff began to make it clear that it felt that Israel had at least indirect responsibility for the massacres by in the first place permitting the Phalangists to enter the camps and then not taking any action for at least a day. On September 20, Begin's office acknowledged publicly that the Cabinet had approved the Phalangist invasion of the refugee camps. I am not clear when that approval was actually given. President Navon, horrified by the events, called for an independent inquiry, which was an unusual action of a President who was supposed to be non-political. Begin seemed to be a state of shock; he denied any prior knowledge and said that he had only learned about the massacres on Saturday, which seemed to be somewhat less than credible to many people.

In Washington, the massacre led to a decision to return the peace-keepers. The White House felt very guilty about the withdrawal of the multi-lateral force; it appeared that that had been very premature. The absence of these troops had barred the U.S. or any other outside force from taking any preventive actions. We told the Israelis that we would return the troops, which they accepted, after some discussion, but did not set any time table for the withdrawal of the IDF. The Lebanese had in the meantime elected Amin Gemayel, Bashir's brother, as President of Lebanon. The vote had been 77-3.

Begin resisted the idea of an independent investigation, although he agreed to an internal investigation. But there was a huge public outcry. Hundred of thousands Israelis demonstrated in the streets against the government, against the massacres. The Israeli public demanded the investigation. The Knesset defeated the proposal for an independent commission at Begin's insistence even though Sharon admitted during the debate that the IDF had permitted the Phalangist invasion of the camps. He also admitted that the Israelis had supplied flares which lit up the camps so that the Phalangists could do their work during the night. But Sharon insisted that his understanding had been the Phalangists were only searching for PLO fighters who had been left behind in contravention to all agreements reached. He insisted that the Israelis never dreamed that the Phalangists would kill women and children. In light of the revulsion about Sharon's actions, there were some resignations by senior officials.

The French were the first to return to Lebanon on September 24, which was the same day that I returned to Israel. On the 25th, approximately 350,000 Israelis demonstrated in a Tel Aviv square, in an anti-government display both for the massacre and for its refusal to have an independent inquiry.

Habib returned to the area, reluctantly, at the President's orders. So when I returned to Tel Aviv, both Habib and Draper were there and we met with Begin and Shamir on the 24th. Our troops did not land back in Lebanon for another few days, but we kept pressuring the Israelis to withdraw their troops from the airport so that our Marines could land there. The Israelis insisted that they had to remain there, but we refused to let our soldiers to intermingle with the IDF which in itself increased tensions. Eventually, in light of the domestic pressure as well as the international ones, the Israelis accepted our ultimatums to withdraw from the airport area. The public pressure also forced Begin to permit the establishment of an independent commission, which was headed by Mr. Kahan, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

I was concerned that our relationship with Israel was going into a final nose-dive. Our meetings with the Israelis were interesting in a way; they were not particularly confrontational. Begin, Shamir and Sharon were so much on the defensive in the public opinion arena that they were trying to be a little more conciliatory towards U.S., which was an unusual reaction. On Saturday, September 25, Habib, Draper, Flaten and our military attaché, Colonel Raines, and I went to Sharon's ranch where we spent the day. We ate lunch and talked about getting the IDF out of Beirut. Sharon went out of his way to try to smooth things over with Habib; they had had a very difficult and nasty relationship over the summer, but by the end of September, Sharon was trying to make amends in an effort to dampen down some of the anger and bitterness. The meetings were somewhat stiff, but they were useful. Yom Kippur was on the 27th which seemed an appropriate time for a day of atonement. Begin started a personal slide down at about this time; he went into a deep depression.

Q: You have alluded to the severe depression that Begin experienced. Tell us more about that.

LEWIS: As I think about the period we are discussing (end of September 1982-Summer 1983), there are about four major areas of my professional life in Tel Aviv that took up almost all of my energies. the first was dealing with Menachem Begin as he entered his state of depression which ultimately led to his resignation. The second was trying to get the Israelis to withdraw their forces from Lebanon -- an effort that Ambassador Habib, Maury Draper and I were very deeply involved in. The third was what happened to the Reagan initiative and the effort to start peace negotiations, which began in early September. The fourth was an upheaval in my official life due to a very bitter personal feud with Ariel Sharon.

Let me start with the Begin story. I didn't really know until later that throughout his life, he had been subject to periodic bouts of depression, followed by a sort of manic phase subsequently. These periods lasted from a few days to a few weeks. By this time, I had already observed him in two or three of these periods. They were very striking phases. Each time, he would become listless; he would lose interest in the kind of detail that he normally found fascinating. He would become very morose. I don't know what his doctors believed about the causes or the origins. He was under medical treatment for other ailments. I was never told that he had ever consulted a

psychiatrist, but he may have done so secretly. I never heard any reliable stories if in fact he was under psychiatric care. That Fall, the pressure of public opinion -- thousands and thousands of protesters in the streets -- forced him and the Cabinet to set up a National Commission of Inquiry, under the chairmanship of Supreme Justice Kahan, to investigate the massacres in Sabra and Shatila and pin-point responsibility if possible. The Commission was set up much against Begin's will. Almost immediately after the Commission was established, Begin went into one of his depression periods. It lasted for several weeks. At the same time, Mrs. Begin, to whom he was extremely close -- closer than any other person -- was suffering from emphysema and other serious ailments, from which she had suffered from time to time. She was in and out of the hospital during this period and the Prime Minister was very concerned. He was also very anxious to be invited to Washington to meet with President Reagan to try to rebuild the friendship and the bilateral relationship that the Lebanon war had so seriously tarnished. But he didn't feel that he could leave the country while his wife was in the hospital. At the same time, he was angling for a meeting with Reagan. Eventually, after a couple of months, a meeting was arranged. Yet, Begin was torn about whether he should leave Israel. Mrs. Begin's doctors assured him that her condition had stabilized, that she was not in danger and that he could proceed on his trip. More importantly, Mrs. Begin urged him to take the trip, assuring him that she was fine. I remember that he was still in doubt about the trip even up to the night before he left. He was a tormented man both because of the personal dilemma and his state of depression which had dragged on, leaving him somewhat disengaged from politics. He was always somber when he met anybody officially. But, as I said, he was so anxious for the meeting with Reagan because he was convinced that if he could only sit down with the President, he could convince him that the Lebanon war had been a wise and justifiable action which had forced the evacuation of the PLO from the area and that the Sabra-Shatila massacres were not Israel's responsibility. He firmly believed that he could get the US-Israel relationship back on the high plane it used to occupy.

So he decided to go to Washington in early December 1982. The trip required him to go first to Los Angeles, where he was supposed to give a speech before a huge gathering of the area's Jewish organizations. I had already returned to Washington, preparing for his visit to the Capital which was to follow immediately after the L.A. stop. I met with people in the Department and the White House to prepare for Begin's meeting with the President. One evening -- Saturday, I believe -- I got a call from someone in Begin's entourage to tell me that Begin had just received a telephone call from Jerusalem transmitting the news that Mrs. Begin had just died. He had received the call about an hour before he was to make his L.A. speech. With his characteristic discipline, he proceeded to give the speech. But then he returned immediately thereafter to Israel, canceling his Washington visit. I tried very hard to find a way to rendezvous with his plane in New York and accompany him back to Israel, so that I could attend the funeral. But somehow, we were not able to make the connection and I went back separately. I arrived unfortunately after the funeral. The death of his wife was a shattering blow to Begin as you can well imagine. It greatly increased his depression. Mrs. Begin was only in her early 60s at this time; she was not an old woman, but she had been a very heavy smoker and had had emphysema for a long time. I don't remember the actual cause of death, but it was unexpected. The doctors were startled; Begin was devastated. Thereafter he carried a load of guilt because he had been out of the country when she died; he was never able to rid himself of that burden. As is the Jewish custom, he grew a beard for thirty days as sign of mourning. He went into complete seclusion; he saw no one except his immediate family -- his son and daughters.

He came back to work in January 1983 with a beard and still in a deep state of depression. He was also very thin. Over the next several months, he tried very rigorously to do his job. He came to the office early in the mornings, he stayed at his desk during the day and went through his papers. He rarely initiated any conversations. He listened a great deal and assented. This state lasted from January to May during which very complicated negotiations between Israel and Lebanon over Israeli withdrawal took place, mediated by Habib first and then George Shultz. Members of the Israeli delegation would visit Begin periodically and brief him; Habib and Shultz did the same thing. He would chair Cabinet meetings and other high level meetings, but he was always very passive. Instead of cross-examining people about the details of the negotiations and getting involved personally as had been his style in drafting Israeli positions, he was almost an observer. Shamir, who was the Foreign Minister, Arens, who became Defense Minister in February and the chief negotiator, David Kimche and other team members carried the ball. They kept Begin informed, but he gave very little guidance. He made no public appearances for months. He didn't speak to the press. He kept the Cabinet meetings going, but they were very short; he did not really participate. He was functioning, but only at 20-30% of normal activity. He apparently wasn't eating well during this period; he got thinner and thinner until his clothes hung on him, pathetically. His daughter had moved in with him and was looking after him, but he just wouldn't eat.

People became very worried about Begin. He was still in his state of depression. They tried to get him to see other doctors, but he resisted that. His medical records were reviewed by some foreign doctors and he may have been examined by other than his family doctor. He was on some kind of medication for a while, but nothing to make much difference. He didn't snap out of his depression. He was functioning well enough to run the government, but he was well aware of how far below his usual capacity he was. He lost completely his zest for political life. Begin had always enjoyed being Prime Minister. I think I mentioned earlier how pleased he was to become Prime Minister after his many years in the political wilderness. He got a kick out of attending public events, out of chairing Cabinet meetings, out of being "in charge". But after his wife's death, he lost all interest, and just went essentially through the motions.

Begin's condition made the responsibilities of other government officials somewhat easier, particularly Shamir and Kimche, because he didn't argue with them so much. On the other hand, he didn't provide the kind of leadership that at times they undoubtedly would have liked to have. His state may have made it easier to reach an agreement with Lebanon than had he been in full action.

He seemed somewhat better and stronger towards the end of May and the beginning of June 1983 after the agreement with Lebanon had been reached. His office sounded us out about scheduling another visit to Washington. The White House agreed for around mid-July. But oddly enough, we could never quite pin-down the exact dates. We would propose a time; they would counter-propose, but no time was ever agreed upon; there was some uncertainty in Jerusalem that became more and more apparent. A couple of Israelis told me at the time that they didn't believe that Begin would ever go to Washington. I didn't accept that evaluation. I knew how much importance he had attached to a Washington visit and a meeting with Reagan and I believed that he would come out of his depression.

During this leaderless period, the Cabinet was divided continually over what Begin viewed as very petty political domestic issues. There was a lot of in-fighting within the Likud. The Cabinet would come to Begin to resolve and arbitrate these minor squabbles. He was totally uninterested; he thought it was ridiculous that they kept bothering him with this stuff. He was upset by the apparent lack of understanding that he was still in mourning and couldn't understand why they couldn't resolve these issues among themselves. He felt very put upon by his own party particularly since he was presented with issues that he wasn't really interested in dealing with. Eventually, a date for a Washington visit was established. Reagan had issued a formal letter of invitation, but Begin had never answered the letter. This was another signal that he was uncertain. About 10-14 days before the meeting, he told the Cabinet that he wasn't going to go to Washington. He told me that he was unable to go. That was the only way he ever explained his change of plans in a message to Reagan; that for "personal" reasons he would be unable to meet in Washington. He left it open for a possible later meeting, but was very vague. It was an obvious tip-off that he had decided to resign, although it was unclear to his colleagues that that had been a decision. Shortly after, on his 70th birthday, which was towards the end of July, he announced his resignation, also for "personal" reasons, to the Cabinet. He didn't make any speech to the country; he just expressed his regrets to the Cabinet that he couldn't continue. They were all up in arms; they were desperate because they felt that without Begin the party would fall apart. It had been his creation; he had been its only Prime Minister; there was no obvious heir-apparent; there was a lot of in-fighting; Likud was already rendered asunder by the Lebanon war with Sharon having been forced out as Defense Minister as a result of the Kahan Commission's report. The events of the previous two years had left the Likud in bad shape. So the Cabinet pleaded with Begin to stay on, but he was adamant. He gave no reason other than he just couldn't continue, although it was quite clear that physically he could have handled the Prime Minister's job. He was in reasonable physical shape and his mind, even after his wife's death, was as clear as ever. But he had lost his will to continue. He had no inner drive left. Begin had a great sense of responsibility so that he felt that really for many months that he wasn't doing the job he should have been doing. So he had reached the conclusion that it would be better if he resigned.

The party was desperate. They finally persuaded him to defer his resignation while the succession issue was sorted out. August was filled with a lot of scurrying around among the Likud leaders looking for another candidate for the Prime Ministership. Every week, at the Cabinet meeting, Begin would be asked to extend his tenure a little further; he finally realized that the party would not make a decision until he actually left office. He then insisted in submitting his resignation to the President and indicated, although I don't remember how widely, that Shamir would be a logical successor, even if only temporarily while the party leaders fought out their battles. Shamir was not viewed as a heavy-weight. He had been brought into the party by Begin in the 70s. He had never been particularly active in party affairs. He had been Foreign Minister for some time and not involved greatly in domestic political matters.

So Shamir was viewed as a stop gap. He was the one person that the other aspirants -- Arens, Levy, Sharon, etc. -- did not view as a serious rival. So they agreed readily to his succession to the Prime Ministership until a permanent successor could be elected, which they all expected to be within a few months. Of course, Shamir out-foxed them all because eventually he served longer as Prime Minister than any other Israeli except Ben Gurion. He became a much more

formidable politician than anyone expected. Begin left very sadly; went into his house and total seclusion. He did not appear for a year. He refused all phone calls; he rejected all press inquiries. An extraordinary event happened on the first anniversary of Mrs. Begin's death when he didn't go to the cemetery. That was an extraordinary omission and showed how deeply immersed he was in an unalterable state of depression.

I spent a lot of time with Begin in official meetings during the 1982/83 period. There were a few times when he would talk to me privately, on a one-on-one basis, on how much he missed his wife and how inadequate he felt, but he didn't "let his hair down" with me; he had never done that. He was a very private man. In fact, his wife was the only person with whom he was totally candid and open. There may have also been one or two of his old cronies. A lot of people have wondered -- and have asked me -- in retrospect, what had happened. It is my belief that the crucial reason why he never left his state of depression was related to his wife's death, but in a very complicated fashion. In the first place, there was the issue of guilt of not having been at her bedside when she died. In addition, he felt guilty about the Sabra/Shatila massacre, although he refused to admit it. But above all, I think his problem was physiological. During his previous bouts of depression, Mrs. Begin was available to get him out of it. She made sure that he ate properly; she would rebuild his self confidence. But in 1983, she was not available and there wasn't anybody else to do it. I have also learned from some doctors that when someone is in a deep depression, diet is quite important in determining the length and depth of the disease. The fact that he didn't eat properly and that his daughter couldn't force him to do so, undoubtedly contributed to the extent of that last bout, making it much more difficult to ending or easing it. So it all comes back fundamentally to Mrs. Begin's availability; had she been around, she would have made him eat and she would have convinced him that the country needed him and that he had no alternative except to pull himself together. It was a very, very poignant end to a long political career; in many ways, it was a tragic end coming, as it did, after the momentary triumph of driving the PLO out of Lebanon.

The second major theme for that year was the issue of Lebanon. That is a very complicated story which is not worth retelling in all of its details. It involved several factors: a) after Sabra/Shatila, the U.S. administration had rushed into Lebanon a second wave of an international military force, together with the British, Italians and the French. There was a great American wave of anger against Israel for allowing the massacres to take place. That anger was felt particularly strong by Phil Habib, who, during negotiations about PLO withdrawal, had made certain oral statements to the Lebanese to be passed on to the PLO to the effect that if the PLO fighters were withdrawn from Beirut, the Israelis had assured him that the Palestinians left behind would not be mistreated. Habib had received those assurances from the Israelis. The Palestinians interpreted Habib's statements to be commitments on behalf of the United States and not only messages from the Israelis. So when the Phalangist troops massacred many women and children as well as some remaining fighters in the Sabra/Shatila camps, the Palestinians blamed the U.S. in addition to the Israelis for allowing the Phalangists to have free rein. Habib felt anger especially since he had passed on the Israeli commitments which he felt had been broken. Thereafter, his ability to function as an intermediary in the Lebanon negotiations was somewhat affected by his new view of Israel and the unreliability of its government. I mentioned earlier that Habib had returned to the U.S. completely exhausted, after the PLO withdrawal and therefore was not in the area when the massacres took place. Morris Draper, who had been in and out of Israel during the last part of

September 1982, returned for another series of meetings with Begin and Sharon on October 5. He wanted to discuss the Kahan Commission and the disposition of Israeli troops still in Lebanon. Those meetings in Jerusalem on that day were the beginning of U.S. efforts to negotiate Israel out of Lebanon. Those efforts went on until the final withdrawal in 1984.

As I have said, the initial American effort, led by Draper with whom I worked closely, started in early October 1982. Shamir had made a statement at the U.N. Assembly meeting that year that Israel expected that all foreign forces would have left Lebanon by the end of 1982. Habib had a meeting with Syrian Foreign Ministry officials in early October, while Draper was in Israel, in which he was told that Syria would take its troops out of Lebanon if and when Israel withdrew its forces from the country. At this point, Syria was feeling very battered. The Syrian Air Force had been overwhelmed by the Israeli Air Force. The Soviets had not come to their aid; no one had. Israel was sitting astride the Damascus-Beirut highway. So in the early weeks after the PLO withdrawals, the balance of power in the area was very heavily weighed on Israel's side -- psychologically, politically and militarily. The Syrians had lost considerable amount of equipment that had not been replaced by the Soviets who did not want to get involved. There were a number of us Americans who saw that Syria at that time was not in a good position to block peace agreement negotiations between Lebanon and Israel. Such an agreement would have permitted Israeli troops to withdraw. So Draper was pressing to get negotiations started while the Syrians were in such a weakened position. He felt even more strongly about starting the process after the Syrian statement to Habib about their willingness to withdraw; that position added a sense of urgency to our interest in starting negotiations.

Sharon was still the Defense Minister at this time. He was determined not to have the negotiation, or at least to have it move on a very slow track. He wanted to find a way to keep us out of it. He always preferred to deal directly with the Lebanese leaders and especially with the new President, the brother of the assassinated Bashir Gemayel. It was really Sharon and his allies who put Amin Gemayel in office; they had been also responsible for Bashir's election in August 1982. Sharon always believed that the Phalangists, who controlled the Lebanese government with the support of the Lebanese troops, were in a position to conclude a peace treaty. He thought he could negotiate that treaty with Gemayel and then present to Begin as the spoils of victory. He knew that Habib and the U.S. were much more concerned with Israeli troop withdrawal and with the protection of the Muslims in Lebanon. The U.S. was interested in a more balanced outcome in Lebanon than Sharon's plan would have brought about. On October 7, there was a radio report that Sharon had announced that Israel would not relinquish control over a twenty-seven mile zone in southern Lebanon, unless security arrangements were negotiated directly with the Lebanese government. Lebanon was insisting that it would not negotiate directly with Israel, even though the Phalangists were Israel's allies. The Lebanese government was still too nervous about Arab opinion to be seen to be negotiating openly and directly with Israel. The U.S. was trying to put together a negotiating process in which we would play the broker's role. Draper spent the first part of October in Israel. We had a series of meetings discussing all these issues.

On the side, the U.S. was trying to follow-up on the Reagan initiative trying to bring together the Palestinians, the Jordanians and the Israelis to try to resolve the future of the West Bank and Gaza. This was another version of the autonomy negotiations. The Begin Cabinet had rejected

the Reagan initiative completely, but the Arabs had not. During this period, Hussein and Arafat were having discussions in Amman in which the PLO was trying to get Jordanian backing for a negotiating position, which included the right of Palestinian self-determination, but would not insist on a Palestinian independent state and would agree to recognize Israel within its pre-1967 borders in exchange for a federation of the territories with Jordan. This dialogue between Arafat and Hussein went on for several months. Eventually they reached an agreement, although the Syrians insisted that Arafat could not negotiate an agreement without approval of the PLO Executive Committee. At the same time, Syria said it would recognize Israel if it withdrew all its forces from occupied territories, including the Golan Heights, and if it recognized Palestinian rights to self-determination. The Arafat-Hussein agreement was then repudiated by the PLO Executive Committee meeting in Kuwait. In January 1983, I believe, Hussein gave a formal "No" to the Reagan initiative. Arafat had, on October 12, rejected the Reagan plan, although he did say that it had some "positive elements" in it. Before that, the representatives of the U.S. government were working assiduously in the Arab and Israel capitals to get concurrence to the Reagan plan, while at the same time trying to get Lebanon-Israel negotiations started.

On October 11, Columbus Day, Sallie and I went up to Nahalal in the Galilee to attend a memorial service for Dayan. That was one year after his death -- the first anniversary. I remember thinking as we stood by the tomb how much we and Israel had missed him, particularly at this juncture of its history. There was also a memorial service for him in Tel Aviv that we attended on the evening of October 13. Throughout this period, we were engaged in a variety of activities which had nothing to do with the major issues. We took a little diving trip on Sunday, October 17 to the caves of Rosh Hanikra on the Lebanese border. I went with my friend Howard Rosenstein, the Red Sea diver, who had taught me to dive. The waters in the caves were relatively shallow because they were just under cliffs. They are suffused with light which makes them seem almost like snow climbing; they are a lovely spot, something like the Blue Grotto off Capri, Italy; the water has a very similar light composition.

Shamir was in the United States for the General Assembly meeting in the Fall 1982. I was in Israel. Normally, I did not go to the United States for visits of the Foreign Minister; I saved those trips for Prime Ministerial visits. There was a time honored Israeli tradition that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister did not travel together anywhere; that had to do with the internal competition for the spot light. Shamir met with Shultz on October 13. They agreed that the U.S. and Israel would convene a working group to discuss the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon so that the two countries could have a coordinated approach to this issue and so that both Syria and Israel would withdraw their forces from Lebanon. It was during this period that efforts were being made in the U.N. to force Israel out of Lebanon as a response to the Sabra/Shatila massacre. Shultz threatened to withhold U.S. contributions to the U.N. and some of its agencies if the General Assembly were to take any actions against Israel, including depriving that country of its membership in the U.N. agencies. On the surface, the chances for negotiations seemed pretty good. There were meetings between Arabs and Reagan and others in Washington. In late October, the Israelis permitted the Lebanese forces to take over certain positions in the Shuf Mountains from them in order to maintain the truce between the Druze and the Christians. At the end of October, Draper returned to Israel to start the negotiations. The plan was for him to shuttle between the parties.

Draper met with Begin and me on October 29, after a session with Dave Kimche and Shamir at the Foreign Ministry. Draper made an announcement that Israel and Lebanon had agreed to assemble negotiating teams to start working out arrangements for the withdrawal of Israeli forces along with appropriate security arrangements in southern Lebanon. On the same day, Assad made a public statement in Damascus, restating that Syria would not withdraw from Lebanon until Israel had done so completely. In Beirut, the American Marines were stationed as part of a multilateral force and were beginning to make some limited patrols and expanding their coverage of East Beirut. Also, on the same day, as a harbinger of the future, a car bomb exploded near Marine positions in southern Beirut, killing one Marine and wounding two Lebanese. That was a sign that the Marines were no longer being viewed as peace-keepers, but as partisans on one side and as enemies by the Muslim side. I had left right after the Draper meetings on October 29 and had gone to the Sinai for my first diving trip there since Israel had returned that territory to Egypt. I went with my old friend David Friedman and a couple of other divers. We crossed the border at Taba and drove to the water. The waters seemed unchanged; the land was different. The multinational force that we had deployed after the peace treaty was in control of the area along the coast. It was a fascinating trip and the diving was superb. It was a good break for me.

I returned to Tel Aviv on Monday. Tuesday I met with Draper in Jerusalem and had a long session with Shamir about moving the negotiations with Lebanon forward. There was a lot of activity during this period behind the scene. For one thing, Israel was developing plans for additional settlements on the West Bank. The U.S. administration in Washington was increasingly dismayed by that prospect and issued a couple of sharp public criticisms. That scenario was replayed in 1992. On November 6, 1982, administration officials put out public statements that President Reagan planned to step up pressure on Israel to freeze West Bank settlements and to withdraw from Lebanon during the meetings that Begin and Reagan were to hold in the near future. From the American point of view, the main justification for the Begin trip was to "talk turkey" to him about these two issues. The meeting, as we now know, never took place. On November 11, a car bomb exploded at the Israeli military headquarters in Tyre in south Lebanon. Dozens of Israeli soldiers and security personnel were killed and lots of civilians wounded. That was a precursor of the attack on the American Marine barracks in 1983. The November incident stirred enormous outrage and concern in Israel. Begin had left for the U.S. the previous day, but Mrs. Begin died three days later and he returned without going to Washington, as I have noted earlier.

I need to clarify why the Lebanon/Israel negotiations were so slow in developing. Draper was very busy flying back and forth between Beirut and Jerusalem. We pressed both parties to get down to business, appoint negotiators, decide on a time and place, etc. We couldn't figure out why it was so hard to get the process started. We got a lot of technical excuses. Draper and I got the distinct impression that he was being "given the run around" especially by Sharon. The big argument was about the location for the negotiations. The Israelis wanted to meet both in Israel and in Lebanon. Then there was a Cabinet meeting about mid-November, just as agreement was about to be reached about the two sites. Sharon suggested during the Cabinet meeting that it would be necessary for the negotiators to meet in Jerusalem when it was Israel's turn to be the host. Jerusalem as a negotiating site was a red flag for the Arabs because of its disputed status. The Egyptians, for example, had been very reluctant to come to Jerusalem for the autonomy negotiations and in the final analysis, did not. When Sharon threw this diplomatic bomb shell in

the Cabinet meeting, he must have realized that Begin, with his special devotion to Jerusalem as a symbol, would have to agree with him. He must also have recognized that the Lebanese would have found it very difficult to agree to that site and that is in fact what happened. So for the next six weeks, there was a continuing argument about where to hold the triparty negotiations. The Jerusalem was a very divisive issue, so I suspect Sharon had raised it deliberately to block progress. We only found out in December what had occurred. Then it became apparent that while on the surface Israel seemed to be cooperating on starting the negotiations, in fact Sharon was conducting a private, secret dialogue himself with an emissary of Amin Gemayel. We knew nothing about it. He was trying to make a direct deal with the Phalangists which would present us with a *fait accompli* which we would have to accept. It was not in his interest for the formal negotiations to start, while he was working behind the scenes unfettered by our involvement. That is why he introduced the Jerusalem issue out of the clear blue sky.

I had planned to be in Washington with Prime Minister Begin for his meeting with President Reagan in Early November -- a meeting which never took place because of Alisa Begin's death. I had left for Washington on November 12. As it turned out, I tried to return with Begin on his flights when he returned to Israel for the funeral, but we could not make connections. I could not get a commercial flight in time to get back for the funeral. So I decided to remain in Washington for an extensive period of consultation, which I had planned to do in any case after the Begin-Reagan meeting. So I was in Washington November 13-28, 1982 while Maury Draper was continuing to negotiate off and on in Beirut and Jerusalem in an effort to jump start the Lebanon-Israel Negotiations. He had been blocked by inexorable road blocks.

While in Washington, I had a chance to see every person in the State Department even remotely involved in US-Israeli affairs. I met with Secretary Shultz, Habib, Veliotes and others. I spent time at the Pentagon and the CIA; I met with various Members of Congress and their staffs. I was in New York to attend a couple of events sponsored by Jewish organizations. All of these contacts gave me a good opportunity to measure the American political climate in relationship to Israel, from the White House down. Since Thanksgiving came during this period, I also had an opportunity to be with one of my children, who was then living in the U.S.

I returned to Israel on November 28. I had reached some clear conclusions, based in part on some informal guidance I had received from my bosses and colleagues. They gave me a sense of a deteriorating mood in Washington resulting from Israeli obstruction to the beginning of Israel-Lebanon negotiations and from the growing anger generated by the renewed Israeli drive for expanding settlements on the West bank and Gaza, spearheaded by Begin and Sharon. This settlement policy was Israel's way to signal its unhappiness with the Reagan September initiative and furthered also Israeli views that the more settlements, the better. It had been my standing practice to brief the press, on background, within a few days after any of my trips to the U.S. I would first brief the Israeli journalists and then, a couple of days later, the American and some British correspondents -- particularly the BBC which had a wide and important audience in Israel. I briefed the press every six weeks or so under any circumstances, but trips to the U.S. gave me an opportunity to provide a more authoritative sense of the mood in Washington. In part, this was an effort to counter some of the more tendentious reporting that was a normal part of Israeli media content. American purposes and motives were often misstated, usually maliciously, for the Israeli readers.

I held this briefing on December 8 in the afternoon. It was a long briefing; I have had an opportunity to review the transcript. It generated considerable press reaction, including some angry, although veiled, rebuttals from government sources. As usual, I gave the briefing on "deep background", so that the attribution had to be to "informed sources". But it would not have been a great mystery for any Israeli who followed politics to figure out who the source might have been -- namely me. But by using that briefing technique, I could avoid a possible diplomatic confrontation that might have been difficult to deal with, once the government had reacted. I did not brief on instructions from Washington. My colleagues in the Department knew that I followed a pattern of briefings and never tried to discourage me from that course.

The main subject of the briefing centered on a number of allegations that were almost omnipresent in public discourse in Israel at the time. Allegations were being made that the U.S. was trying to steal the fruits of Israel's victory in Lebanon by opposing a peace treaty which would have essentially upheld the status quo. That was a line promulgated by Sharon and his supporters. Another allegation was that the U.S. was blocking the beginning of negotiations between Israel and Lebanon because we wanted to have the Reagan plan accepted by King Hussein first. There was also a good deal of concern about a Congressional proposal to add \$1 billion to the Israeli assistance package for FY 84, despite the fact that the administration had requested just a modest increase. Understandably, the administration had opposed the Congressional initiative because it would have required offset cuts in other assistance programs and because such a huge increase might be interpreted as rewarding Israel which at the time was not in a mood to cooperate on the negotiating process; we were also concerned that the new aid package would discourage the Arabs from pursuing the Reagan initiative. All of these concerns had essentially been acknowledged in various statements made in Washington, both on the record or on "background". The charge that the U.S. was trying to pressure Israel into accepting the U.S. strategy through the foreign assistance package was made often in Israeli circles. I tried, in the backgrounder, to deal with all these issues; I went in each of them at considerable depth. One of the most ridiculous arguments that I tried to lay to rest was that the U.S. was trying to slow down the Lebanon negotiations. I told the press some of the things I heard in Washington, trying to convey the impressions I had come away with after talking to many people in our government. I did not try to reach my own conclusions, but the press of course reported that the views expressed in the briefings were all mine. Of course, I did in fact pretty much reach the same conclusions, but never said so. I did say that when the U.S. expressed unhappiness about the negotiations it was primarily concerned with some of the procedural obstructions that were being built. I had in mind such things as, for example, Israeli Cabinet insistence that the negotiations had to take place in Jerusalem and Beirut -- the two capitals. That requirement was an invitation to blocking any further discussions because it was very clear to the Israelis that the Lebanese would not be able to risk politically conducting negotiations in Jerusalem when no other Arab state had ever done so. I made the point that it was rather difficult for Washington not to be suspicious. We had very belatedly come to understand that in mid-October -- at the very beginning of the discussions between Draper and the Israelis on starting the negotiations -- the Israelis had at that point adopted secretly that demand that Jerusalem be one of the negotiating sites. We were not informed of that decision; we did not learn of it until late November when it appeared suddenly just as Habib and Draper had completed a package of proposals which they thought would start the negotiations. I emphasized in the backgrounder that this development

that caught everybody by surprise did not engender an atmosphere of great confidence in Washington that Israel was very interested in the Lebanon negotiations.

We now know, as I mentioned earlier, that the reason the Israelis were stalling was because Sharon was conducting a private, secret bilateral negotiation with Amin Gemayel through a Lebanese emissary; he wanted to wrap up the negotiations all by himself in order to keep us entirely out of it until a deal had been made. I think our intelligence was woefully inadequate in this matter; we had no clue what Sharon and Gemayel were up to. We did know of course that the Israelis were stalling; Washington was increasingly upset as the days and weeks passed. I had learned, and I mentioned this to the press which used it in its stories, that there were a good number of officials in Washington who were by this time convinced that, despite everything that Begin had been saying about Israel's interest in leaving Lebanon as soon as possible, the Israelis were planning to stay in Lebanon for a very long time; these Washington officials saw the procedural roadblocks as just another delaying tactic in discussions of Israeli troop withdrawals. Washington also suspected that, by stalling the Lebanese negotiations, Israel was making it impossible for us to pursue the Reagan initiative because it had been clear between September and December that King Hussein, while not having rejected the plan, was trying, eventually unsuccessfully, to obtain Arafat's agreement to incorporate PLO participation in the Jordanian negotiating team. The King had told us directly that it was very difficult for him to enter broader negotiations under the Reagan plan until there was some good faith sign that Israel would withdraw from Lebanon. He needed that sign for his own political survival. The Israelis knew this which heightened the Washington suspicions. So Washington felt that the Israelis were stalling both to continue their occupation of Lebanon and as a way of forestalling the Reagan initiative. I highlighted all of these factors in the backgrounder.

The backgrounder produced some very accurate reports in *The Jerusalem Post* and several Hebrew language papers. Of course, there were also tendentious reactions. There were some tortuous and angry rebuttal stories. Once again, I was brushed with my old nickname "The High Commissioner", who was telling Israel how to run its affairs. On the whole, I believe the stories had a very salutary effect. A number of Israelis, particularly in the center and on the left, who picked up the same themes and began to argue publicly that it wasn't really necessary for the negotiations to take place in Jerusalem; they could proceed elsewhere.

This is the background that Habib found when he returned to the area. He arrived mid-December and brought with him another package of procedural proposals to try to break the impasse. He was strongly supported by President Reagan and Secretary Shultz who were anxious to see some progress. First, Habib, Draper and I held meetings with a number of senior Israeli officials just to cover the ground. Then we met with Dave Kimche and some of his Foreign Ministry colleagues. On the afternoon of December 16, a Thursday, we met at the Prime Ministry for two and a half hours starting at 5 p.m. Habib, Bob Flaten, Paul Hare and I sat in the Prime Minister's conference room, adjoining his private office. Across the table from the American delegation sat Begin, Sharon, Shamir and their staffers. This meeting was set up to permit Habib to lay out formally the proposals that he had developed to break the stalemate. While he was doing so, I looked at Sharon and noticed that he looked like the cat that had swallowed a canary. He looked uncharacteristically benign; in fact I would say that he was smirking. Begin did not respond to the Habib presentation. He asked Sharon to speak. Sharon opened by dropping a bomb shell. He

described with some glee that negotiations he had been conducting for months with Gemayel's emissary. He described the outline of an agreement he had reached and which had been signed by both the Lebanese and Israeli governments. Sharon concluded by essentially saying that the U.S. was not needed; the deal was done. As far as he was concerned, it only needed to be publicly formalized; he thought that that could be done in the following week. In the course of his discourse, Sharon inserted some gratuitous insults. He was obviously intent on totally humiliating Habib and the American team. It was obvious that Begin knew all about this, but he left it up to Sharon to make the presentation for the Israeli side. Begin, throughout this whole period, was in a state of depression and quite passive in general. He had just finished the month of mourning for his wife's death. He was unshaven and drawn. He was lucid, but not really involved. Shamir characteristically sat and said nothing. The conversation was essentially between Sharon and Habib.

Phil Habib exercised enormous self-control; he showed great professionalism. He essentially said that he would leave for Beirut immediately to verify with Gemayel that an agreement had been reached. If he had confirmation, the U.S. would then support the agreement and provide whatever help might be necessary to put it into effect. On first hearing the outline, we did believe that it sounded something that would be easily sustainable from the Lebanese side. During the meeting, Sharon was called out of the conference room for a phone call. When he returned, he spoke with Begin; the Prime Minister summarized it for us. What Begin said was that there had been a leak about the agreement and that *Mariv* would run a story the next morning. That bit of news made it even more important that Habib reach Beirut as soon as possible to at least warn the Lebanese that the story was about to break.

What actually happened was an extraordinary sequence of events. Sharon was so triumphant about his diplomatic coup that he had briefed a *Mariv* reporter, giving him the whole story earlier. The Israeli military censor, when he saw the story, immediately understood that it should not be published; however the source was the Minister of Defense, who was the censor's boss. So he didn't feel he could stop the story. Begin, apparently belatedly, realized, when informed of the leak, that something had gone awry. I don't believe that Begin had any idea of the source of the story. He was savvy enough to know that a premature disclosure might abrogate any agreement reached. For reasons that I don't remember now, it was apparently too late for Begin to stop the story.

The story was indeed published. Amin Gemayel, confronted with the story and its subsequent repetition in the Lebanese press, came under enormous political pressure. He had not prepared his Cabinet or any of his entourage; all that had been done had been done in secret and no one else knew, except perhaps one advisor and the intermediary. So no political ground-work had been done at all, but it was in every Lebanese and Israeli newspaper. This uproar forced Sharon to fly to Beirut on Christmas as a last ditch effort to save the agreement. Within a few days, it became eminently clear that Gemayel could not obtain approval of the agreement. The more the agreement was scrutinized, the more vulnerable it seemed. The Syrians weighed in as well in opposition to the agreement. When Sharon returned, he reluctantly admitted that he would have to follow the American track and start the negotiations as we had been urging. These negotiations started at Zachle on December 28. Washington was both astounded and furious at this turn of events because it viewed it as a deliberate insult to Habib and the United States in

general. The White House was angry; the State Department was angry. The Sharon ploy became one more element in the rapidly deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and Israel. That relationship had improved a little bit in the Fall when Shamir had gone to Washington and had a good meeting with Shultz. As long as it appeared that both governments were moving in the same direction on the Lebanese negotiations, the U.S. was giving Israel the benefit of the doubt.

This story was one of the most illustrative examples of Sharon's hubris, which led him to "shoot himself in the foot". I doubt that the agreement would ever have been approved publicly. The political pressures would have been too great in any case. But, it is conceivable of course had the major players been more careful and adroit they might have reached a better agreement and an earlier one than the one that was finally reached with the assistance of Secretary Shultz in April.

In any case, with the settlement issue unresolved, Begin's passivity and Sharon's conduct did not help US-Israeli relationships. The Washington attitude was skeptical about Israeli intentions.

I said earlier, that throughout the Fall of 1982, I was working on four major subjects. I have not discussed at any great length the Reagan initiative.

Ever since Begin had angrily and rapidly rejected the Reagan initiative in September, the American administration had doggedly pursued it, trying to have become the center of negotiations. In retrospect, I realize now that there was never any expectation in Washington that the Israelis would accept it, at least initially. It did reject the idea of a Palestinian state, but it also rejected the annexation of the West Bank territories. There were other elements that were bound to be unacceptable to Begin. But Shultz and his colleagues had convinced themselves that if Hussein were willing to come to the negotiating table under a sort of "Camp David" rubric, as interpreted and expanded by the Reagan initiative -- we had always asserted, correctly so, that the initiative was consistent with "Camp David", although the Israeli disagreed vigorously -- then the Israelis would inevitably be forced to look at the initiative once again. That would provide the needed opportunity to start serious discussion about the Initiative. Hussein was the key. Throughout the Fall, Hussein and Arafat carried on a minuet, trying to find a way in which the Jordanians could represent the PLO's interests in any negotiations. They had to find a way mutually satisfactory, which would also be at least acceptable to Israel and the U.S. The Egyptians were anxious for this to happen. Hussein thought, on at least two occasions that he had Arafat's agreement to a formula. Each time, when Arafat tried to get approval from his Executive Committee or the Palestine Council, he was rebuffed and the formulas were rejected. The Syrians put on a lot of pressure on the PLO, where they had considerable influence, against any efforts to start negotiations. It was only in late December that Arafat and Hussein apparently reached some kind of understanding that if a Palestinian state were to be created on the West Bank, it would be a part of a federated Jordan. That at least was an indication that something was beginning to develop on that side, but nonetheless, Hussein, who visited Washington on December 20, while meeting with Shultz, gave a rather pessimistic view of his hopes. During a meeting with Reagan, on the following day, Hussein said quite clearly that he was not prepared to enter the negotiations as long as Jewish settlements were being established on the West Bank and Gaza.

During this whole period, the settlement issue was very much on the front burners. Sometime

around December 1, Sharon reinvigorated the settlement drive; the Cabinet announced that it had authorized an additional 31 settlements on the West Bank. That was an irritant in our relationship with Israel, but it also convinced Hussein not to get involved in the peace negotiations. There was a lot of pernicious stuff going on in Israel during this period, most if not all centered around Sharon and his supporters. The Syrians also strongly opposed Hussein and Arafat getting together on a formula and they managed to torpedo all efforts, although that might have happened under any circumstances. The fact that the two concluded any formula was a small miracle in itself; they distrusted each other enormously. Whenever one of the Hussein-Arafat negotiating sessions was finished, we would immediately receive indications from Hussein that Arafat was one of the most frustrating, difficult, annoying and infuriating men to deal with. We heard a lot about the difficulties the two men had with each other, although we heard more from Hussein because we were of course not in touch with Arafat at the time.

When Hussein came to Washington in December, he suggested to Reagan and Shultz that he was still open to the Reagan initiative; he had not come to any final conclusions. But as long as Israel was not showing any interest in retreating from Lebanon, it was impossible for the King to deal with the initiative. The settlement process, accelerating as it was, was also a stumbling block. We of course also knew that in addition to the two reasons he gave, he was also having difficulties reaching an acceptable agreement with Arafat. Nevertheless, the King kept the door open; it was not closed until April 1983 when he announced that he could not participate in negotiations based on the Reagan initiative. That almost coincided with the time when George Shultz had achieved success in negotiating an agreement between Lebanon and Israel. The American government's attitude towards Israel shifted rather substantially during the February-April period, particularly once the agreement was signed and when it became clear that Hussein would not enter the negotiations. By this time, Sharon was not Minister of Defense any longer; he had been replaced after the Kahan Commission report, by Moshe Arens. That brought a different tone to the relationship.

From April on, the US-Israel relationship was much calmer. Shultz especially had come to the conclusion that the U.S. had to work closely with Israel, especially if the Syrians were to be blocked who were already showing signs of interfering in the Israel-Lebanon agreement. The US-Israeli relationships grew closer as it became clearer that Hussein would not join the Reagan initiative and that Damascus, contrary to Shultz' expectations, was determined to block the implementation of the Israel-Lebanon agreement.

Now I will return to the Lebanon drama. When President Reagan reintroduced the Marines for a second time after Sabra and Shatila, the Administration had told Congress that it expected the forces to be in Lebanon only briefly. By December, they had been there for four months and nothing seemed to be happening to permit a plausible withdrawal. That situation increased the pressure on the administration to convince Israel to withdraw from Lebanon and to complete the peace negotiations. During December, Sharon returned secretly to Beirut the day before Christmas and Christmas Day, during which he met with Gemayel and other Lebanese leaders in order to push the Israel-Lebanon bilateral negotiations back on track. This effort was way too late and the whole situation collapsed soon thereafter.

After the end of the bilateral debacle, the Israelis realized that they had to find some way to join

our negotiating track. We talked to them about procedural matters that had been a stumbling block. We received a number of messages from Washington urging that some movement be evident. When Sharon returned from Lebanon and reported to Begin his failure to make any progress with Gemayel, the Israeli Cabinet decided to accept the terms that essentially Habib had suggested earlier.

On December 26, Israel made a formal statement to the press announcing that negotiations would begin the following day. That was somewhat overly optimistic, but in fact the negotiations did start on December 28 in a suburb of Beirut. The site was a partially shot-up old hotel. David Kimche headed the Israeli delegation with Abrasha Tamir representing the Defense Ministry -- i.e. Sharon. He was essentially the co-chairman. The Lebanese delegation was a very complicated one filled with representatives of each major ethnic and religious group -- Shia, Sunni, Christians, Druze. The Lebanese were either officials of the Foreign Ministry or the military, but had practically no authority. Morris Draper represented us, supported by a couple of other U.S. officials. He served as an observer and mediator and catalyst to keep the discussions moving. He may have served as chairman of the opening session. That meant that it took from the end of September to the end of December for any formal dialogue to be launched.

In the background stood the Kahan Commission which was investigating the Sabra/Shatila massacres. It was expected that it would report its findings by the end of January. That undoubtedly made Sharon nervous since he was bound to bear the burden of any negative comments.

On December 29, I called Simca Ehrlich who was then the Vice Premier and Minister of Finance. He was the leader of the Liberal Party; he was a moderate and not especially vigorous, but very interested in maintaining a working relationship with the United States. I told him that I would appreciate a few private moments with him. I was greatly concerned at the time by the status of our relationship with Israel, which had been very much attrited by the Fall's events. I was especially concerned by Sharon's nefarious influence on the relationship. I knew that Ehrlich was not a great admirer of Sharon's; he had been unhappy for sometime with Sharon personally and with his influence on Begin and the Cabinet. So I met with Ehrlich. I made it immediately clear to him that I had no instructions from Washington, but that I had taken it upon myself to make this call because of my deep concern about the relationships between our two countries. I told him that I had been in Washington in late November and that my consultations there had indicated that my concerns were shared by many others. But I told him that I found it very difficult to repair the situation because so much of the damage had resulted from the various personalities involved and their interactions. We had a frank and personal exchange about the situation and events and about steps that might be considered to improve the relationship. Ehrlich was the first to raise Sharon's name in the conversation. He of course had gone immediately to the heart of the problem without prompting from me. I told Ehrlich that unless that relationship did improve, I was deeply concerned that we would soon run into some very stormy weather. He concluded our talk by saying that he would try his best to convince Begin to reduce Sharon's influence and actions as one step toward better Israel-US relationships. I mention this meeting here at this point because a year later it figured centrally in my most bitter encounter with Sharon.

I have mentioned earlier that Ambassadors do a lot of unusual things. For example, on December 31 -- New Year's Eve -- soon after my very significant conversation with Ehrlich, I attended a benefit party for the International Variety Club at the Tel Aviv Hilton. American Ambassadors were expected to attend these benefits. This was a particularly interesting one because Variety had managed to obtain the presence of a special guest: Liz Taylor. Sallie and I had the duty to go to the Presidential suite in the hotel to meet the guest of honor and to escort her down to the ball. This one of the periods when she was not married, but she was accompanied by a Mexican businessman, to whom, I believe, she was engaged although I don't think she ever married him. We had met Liz Taylor once many years before but it was just a brief handshake; we had never really conversed with her. But that New Year's Eve we spent a lot of time with her; she turned out to be very different from what I expected. Actually, she seemed to me to be a very sad lady, although she looked very good -- she was in one of her thin phases. Sallie and I escorted her down, accompanied by several bodyguards, and arrived in the lobby only to face a throng of screaming people, mostly quite mature looking people. Most seemed to be over 40. There must of been several hundreds of fans just waiting there hoping to touch her or at least get near enough for a close look. It was a rare illustration of the old "movie star" syndrome. Sallie was walking a little behind Liz and me. The bodyguards were all around us keeping the crowd away from Taylor and me. But Sallie, who was not inside the "envelope", was almost trampled to death by the throng of fans. It was just fortunate that a friend, who happened to be in the lobby, grabbed her and pulled her up on a sofa; that is the only reason she survived. We of course were ushered into the ballroom and escorted to the table; we sat down -- the ten who were invited to that table. Everyone else in the room just surrounded the table forcing the bodyguards to form a ring around the table to keep two or three feet of distance between the crowd and the seated guests. Sallie was not with us; she had not been able to get through the crowd. In the melee, I didn't realize for a while that she had not made it; when I did, there wasn't much I could do in light of the frenzy surrounding us. Eventually, Sallie worked her way through the crowd, only to be met by the bodyguards who wouldn't let her through. It took her about twenty minutes to finally get a seat. I don't think she really enjoyed herself that evening. It was sheer bedlam.

There was another celebrity at the ball that night and that was Brook Shield, the actress, who was quite young at the time. She was in Israel making a film. She and her mother, who went with her everywhere, were at another table about four or five tables away. She received a certain amount of attention, but nothing of course compared to the fan adulation that Elizabeth Taylor drew even though the latter was much older and the former much prettier at that time. During the course of the evening, Shields and her mother came to our table and sort of paid obeisance to the "Queen". It was quite an evening!

Taylor's Mexican escort was very nice. He was very protective of her and jumped at her every bidding. She was clearly one of those women who from the age of four had never done anything for herself. She always had someone around who waited on her hand and foot; she accepted that as a normal pattern of life. She was really helpless without a coterie to look after her every aspect of daily living.

For the next couple of days, while negotiations were starting in Kiryat Shimona, I was off on other business. Maury Draper was our representative. On the afternoon of January 2, I briefed then senator Paul Tsongas at the residence and a couple of people who were traveling with him.

We always had Congressional visitors. In my first year as Ambassador to Israel, two-thirds of the U.S. Congress visited the country, either individually or in groups. In subsequent years, the traffic was not quite as heavy, but I think that practically every Congressman or Senator has been through Israel at one time or other. I always tried to brief them personally, either in Jerusalem or in Tel Aviv, usually at the residence. I got to know a lot of Members of Congress that way. It was useful for me because I got a good feel for the Middle East political temperature in the Congress.

Solarz must have been in Israel once every six months. He was the most demanding because he was such a fantastic worker. When he would come to Israel, he would want see everybody starting with early breakfast meetings at 7 a.m. and then he would go until midnight every day. He would practically kill his control officer. I would spend a lot of time with him because he was "good value"; I would learn a lot from him during the meetings; he was also very anxious to have our views on current events. So I would spend a lot of time with him. But I can tell you that after a Solarz visit -- two or three days -- everyone was completely exhausted. He has incredible energy.

On Monday, January 3, 1983, Sallie and I left for Washington to accompany President and Mrs. Navon on the first formal visit ever arranged for an Israeli President. They had insisted that we escort them. Navon had been very anxious for such an occasion and had been angling for it ever since he had become President. Until early 1983, Washington had not been impressed that it had been necessary. We always had close contacts with Prime Ministers and other Israeli officials, but the White House had always been reluctant to host a State visit with a personage who was essentially a figure-head. Navon was an influential player within the Labor Party and a very fine person. Mrs. Navon was a former Miss Israel. The Navons put a lot of stock in getting the State visit invitation before the end of his term which was going to take place the next year. I tried to help with the White House to get the invitation. In the final analysis, Navon got an invitation, but it was not full State visit honors. It was, protocol-wise, the next lower set of arrangements, which for example did not require a Blair House stay nor a State dinner.

So we came with the Navons to help with the East Coast portion of their American tour. We flew on an Israeli Air Force plane, which is the transportation used by Israeli VIPs -- not very fancy, to say at least. President Reagan hosted a luncheon for the Navons; there was a big reception, a formal dinner at the Israeli Embassy (hosted by then Ambassador Moshe Arens), not to mention several meetings, some of which I participated in. The fact that he had an official lunch was very important to Navon. It took a lot my persuasion to get the White House to host the lunch; it finally did, but it was a battle all the way. In fact, the visit went very smoothly and Navon was very happy although undoubtedly he would have preferred a full State visit.

I did arrange for John Hopkins University, which I attended as a graduate student, to grant Navon an honorary degree which helped the visit greatly. I did that by conspiring with Steve Muller, the President of the University, who was Jewish himself and also someone very sensitive to international nuances. So John Hopkins hosted a big dinner and a ceremony in Baltimore which was greatly appreciated. The Baltimore ceremonies were huge, but lovely and well done. Navon gave a fine speech, followed by a large kosher dinner for several hundreds of guests.

After that, we went to Boston and stayed with the Navons through that visit. Governor and Mrs. Michael Dukakis hosted a very nice reception for the Navons at the State House. That was my first opportunity to meet Dukakis. He was terrific -- very engaging, politically savvy. The whole reception was a great success. I was surprised that he did not turn out to be a more effective Presidential candidate because on the occasion of the Navon visit, he and Kitty both seemed to be terrific politicians.

In the meantime, back in Israel, the Kahan Commission had finished its report, although their findings remained unknown, even to the well known Israeli informal information system. On January 2, there was a story in the press referring to Steve Solarz, who apparently had been in Baghdad in August shortly after the PLO withdrawal from Beirut. The Iraqis released the transcript of Solarz' meeting with Saddam Hussein. Hussein was quoted as saying that "no Arab official includes in his current policy the so-called destruction of Israel, but there is not one Arab who believes it is possible to co-live with such an aggressive and expansionist state". Those were the words of the man who eight years later would launch an invasion of Kuwait! The Solarz meeting was one of many conducted by American Congressmen to try to wean Hussein away from the camp of Arab leaders who totally rejected Israel.

Habib was back in Washington while I was in New York with Navon. The President met there with American Jewish leaders and intellectuals. We held a session in Elie Weisel's apartment. We were still in a period during which Israel's image in the U.S. in the aftermath of the Lebanon invasion was very badly frayed. Navon's visit was important not only for the contacts he made with American leaders, but also for his portrayal of an Israeli leader so different from Begin and Sharon. He was a left-wing Liberal Party member, known for his strong support of Israel-Arab co-existence. He spoke fluent Arabic -- he taught Arabic at one point in his career. So his meeting with American leadership and the press did have a useful effect in that it brought a different image of Israeli leadership. That was one of the reasons why I was happy to assist in the arrangements for Navon's visit.

In New York, Navon gave a speech to the Council of Foreign Relations. Then he left for a tour of the United States and I returned to Washington. As I said, Habib had been there and had been instructed by Reagan to return to the Middle East in the hopes of accelerating the negotiating process. I met with George Shultz and Cap Weinberger and Fred Iklé and then returned to Tel Aviv on January 11.

Upon my arrival the next day, I went directly to Jerusalem and had a working dinner with Habib that night at the Consulate General. Habib was to see the Israeli leaders the next day. We met with Begin on January 13 at 11 a.m. Habib conveyed Reagan's concerns and delivered a fairly stiff message, although couched in polite terms. We were pushing for an early resolution of the current situation before any further damage might ensue. Begin said all the right things; he also wanted to expedite the negotiations, but he was still withdrawn and depressed and did not engage much in the dialogue.

Habib then went to Beirut. I had dinner that night with Shimon Peres, during which I briefed him on my Washington consultations and Habib's current efforts. I saw that kind of briefing for the major opposition party leader as one my roles. Although I was assigned to work with the Begin

government, it was important that the Labor opposition party be kept current of the negotiations and especially what we were doing and what our views were. Sometimes Habib would also meet with Peres, but more often those briefings were left to me. Begin knew what I was doing, although he was not enthusiastic about the process. As I said, we felt it was important to be even-handed with both major Israeli parties. Labor was much opposed to Begin's Lebanon policy so that our views had a much more sympathetic audience there than with the Likud. But Labor did not have any influence on government policies. So I used to meet with Peres during this long period at least once a week just to keep him apprised.

Moshe Arens was the Israeli Ambassador in Washington. Although he was hard-liner, he was well acquainted with American practices and views and managed to always put the best face on Israeli policies and actions, even though sometimes that was a very tough assignment. He was highly regarded and fully trusted by Begin. He was a very useful communications channel.

The negotiations dragged on through January. Habib shuttled in and out of Beirut, but did not participate directly in the formal negotiations. That was left to Morris Draper. The level of the negotiators was below Habib's, made up essentially of technical people; no Ministers were involved. Habib would coordinate with Draper; he would talk to Amin Gemayel in Beirut and with Begin and Sharon in Jerusalem. He would push both sides to show greater flexibility; he would try to sell them on some compromises. The formal talks took place on a home-to-home basis -- once in Beirut and then in Kiryat Shimona in Israel.

On January 20, the Lebanese rejected a series of Israeli demands for a security sector in south Lebanon and for some early warning stations to be manned by the Israelis even after withdrawal. This negotiation became very complicated; I was not directly involved although I discussed the issues with Habib and Draper in great detail and for many hours before they were discussed again at the conference table. By about January 20, it became apparent that the negotiations were not getting very far. The conference became stuck on many issues. Ultimately, the bottom line was that the Israelis were, in exchange for withdrawal, demanding an adequate presence to provide an early warning of pending attacks and to influence their southern Lebanese allies to provide some defense against cross border attacks. The Lebanese were resisting these demands. The Israelis were also trying to achieve a political arrangement between the two countries which would have been tantamount to a peace accord without that name. All parties understood that a formal peace agreement would have been too provocative to the Syrians.

Gemayel, if left to his own devices, would have been prepared to accede to Israeli demands. But he was under increasing pressure from Syrian allies in Lebanon and from Syria itself. He did keep the Syrians informed about the status of the negotiations, but did not necessarily seek their approval. This set of circumstances became the subject of debate long after the end of the negotiations which continued for months and months. Eventually, Shultz came to the area at the end of April and took over for Habib. In about ten days, Shultz put a deal together which was called the "May 17" agreement. It included many of the Israeli positions as well as some of Lebanon's. It was actually a pretty good agreement from Lebanon's point of view and certainly a very good agreement for Israel. Unfortunately, it never took effect. Gemayel did sign it, but could not get it ratified by the Lebanese Parliament. Gemayel had been overly confident that Syria would acquiesce and not oppose it. When Assad was briefed on all the details, he made his

opposition clear and told Gemayel that he would not permit its approval. He began to apply pressure to his surrogates in Lebanon and intimidated the Lebanese Parliament so that ratification was impossible. The agreement was therefore still-born.

Then came the second guessing. Were we foolish to think that such an accord would be ratified without Syria's prior agreement? When, in the prior Fall, we first began to discuss the problem of achieving an agreement both in Washington and in Israel, Syria was in relatively bad shape having been battered both by the war and their own losses on the battle fields. The Russians had not yet resupplied the Syrian forces; the Syrians felt uncertain and vulnerable. Habib had been told by Syrian officials in Damascus on October 2 that Syria would agree to withdraw its troops from Lebanon if Israeli forces were also withdrawn. Moreover, at some time in the Fall, Shultz had been assured by the Saudis that if an agreement were reached between Lebanon and Israel, Syria would not be a problem. The Saudis assured Shultz that Assad would not interfere. Shultz accepted that assurance at face value and based his approaches on that assumption, even though it was clear that the Syrians might well object to some versions of an agreement. He believed that when it came crunch time, the Syrian would back off and accept whatever arrangements might be concluded. We knew that the Israelis, who were demanding a peace agreement, were taking positions that were probably not acceptable to the Syrians. It was clear that the Israeli were pushing so hard for a full peace accord that if we had tried to bring the Syrians into the process as participants, it would have resulted in a stalemate. On the other hand, we thought that if an agreement could be hammered out quickly while Syria was weak and vulnerable, there was a possibility that the Syrians would reluctantly acquiesce and not try to block the arrangements. That was our calculation and I think, even in retrospect, it was a reasonable gamble. That approach certainly had a better chance of success than trying to get the Syrians to agree explicitly during the negotiations themselves to anything that was acceptable to the Israelis. We had very little effective leverage on the Israelis and therefore a very limited opportunity to reduce Israeli demands.

What was probably wrong was the timing. During the long period of stalemate in the Fall, for which Sharon was responsible, whatever opportunity for success we had was lost. The agreement that was finally reached could have been achieved in the Fall, and would have had a far better chance of approval then because Syria was far weaker and less confident than it was six months later. Assad may have felt that he had no choice except to acquiesce, or at least Syria might have been less able to intimidate the Lebanese and thereby prevent the achievement of an agreement. By the time we had reached May, Syria had regained its self-confidence; it had been resupplied by the Soviets permitting Assad to flex his muscle again in Lebanon, thereby reestablishing Syria's prestige and influence in Lebanon. By May, the chances of Assad acquiescing in something that he clearly opposed, had become minimal if at all existent. The Saudis again demonstrated their inability or unwillingness to influence Syria. Therefore, although agreement was not reached, I do not believe that it was mistake to try to achieve it. I still believe that if Sharon had not been permitted to play his own game during the Fall and had we moved ahead quickly with our efforts as we had wished, the outcome would have been different. Begin's health failure was a large factor because it enabled Sharon to have greater latitude than might otherwise have been possible.

In addition, there was another series of events which effected the eventual outcome of the Israel-

Lebanon negotiations. I refer principally to the Kahan Commission report, which took about five months to complete. On February 2, while Israeli and multi-national forces were in Beirut, three Israeli tanks moved from one sector of the city to another on a road that was patrolled by the multi-national force. An American captain, waiving his pistol, tried to stop the tanks. Someone took a photograph of that moment which appeared in The New York Times and some other papers. That episode was viewed in Israel as ludicrous because the Israelis always liked to believe that our two countries had parallel interests in Lebanon. The possibility that one ally was trying to stop another ally was viewed as ridiculous in Israel. In the U.S., that picture had an entirely different meaning; namely that it was evidence of Israeli lack of consideration for the different roles that the two countries had assumed in Lebanon. Cap Weinberger became very exercised about the picture; it fed his anti-Israeli views which were quite substantial by this time.

The Pentagon, based on this event and other similar ones, put out some very nasty stories about Sharon. They probably were based on some truth. He was accused of discrediting our forces by encouraging these episodes. Sharon had always opposed the idea of the multi-lateral forces because he knew that they would limit Israel's freedom of action. That suggests that the Pentagon's allegation may have had basis in fact.

The Kahan Commission presented its findings on February 7, 1983. It placed indirect responsibility on Sharon for the Sabra and Shatila massacres. It recommended that the Chief of Staff, the Chief of Military Intelligence and another senior general be relieved of their commands. Begin and Shamir were both criticized by the report, but were not held ultimately responsible. On February 10, the Cabinet voted 16-1 to approve the recommendations of the Kahan Commission, including the recommendation that Sharon be removed as defense minister. By this time, Sharon had become completely isolated in the Cabinet. He took all the heat for the Lebanese events, although he tried to wrap himself in a martyr's mantle. He therefore was forced to leave his post, although Begin refused to fire him from the Cabinet and allowed him to stay on as Minister without Portfolio. Nevertheless, Sharon's influence on the negotiations was vastly diminished since he was no longer defense minister. Moshe Arens was brought back from Washington (replaced by Meir Rosenne as Ambassador) and made Defense Minister. That one single action signaled the revitalization of U.S.-Israel relations although the improvements came slowly. Also Israel's position in the Lebanon negotiations became more flexible. I am convinced that had Sharon remained defense minister, there never would have been a May 17 agreement. He would have tried to extract the last ounce of flesh out of the Lebanese; he was very angry with them for their abandonment of his bilateral deal. Arens was determined to achieve some settlement. He was on good terms with Shultz and worked much more cooperatively with us in trying to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion. The fact that Shultz, Begin and Arens got along quite well and with Sharon no longer a looming figure was the key to bringing Israeli-US relationship on track. I have always thought that one important aspect of the "May 17" agreement was that George Shultz, while achieving an agreement which ultimately did not get ratified and therefore did not solve the Israel-Lebanon tensions, did manage as a by-product of his direct role in the negotiations, start to bring the U.S.-Israel relationship back to its pre-invasion levels. It had been badly ruptured by the invasion; and then had become increasingly difficult through a long series of incidents. Arens return to the Defense Ministry also helped to bring the two governments back together so that they could work on achieving common goals. Israeli approval of the Shultz agreement became the base necessary for the rebuilding of U.S.-

Israel governmental ties. This rapprochement accelerated in the latter part of 1983 and in 1984 and 1985.

I was not in Israel on the day the Kahan Commission made its formal submission. I was on one my infrequent, but highly publicized diving expeditions. This time, I had gone to the Sinai on Monday, February 7. I visited our U.S. battalion which was acting as part of the observers' force on the southern part of the Sinai coast. I stayed overnight and then went to Sharm el Sheikh for a dive. I returned the night of February 8. On the ninth, I met with Habib and Kimche on the status of negotiations. Habib and Kimche got along well; as a matter of fact, David Kimche got along well with all of us. He was the Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He and his deputy, Habon Bar-on, were two reasonable professional diplomats with whom we dealt with easily and effectively. Kimche was as I mentioned the formal leader of the Israeli delegation to the Lebanese peace talks, but that didn't reduce the influence of the Defense Ministry which was of course very powerful. The Foreign ministry, throughout this period, was a positive influence from our point of view, even though Shamir took a back seat to Sharon. He didn't play much of a role and depended largely on the work of his staff. He was a silent partner throughout this crisis.

We also saw Begin that day and exchanged views on progress. He was still withdrawn and not really engaged.

There were a lot of minor events during the February-April period. I won't recount all of them, but I will mention one that was of particular interest to American diplomats. On April 18, a car bomb blew up our Embassy in Beirut, killing our CIA Station Chief and many others. That was the first clear piece of evidence that our military presence in Lebanon, which was part of a peace-keeping operation, was beginning to be counter-productive. We had become identified as a target for the radical anti-regime forces. That was a major blow to U.S. interests in the region, particularly the destruction of the CIA complex. It destroyed our intelligence gathering capability on Lebanon, leaving us with too little intelligence for a long time thereafter. It made us very dependent on Israeli intelligence who worked very closely with the Christian Phalangists. Shultz returned to the area shortly thereafter to put the finishing touches on the agreement which was by then close to completion. Habib had by this time lost the confidence of the Israeli government so that he could not bring it to closure. He worked night and day, but he couldn't bring Begin, Arens and Shamir over the last hurdles; they would not trust him sufficiently. That forced Shultz' return; he shuttled for about ten days and brought the negotiations to a successful end. Shultz stopped in Cairo on his way to Beirut and held a conference for those regional Ambassadors who were involved in the process. Among us was Ambassador Paganelli who was assigned to Damascus. He was an outspoken, able and volatile individual, who had been unhappy with our policies toward the area. He believed that we should have been coordinating with Syria all along; he was unhappy that we were talking to Israel and Lebanon but were waiting for Syria until later. He had peppered Washington with his views for some time, but was not getting any positive response. When we met with Shultz, Paganelli, backed up by some other Ambassadors, launched a rather intemperate attack on Shultz' strategy.

He said that even if an agreement were to be reached, it couldn't succeed because the Syrians would block it. He urged that we drop the whole negotiations in part because the chances of success were so small and in part because it was souring U.S.-Syria relations. Paganelli was a

serious professional, who talked to the Syrians in tough terms on occasions. He was a diamond in the rough. He had a different perspective because he viewed the situation from Damascus; I don't think he was defending the Syrians just because he was accredited to them. He just the picture from a different angle. Our Ambassadors to other Arab States, like Saudi Arabia, supported Paganelli. Roy Atherton, then our Ambassador in Cairo, and I were the only ones that supported the path that the U.S. had undertaken. Our argument was that we had invested heavily in the negotiation and that we should therefore not now back off and break off the talks, thereby giving Syria and other Arab states a cheap victory, which they would exploit for their own benefit. We further argued that it would be better for the U.S. if an agreement could be concluded, even if Syria then blocked it; the burden would then be on Assad. Shultz was obviously not in a mood to retreat and became very angry with Paganelli. He later told Nick Veliotos, then the Assistant Secretary for the region, that he thought that Paganelli had been in Damascus too long (he had been at post for a little more than a couple of years) and that he wanted a list of potential successors. Shultz was very angry by this ill timed intervention. Nick had a very hard time persuading the Secretary over the period of the next few weeks not to replace Paganelli immediately, although he was transferred in June, 1983. The issue was a perfectly legitimate one, but the presentation was ill advised and too stark, particularly in light of Shultz' personal stake in the outcome of the negotiations. This was Shultz' first trip to the Middle East since taking on the job of Secretary; he had come not only to wrap up the agreement, but with public instructions from Reagan to get the peace process moving once again.

The agreement was signed on May 17. That was not the only issue on our plates. We had arguments about the sale of F-15s to Israel which we had embargoed the previous summer. Shultz promised that once the agreement was signed and approved by the Cabinet, that we would lift the embargo. The Cabinet approved the agreement by 17-2 vote with Sharon and another minister in opposition. Syria, as I have mentioned, immediately raised objections. The Saudis made some noises, but their position was not entirely clear. We kept hoping that the agreement would come into force and were counting on Lebanese reliance on us as well as some hopes that the Soviets would play a positive role with their Middle East allies. We also thought that the Saudis might apply some pressure on Syria, even though the Saudi Defense Minister had publicly said on May 11 that his country would not apply any pressure on Syria -- but what is said publicly in the Middle East does not necessarily reflect what is actually done. On May 13, even before the agreement was signed, Syria formally rejected the accords. But the Lebanese Cabinet proceeded to approve it anyway, after considerable pressure from Gemayel, Habib and Shultz. Arafat returned to Lebanon for the first time since the PLO evacuation.

Gemayel was interested in getting the Syrian forces withdrawn as well as the Israeli troops. It soon became apparent that Syria was not very likely to be very accommodating.

We are now in late May, 1983, following the signing of the May 17 agreement between Lebanon and Israel. As I mentioned earlier, one of the immediate consequences of that signing was the lifting of our embargo on the shipment of F-16, which had been produced, but never delivered. The Congress was also busy at the same time trying to increase the Israel assistance levels, which had been blocked by the Administration since the summer of 1982. After the signing of the agreement, the Administration decided it would go along with any increase as long as that did not result in levels available for other aid recipients. That was symbolic of the fact that with

the signing of the agreement, the long slide in U.S.-Israeli relations, which had begun 18 months earlier with the annexation of the Golan Heights, had been halted and was going to be reversed. Over the following 18 months, there was a steady improvement in rapport between the Reagan Administration and Israel.

George Shultz, who had spent a lot of time in Jerusalem on the agreement, had developed good personal relations with key Israeli leaders. That certainly was an asset. The antipathy of some of the Washington bureaucracy, especially in the Pentagon, to Israel was somewhat dissipated by the agreement. On the whole, relationships began their upward trend to the customary level.

Q: Did the antipathy in the Pentagon stem from the Services or from the Office of the Secretary?

LEWIS: Some existed in the Services, but the over-all tenor was a reflection of Weinberger's view. Once he became less vociferous, the Services also became more forthcoming.

On May 21, Phil Habib flew in from Cairo to have some meetings with Shamir and others. Then he went on to Beirut. He was in this period still trying to tie up any loose ends and urge the Israelis to move forward with their force withdrawals.

I arrived in Washington on June 8 and attended a large ADL dinner that night. I was sitting on the dais and made a few remarks, although I was half-asleep at the time. The next morning, I started on a round of meetings. Habib and Draper were also in Washington at the time, along with our Ambassadors to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon and myself. Nick Veliotis, as Assistant Secretary, chaired the sessions. We did have some meetings with Shultz.

It happened that Eli Salem, the Lebanese Foreign Minister, was also in Washington at the same time. He was meeting separately with State Department officials; I met with him once along with Nick. Interestingly enough, I had known him when we both attended the John Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS), but we had not seen each other since, which would have been nearly thirty years. But we had been friendly at SAIS and it was an interesting reunion. Eli is a very able person, anxious to rebuild the Israeli-Lebanese Christian relationship in a durable way, but he was very sensitive to the Syrian pressure and concerned that such pressure might block the implementation of the agreement just reached. He thought that key would be the U.S. ability to persuade Assad to accept the agreement and to withdraw his own forces from Lebanon on the agreed upon time schedule.

A few days later I went to New York to spend the weekend with some friends. Upon return, there were another round of meetings with Shultz and Eagleburger and then I flew back to Israel. That was on June 14. While I was in Washington, Cap Weinberger said publicly that the U.S.-Israel memorandum of understanding on defense cooperation could then be revived. That was not a great inducement to the Israelis at the time, but it was another signal that the U.S.-Israel relationships were changing. Also, just before my departure, the White House announced that Begin would be invited to the U.S. on a working visit in late July (which, of course, never took place; Begin resigned late in the summer). It was also announced that Habib and Draper would return to the area to continue to work on the troop withdrawal agreements.

On June 16, I had a long private talk with Begin in which I relayed President Reagan's desire to bring the relationship back to the pre-war days. I asked him what dates he might prefer for his Washington visit; he told me he would examine his schedule and let me know. He still seemed curiously unengaged, even when discussing his trip, which he had been anxious to undertake. Throughout the Spring and the Summer, he appeared almost frail; he was obviously eating very little. His clothes hung on him; he did look terrible. He was unquestionably depressed, but he did show up at his office every day, in a shirt that looked three sizes too big for him. He had enough energy to go through his schedule. He didn't seem physically weaker, but just plain listless -- no spark, just going through the motions. I have to assume that Begin's problems were largely psychological, but that his reduced food intake from lack of appetite was taking a physical toll. Without his wife looking after him, he was just declining. His daughter was living with him, but she didn't have the same influence that his wife had had.

Just after I had returned, on June 21, Sallie and I had gone to Safad in north Israel to spend a weekend; we were celebrating our 30th wedding anniversary. While there, we received word that Simcha Ehrlich, the Minister of Finance and the leader of the Liberal Party -- the Likud's junior partner -- had passed away. I went to the funeral on the following Tuesday. This was another watershed event because Ehrlich had been one of the most moderate members of the Cabinet; he had opposed the war; he had been a great admirer of the United States. But he was a weak political figure, unable to stand up to Begin and unable to assert himself very effectively. Nonetheless, he had been a useful and friendly interlocutor, particularly about internal Israeli political matters.

Soon after my return, I briefed the Israeli and American press on my trip with special emphasize on the changing mood in Washington. I tried to stimulate some positive stories about U.S.-Israel relationships. On June 26, Habib met with Begin. The feud between Arafat and Assad had heated up again, resulting in a Syrian announcement that Arafat was *persona non grata* because of his public statements that had not set well in Damascus. He was ordered out of Syria and left for Tunis. He was not to return to Syria for a long time.

During this period, we had lengthy discussions with the Israelis about the timetable for their troop withdrawals from Lebanon. There were some significant disagreements; we hoped for an early start of withdrawals, particularly from the Beirut area. The Israeli view was that they needed to stay in Lebanon until the Syrian began their withdrawals. They felt that the presence of their troops was important assurance for the Lebanese government that it would not be abandoned to the Syrian troops and the pressure that that would create. We sympathized with that view-point, but it was Washington's position that the Syrian wouldn't leave until the Israelis left. It was the old "chicken and egg" argument, which began to seep into the press and we were accused of trying to put the agreement in jeopardy by pressing Israel to move too fast and too far. This was the normal part of U.S. Israel relations; whenever we had a disagreement we would soon find it ventilated in the press in a rather distorted form. That put us in the position of having to get our version out to the press; sometimes we succeeded, sometimes we did not.

Throughout my tenure, The New York Times and the Washington Post and several other American papers had very good correspondents in Israel. Some of the British writers were good; in general we had a high caliber press corps in Israel. David Shipler wrote for The New York

Times -- he was outstanding. He was followed by Tom Friedman who had been moved from Beirut; he was also an outstanding correspondent. David Greenlee of the Washington Post and others were very, very good -- almost as good as the Times' people. Mike Kubic of Newsweek had been there for about fifteen years and was highly regarded. The American press was very well informed. It got a lot of information from their Israeli journalists friends, but they were quite responsible -- much more than the Israeli press. The Americans would check their stories with at least two sources which is something that the Israeli seldomly do. The Americans, if given some accusation about the U.S., would have the decency to call the Embassy to get a reaction before they ran the story; that was not characteristic of the Israeli press. I dealt with the two groups separately most of the time. I learned a good deal from correspondents, particularly the Israeli ones. I didn't deal much with the British press; I concentrated on the American and Israeli press. I took the view that it was not my job to feed the foreign press, so I didn't give them any interviews and rarely talked to them except on social occasions.

At the end of June, the growing split between the PLO and Syria was graphically demonstrated when the Mufti in Jerusalem issued a "Fatwa" calling for the early demise of President Assad which probably was not well received by the Palestinians still in Damascus at the time. At about the same time, Habib, Draper, Dick Fairbanks and Dennis Ross -- then either in Defense or at the White House -- visited Israel. Ross became a prominent member of the U.S. negotiating team during 1983. He was very tough on the Syrians, especially, and abetted the already pretty strong anti-Syrian views of many of the American officials.

Coincidentally, another old "Middle East hand" -- Henry Kissinger -- arrived. He was in private capacity to renew old acquaintances and of course he saw everybody. We briefed him; I attended a dinner that President Herzog hosted for him and Nancy. He delivered the Yigal Allon lecture at Tel Aviv University. I remember it as being pretty boring, not up to Henry's abilities. Abba Eban introduced him. I was sitting in the front row of the auditorium. Henry was talking to someone before the event started when Abba Eban came in and sat down next to me. He started to talk to me and then said: "I have to make a note or two about my introduction". He pulled out an envelope and on the back of it, in less than one minute, he scribbled down his notes. We continued our discussion. Eban had been very critical of Begin and his policies. He then went on stage and delivered on those absolute short speech gems, which should have been recorded. It was an absolute model of 5-7 minute speech. It was perfectly timed; every phrase delicately structured, witty, insightful. It contrasted sharply with Kissinger's which he read; it was formal, heavy. It was good, but it demonstrated what a great orator can do extemporaneously as compared to other speakers. I of course had seen the Ebans relatively frequently. We saw them socially; they used to come to the residence and we went to their home. I liked Susie (Mrs. Eban) very much. We liked Abba as well, but he was not really involved by that time in the politics of Israel. So our relationship was primarily social; our conversations covered history often. He still an active member of the Labor Party, but no longer really important. But his views were always lucid and wise; unfortunately he did not fight for his views very strongly and he really didn't have a political base to support him. He was still hoping to return into a Cabinet position, so that he was very careful about what he said in public. He didn't reveal that he had long since concluded that the Palestinians needed to have their own state; many years went by before he could afford to articulate those views publicly. It was something of a death knell for one's career to hold those views in 1983.

Let me just finish this section with a vignette to describe what life was like in mid-1983 as U.S.-Israel relationships were on the mend. Shultz had reported to Reagan that problems were developing in implementing the troop withdrawal agreement. He also mentioned that Syria was being very uncooperative, to put it diplomatically. Reagan then asked Shultz to return to the area, which he did in early July, visiting Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Israel. After meeting with Assad in Damascus, Shultz stated publicly that he didn't see any prospect of imminent Syrian withdrawal. In the meantime, the Lebanese had told us privately that if Israel withdrew, even partially, without comparable Syrian withdrawal, the pressure on them might become so great that the whole agreement might be voided. So while we were publicly declaiming that the Israelis had to start withdrawal, Shultz was being told in Damascus that the Syrians would not and the Lebanese were saying privately that the Israelis should not leave too quickly. The contradictions in all of these statements were beginning to make our policies subject to considerable strain, both in trying to explain them and then in having them implemented. Every year, of course, we celebrate the Fourth of July. In Israel, as we do in many countries in the world, we had a large reception on that date. We had become accustomed by this time to having a fairly elaborate celebration. We found that limiting invitations was counter-productive because all who didn't get an invitation were insulted and that we were therefore creating considerable ill-will when our purpose was just the opposite. The American community on Tel Aviv had a separate picnic at the American School, attended by families. The diplomatic reception was largely for Israelis and other diplomats. There were so many Israelis who felt they were due an invitation because of their American connections or their relationships to the Embassy. The longer the Lewis family stayed in Tel Aviv, the greater the invitation list became. By 1983, this was our sixth Fourth of July reception. What started as an affair for 400-500 people, by now the invitation list was at 2,500 with about 2,000 showing up. We managed to fund the costs out of our available representation allowance; the party was certainly not fancy; we just had a lot of hot-dogs and hamburgers, etc. But I had decided that we would make the reception as spectacular as possible; the Marine Guard contingent would go through a full dress drill on the roof of the residence, above the garden where the reception was actually held. We rigged up a search light which shone on them as they presented the Flag. A separate spotlight shown on another gigantic flag, 50 feet by 30 feet. I don't know where it had come from, but we used to hang it on an abandoned water tower which was right next to the residence on the edge of a cliff. Raising it was quite a feat and our Major Domo almost was killed at least three times getting it up until he learned how it had to be done. When darkness came, with the spot light shining on the Flag, I would make a short speech of welcome. I also got in the habit of trying to make some political points, with some subtlety, I hope. I would pick a theme and with the help of my assistant find appropriate quotations to illustrate the theme. I used this technique to try to imply more than my actual words said. That year I spoke about democracy and elections -- the Israelis were holding theirs that year. In 1983, the Lebanon war had just been concluded; Israeli domestic politics were very tumultuous. The Labor Party had been accused of being unpatriotic, traitorous for not supporting the war more vigorously. The domestic climate was still disagreeable and unpleasant -- one might say nasty. So I delivered a few words about democracy and the right to dissent. I then strung together several quotations about dissent and the lives of people in a democracy. I managed to imply criticism of the government for its disdain for dissent without actually saying so, and our friends in Labor were of course delighted. We had all the leading political actors there: Begin, Peres, Likud and Labor people. That kind of Israeli

audience would always react to comments, especially to any references to Jews historically. So I quoted from Heinrich Heine, who said that since the Exodus, freedom had always spoken with a Jewish accent; that went over very well indeed. Begin had not been out socially since his wife died, except perhaps once or twice. His decision to come to our reception was quite an event. He had of course always attended before and had enjoyed himself staying for an hour or so. But for him to attend in 1983 was a notable occurrence marking the end of his mourning period.

Begin was still the center of attention at the Fourth of July party. He looked better than he had for a long while. He stayed for over an hour, enjoying the fireworks that we always fired off to finish the celebration in the evening. The fireworks were shot out over the sea from our residence's grounds. Everybody was in an upbeat mood in the wake of the Lebanon agreement; they assumed that the Israeli troops would be coming home soon. (Actually it took two years and many more casualties before the withdrawal was finished.) The US-Israel relations were on upward movement again. There was an area of general optimism about the future for the first time in a long time. I remember that everyone that night really felt that the nadir of US-Israel relations had passed and that the future was going to be better. Many of the guests were looking forward to Begin's trip to Washington. As it turned out, as I mentioned, Begin never reached Washington.

I kept asking the government every few days about Begin's travel plans. We had suggested some possible dates, but had not received any reactions. We just couldn't seem to get the dates pinned down. That did seem strange to us, but in retrospect, of course, it was an indication that Begin had already decided to resign. In fact, I think his decision to come to our Fourth of July party was part of his "farewell" strategy; it was going to be his last one. I don't remember exactly when Begin finally told me of his decision not to go to Washington for "personal reasons", but it was shortly after July 4. Even when he told me that he would not travel, he did not explain why and didn't give any rationale to send to Washington. He apologized; he was very gracious; asked me to tell President Reagan that he was very sorry, but that for "personal reasons" he just didn't feel he could make the trip at that time. That was also a tip-off that he was not ready to face the kind of public exposure that a visit to Washington would demand, particularly when made in the wake of the Lebanon war. As usual, he would have had to meet with Congress and with the Jewish groups; he would have had to defend Israel's conduct of the past year; he would have had to discuss Sabra/Shatila. He would have to face a number of skeptical audiences. It would have been a tough act, but if he had been totally himself that would not have fazed him. Now, however, while still in a state of depression and lacking enthusiasm for his job, a Washington visit was more than he could face. He never went to Washington again, then or thereafter.

The second half of 1984 saw the end of Likud monopoly on Israeli political power for the remainder of my tenure in Tel Aviv. In July 1984, there was an election; it was stalemate. After that election, neither major party could form a government without the other. So for the first time and with great difficulty, the two parties agreed to form a coalition of "national unity", as it was called. Shimon Peres became Prime Minister. That arrangement resulted from an extremely unusual political deal. The Labor Party, I believe, had one or two seats more than the Likud, but could not muster a majority of votes in the Knesset, even with its allies. Peres was given first crack at forming a government, as leader of the largest party. When it became obvious that he could not put together a coalition without the Likud, he worked out a complicated agreement

with Shamir, under which Peres would serve as Prime Minister for the first two years, then Shamir would take over. In the meantime, Shamir would serve as Foreign Minister; then they would exchange jobs. So Peres was the Prime Minister for the last ten months of my tour in Israel.

So 1983-84 was the last year of the Likud political monopoly. It was a terrible year in many respects. It was the year that saw the Lebanon agreement, achieved only after much hard work, unravel together with the complete collapse of U.S. policy toward Lebanon. It was also the year during which I had more nasty encounters with Sharon that I will describe later. There were other disappointments as well, but the year was certainly an eventful and interesting one for American diplomacy! It was probably the most unpleasant year, along with part of 1982, that I suffered through while in Israel. The most dramatic event in the summer of 1983 was Begin's resignation. I have earlier described his appearance at my Fourth of July party, which was the last major public event in which Begin participated. Begin clung to office for another few weeks, but it was more and more apparent that he was considering resignation.

At the same time, changes were occurring in Washington. Phil Habib and Maury Draper resigned on July 21. Phil was completely worn out and could no longer effectively discharge his duties as Middle East mediator, in part because President Assad had let it be known that he believed Habib had misled him during the Lebanon war about Israeli intentions. Assad in effect refused to deal further with Habib. When George Shultz visited Damascus in early July 1983, he did not take Habib with him. On July 21, Habib was formally replaced by Bud McFarlane, who at the time was the Deputy National Security Advisor to Bill Clark. McFarlane had earlier moved to the White House from State Department where he had been the Counselor to Al Haig.

Around this time, Arens and Shamir went to Washington together on a trip which launched a new era in US-Israel relations. They had been very cool during much of the Lebanon crisis; they began to open somewhat after the signing of the May 17 Lebanon agreement. Both Ministers had good meetings in Washington. I went back for those talks. There was a lot of discussion about Lebanon and particularly about Israeli withdrawal. Since the agreement had been signed, there had not been much progress on its implementation. It was becoming clear before and certainly after Shultz' visit to Damascus, that the Syrians were not going to allow the agreement to come into effect. They would do everything within their power to undermine it, at least, even if it were not abrogated outright, as they ultimately succeeded in doing. The Israeli public was getting increasingly anxious to have their troops return. The government also was anxious to start withdrawal, but was insisting that it would do so only simultaneously with the Syrians. That was a non-starter. This withdrawal issue dominated our dialogue for the following ten months. The question was how Israel could extricate itself from Lebanon, leaving behind something better than existed before the invasion -- no PLO certainly and a friendlier government hopefully -- and do so unilaterally since the Syrians were obviously not in a mood to cooperate. Essentially, the Israel government never found a good answer. The Syrians still have a major military presence in Lebanon to this day.

Bud McFarlane, when he took the Middle East job, viewed the situation from his perspective that was based on his work with Haig and others as well as his close involvement with the Lebanon negotiations while on the NSC staff. He felt strongly that the U.S. needed to be tougher on Syria

-- a view that George Shultz shared, particularly after his trip to Damascus in July. Up to then, I think Shultz had hoped that Assad could be brought around to permit the implementation of the agreement; he was skeptical, but thought it could happen because he was hoping that the Saudis and others would bring some pressure to bear on Assad. But after the July visit, Shultz became disillusioned with Syria. As an ex-Marine, the Secretary became increasingly disenchanted with Assad during that Fall and Winter and joined the McFarlane camp calling for a stronger U.S. position vis-a-vis Syria. He was even considering bringing military pressure on the Syrians in order to make it difficult for them to stay in Lebanon and perhaps force them to become more accommodating. Shultz and McFarlane tended to have somewhat different views on the handling of Israel. McFarlane was warier in this period of close cooperation with Israel. He preferred to have the U.S. bolster the Lebanese government with overt military support. He did not want to be too closely associated with the Israelis. As time passed, Reagan and Shultz became more persuaded to work more closely with Israel. Both governments were trying to support a very weak government in Beirut, but were coming at the issue from different approaches and sometimes adopting conflicting policy measures. McFarlane made his first visit to the Middle East after having been appointed as special emissary at the end of July, 1983. He went to Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria. He also found Assad unyielding on the Lebanon-Israel agreement. He didn't get much encouragement in Saudi Arabia; they did not feel that they had much influence in Damascus. As I mentioned before, it was during this period that I was back in Washington for the Arens-Shamir talks which laid a good foundation for reconstruction of closer relationships between the two countries -- so badly damaged by the Lebanon war. Arens had begun that process when he was in Washington as Ambassador some six months earlier, particularly with Weinberger and the Defense establishment where the fraying had been the worst. Weinberger couldn't stand Sharon, but he liked Arens. Arens was tough, but straight and polite and he and Weinberger had gotten along well. He was succeeded as Ambassador by Meir Rosenne; he had been the Foreign Ministry's Legal Advisor. Shamir was ideologically tough on the question of the territories, but low key and someone with whom you could have a rationale discussion. So he and Arens made a good team in this reconstruction phase of our relations. They returned to Washington in November-December, 1983; those meetings were really extraordinarily satisfactory and valuable. The focus of both sets of meetings was of course Lebanon, and the efforts to be made by both governments to shore up the weak government in Beirut and the completion of the agreement; both efforts failed in the final analysis.

I returned in time to meet McFarlane when he reached Israel. We met with Begin, Shamir, Kimche and other Israeli officials. The meetings with Begin were interesting, but not very productive because he, although listening carefully, was rather disengaged. McFarlane returned in mid-August with Richard Fairbanks, who had been appointed as his deputy. The only useful meetings were essentially with Arens and Shamir; Begin was clearly not involved in any serious way any longer. On August 28, Begin announced his decision to resign; he told the Cabinet that he was just not able to function as his job demanded. The Cabinet had been hoping for a different outcome. The Likud members almost panicked at the thought of a Cabinet without Begin; he had been such a towering figure for so many years. He had created the Herut movement and had been in complete charge of it for thirty years. The thought that he could be replaced was just unthinkable. Furthermore, there was no heir apparent. Shamir was the senior Cabinet official, but he was not a senior member of the Herut movement, having been brought in by Begin. (In fact,

Shamir had led the rival Lehi (Stern) underground group during the pre-1948 struggle when Begin, a bitter rival, had headed the Irgun.) Shamir had been in the Knesset only since the beginning of the Begin government in 1977. However, he was acceptable to all factions as Sharon was not. The other contenders did not have adequate stature to be considered for the Prime Ministership. The Likud people tried for two weeks to have Begin change his mind; they would not let him retire; they begged him to stay until at least they could sort out over a period of months the question of succession. Begin became increasingly frustrated with his cohorts; they didn't seem to understand how desperate he was to leave. Finally, on September 15, he submitted his formal letter of resignation to President Herzog. A few days later, the President asked Shamir to form a new government. At the time, Shamir recommended a government of national unity, but Likud and Labor were not able to work out all the necessary details and compromises; that had to wait until after the national election a year later.

In Lebanon, events were not favorable for a resolution of the conflict. There were an increasing number of military incidents. There was some heavy shelling on August 29. The Syrian manipulations were becoming increasingly obvious. Opposition to the agreement was being stirred up. Our Marines, who were in Lebanon as peace-keepers, were supplemented by additional forces in September. Two Marines were killed and fourteen were wounded. There were almost daily clashes which our Marines found difficult to manage. Washington was becoming increasingly skeptical about the deployment of the Marines, but the U.S. was committed to supporting the Lebanese government. On September 23, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives voted to authorize the Marine presence for another eighteen months. That resolution was ultimately passed by the whole Congress, after long negotiations on how the Marine presence might conform with the War Powers Resolution.

The whole period between July and September, 1983 was filled with concerns in Lebanon. The Israelis were ambivalent; they wanted to withdraw from Beirut and its immediate surroundings, back to the Awwali River line. That had been the line that the Israelis had promised not to cross when the invasion was launched. That was about 45 kilometers north of the border. During this period, a quixotic difference now arose between us and the Israelis. We had been calling for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon almost from the day the invasion began. We had pressed hard for an agreement because that would permit Israel to withdraw in an orderly fashion. But by Summer, 1983 it appeared that the agreement would be sabotaged by the Syrians. We had begun to recognize the Syrians as the trouble makers in Lebanon; they were clearly checkmating all of our initiatives. There were now many in Washington who viewed the Israeli interest in a quick withdrawal -- even before the agreement had been formally ratified -- as undermining U.S. leverage on the Syrians! These differing objectives generated a strange dialogue between the two governments. McFarlane was involved; I was involved. We found ourselves in the Summer of 1983 in the position of asking the Israelis to move slowly on withdrawal in order to assure that the Lebanese government was fully coordinated so that its troops could follow closely right behind the withdrawing Israeli forces. We were urging the Israelis not to be in such great hurry to pull out, in order to forestall what would be perceived as a great Syrian victory. It was not an easy sales pitch to make after having urged the Israelis for so long to withdraw as rapidly as possible! The Israelis press ran many stories about our efforts to slow down troop withdrawal from the Lebanon morass.

During this period, I was receiving frequent reports over secure telephone about discussions in the White House and in State Department. Charlie Hill, who was Shultz' executive assistant after having been the Embassy Political Counselor, then Israel Office Director and later a deputy assistant secretary, had been authorized by the Secretary to keep me fully informed by telephone about what was happening in Washington on Middle East policy issues.

One of the continuing problems in the Department of State has always been the transmission of information to ambassadors. No one wants to send sensitive accounts, particularly about internecine bureaucratic warfare, by telegram which will undoubtedly be distributed to more people in Washington than it should be and will be seen by friends and foes alike. So, an ambassador who wants to keep up to date on Washington doings has to be on the telephone with someone in the Department who is knowledgeable. The advent of secure telephones assisted enormously. I used it continually for the eight years I was in Israel. It was particularly valuable at times such as occurred in 1983 when a huge policy chasm opened up in Washington. That chasm went on throughout the Fall and Winter. The disagreement was essentially over the question of how tough the U.S. should be towards Syria. As part of that debate was the question of the amount of military resources that we should devote to the propping up of the weak Lebanese government. Furthermore, there were sharp differences of opinion on the question of the extent of U.S. cooperation with Israel to neutralize Syria. There were many NSC meetings on these subjects along with Congressional consultations. The debate raged for weeks and months. Shultz, McFarlane and often Reagan were the proponents of the "be tough on Syria" school of thought. Weinberger was always on the side of a more cautious approach, he was often supported by Vice President George Bush. They were very reluctant to coordinate any policies with Israel and certainly were very wary of involving any U.S. armed forces in the area. There were many others who also took strong positions on one side or another, but the ones I mentioned were the key players.

This Washington debate would generate long phone calls. I was briefed on the debates taking place. The end of every conversation was always the same; no decision. Increasingly, I felt that Washington was coming to the conclusion that Syria was in the driver's seat, that the Lebanese government was growing weaker and that its armed forces would not withstand the shelling from the Shia militia. To redress this changing balance would have meant a commitment of U.S. armed resources; that choice made decisions very difficult. I was supposed to brief the Israelis on the Washington debates in an effort to coordinate their activities with ours. I was put in a position of essentially depicting a U.S. policy which gradually would lead Arens and Shamir to conclude that Israel would have to reach its own conclusions and take whatever actions it thought appropriate to extract itself from Beirut, to provide some security on the border by building up its surrogate force in southern Lebanon, and to try to convince the U.S. to coordinate its actions with Israeli ones. But I am sure that it became increasingly clear to Arens and Shamir that the U.S. could not be counted on for much action. McFarlane and Shultz both tried very hard in the Fall of 1983 to bolster the coordination between the two countries. Their views were often well received by the Israelis, but neither in the final analysis represented the U.S. government. Furthermore, the Congress was very lukewarm on supporting any further commitment of U.S. forces in Lebanon.

The continuing U.S. indecision really came to a head on October 23, when the Marine

headquarters at the Beirut airport was blown up by a truck bomb filled with explosives, killing 256 Marines. On the same day, another truck loaded with explosives hit the French headquarters, destroying an eight story building and killing 56 French soldiers. On November 4, the headquarters of the Israeli Shin Beth and Army was also car-bombed near Tyre; 39 were killed in that action and 32 wounded. These attacks on the French, the U.S. Marines and the Israelis were conducted by Shiite terrorists under direction and with the support of the Syrians. In retrospect, that day was the end of any possibility of further U.S. military involvement in Lebanon to shore up the Lebanese government. We did stay until the end of February, 1984. We did, between October and February, become involved in the Lebanese war; we took sides; we were no longer just peace-keepers, but viewed our presence as a bulwark against Syrian aggression. The battleship *New Jersey* was shelling military positions in the country; bombing missions were authorized; we lost two airplanes; two pilots were downed and taken hostage. Unfortunately, the Lebanese army was not strong enough to assist. The Syrians were not sufficiently impressed by a limited U.S. show of power. We took just enough action to demonstrate a sort of incompetence. Our military actions fell far short of intimidating the Syrians. They just waited us out; by mid-February, after Reagan had just declared that Lebanon was a "vital U.S. interest", the administration caved in to Congressional pressure. The President one day just blithely announced that we were moving our Marines off-shore onto ships, but that we would continue to be very aggressive and active from the ships! Two or three weeks later, we withdrew entirely. We promised a sort of phased withdrawal plan, allegedly calibrated with more active diplomacy and additional military assistance to the Lebanese government, but in fact, little was done. We essentially left the battle field. Reagan cut his political losses in preparation for the election to take place in November, 1984. There just wasn't much political support for our involvement in Lebanon, particularly since our policy was failing which, in my mind, was due to the inability of Washington to reach firm, concise and clear decisions. I have never seen a time in American diplomacy when such bitter arguments raged within the government, incapacitating the U.S. government and barring any decisions.

During this period, I talked over the telephone often to Larry Eagleburger, then the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. He was also a supporter of the "tough on Syria" policy; he wanted to use U.S. military force effectively in the area. By mid-August, McFarlane had moved to become National Security Advisor; by this time, he agreed with the necessity of coordinating closely with Israel. In November, Donald Rumsfeld was named special emissary for the Middle East. He toured the region. He also was for being tough and by and large agreed that we had to be much more consistent and coherent in our politico-military actions and policies to support the Lebanese government. But Weinberger was set on getting the Marines out of the area as quickly as possible and he had full Congressional support for that policy. Larry told me on February 11 that "in the last seventy-two hours, we have lost our Congressional base. We made some rather unwise decisions and we couldn't even stand with those." Even at that late date, he was arguing that some U.S. advantage might be rescued through the off-shore presence, although no one else I think shared that view. The military situation in Lebanon was going from bad to worse for the Lebanese government.

There was a key White House meeting with the President on February 15, 1984. The intelligence estimate was that President Amin Gemayel might last only another two or three days. A series of options were laid out for the President, ranging from major commitment of U.S. forces to Option

3a, which was essentially to let Gemayel do the best he could with the Syrians while we stood by as observers. That option was based on the conclusion that our original goals in Lebanon were no longer achievable. Charlie Hill told me that the meeting produced a decision, more or less, to approve Option 3a. I noted that day that "the Lebanon game is over". That very day, Raymond Hunt, a distinguished retired Foreign Service Officer, who was the Director General of the multinational observer force in the Sinai, was assassinated in Rome, where he was headquartered. He was killed by three gunmen in a drive-by assassination. He was a good friend; he was, I think, the sixth ambassador or equivalent -- all friends -- who were assassinated in the Middle East or because of the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s. We lost too many lives in or for that region.

Gemayel went ahead to annul the agreement with Israel and made the best deal that he could with the Syrians. At that stage, that was probably the most sensible outcome. We tried to sugarcoat the failed policy by saying that we would withdraw in a gradual fashion, etc, but in fact, after February 15, we were no longer active in Lebanon. We abandoned any efforts to force the Syrians to accept the Lebanese-Israeli agreement, which had been negotiated under our auspices.

The whole September-February period -- the end of U.S. involvement in Lebanon -- is one of the sorriest records of U.S. foreign involvement. First we did not have a coherent policy; second we had too many different judgements of what might be effective and what might not work; third, we were so spooked by the Lebanon war that we did not work smoothly with the Israelis to maximize the assets that we did have in place -- which were primarily Israeli assets; and fourth, because Assad is a very tough man, who saw that his stakes in the game were higher than ours and therefore was able to ultimately force us out. It was a sorry period in American foreign policy. I think we all have understood for a long time how tough Assad can be; we may have misjudged our ability to persuade him. We have often vastly exaggerated the influence that the Saudis had on him, despite the fact that they were some of his principal financial supporters. Time and time again, we have tried to get the Saudis to push Assad in the direction we deemed correct, but I am not sure that they really have tried; furthermore I think Assad is much better at intimidating the Saudis than the reverse. He is very nice to deal with personally, but he is tough and ruthless and nasty.

I should note that during this period I did manage to find some time for scuba diving. I went down to Sinai at the end of July for a dive after returning from Washington.

By the time Peres took office on September 14, 1984, I had been in Israel for more than seven years. I had been convinced for some time that the time had come for me to leave Israel. I tried to stay on as long as possible as long as there was any hope for progress on the peace process. But it became clear that the process had become stalemated. I had told Shultz, probably in the Spring of 1984 that I would like to be relieved of my duties by the end of that calendar year. I would have left sooner if a replacement were available. He said that he would like me to stay in Tel Aviv as long as possible, but I was becoming very fatigued. When Peres finally became Prime Minister in September, in the middle of an economic crisis, my batteries recharged because we had been close personal friends for many years. I decided that it might be quite interesting to stay in Israel at least for a little while longer just to watch my good friend in action. My plans were

still to leave right after the American elections in November.

Peres made his first visit to Washington as Prime Minister early in October. That turned out to be a very good visit. I was in a lot of meetings that he had with Reagan, Shultz and others. At the end of the visit, before Peres and I were scheduled to go to New York, he, the Secretary and I had breakfast together -- just the three of us -- at the State Department. It was a wrap-up session during which the two principals took stock of the agreements reached and decided on how to proceed. I was there to take notes, so that the necessary follow-up actions would be taken. During the breakfast, Shultz told Peres that I was planning to leave shortly after November. He said that he had asked me to remain because he thought that it would be helpful to both countries, but that he understood that I was tired. Peres jumped right in; they both urged me, in very strong terms, to stay beyond November until a time to be decided later. It was a suggestion that was difficult to refuse; I said that there was no major imperative to my November departure, but I would prefer not to leave the matter open ended. I suggested that we agree to June 1985 as my departure date. I thought that would provide sufficient time to find another ambassador and would provide enough continuity as Peres took control of the government. That is what ultimately happened and why I stayed for a full eight years.

But in that remaining year, something happened that the press at least thought would disrupt my departure plans. It did not do so in the final analysis, but it is worth describing as another illustration of how an ambassador can become entangled in considerable unexpected difficulties by statements made in public fora. In the late Spring, 1984, I had agreed to give an informal lecture at the Dayan Center at Tel Aviv University. This was to be part of a seminar on the peace process "Six Years After Camp David". I had understood that the seminar would be a closed forum attended only by experts. I was supposed to discuss "Why the Stalemate Occurred After Camp David". About a week before my scheduled appearance on October 30, I noticed that the press was carrying stories about the seminar, including an announcement of my appearance. I called Itamar Rabinowich, the director of the Dayan Center, to find out what the ground rules were. He told me that originally, it had been his intention to limit attendance at the seminar, but when the press had heard about it, he felt that it had become necessary to open the session to the public. I considered not attending because the issue was a difficult one to discuss under any circumstances and certainly in public. But since I knew that I would be leaving my post relatively soon -- although my plans had been delayed at the urging of both governments -- I was feeling ready to take on the world. I probably did not consider all the consequences as carefully as I might have. So I agreed to participate. I didn't prepare a text of my remarks; I spoke extemporaneously from notes, as I normally did. I had about five pages of a scribbled outline which would take about an hour to deliver. As I may have already said, the lecture was to take place on October 30, which was also the "Day of the Americas", the equivalent of our Columbus Day. Every year, on that day the President of Israel hosts a reception at Beit Hanassi in Jerusalem for all ambassadors from Latin, Central and North America. By this time, I was the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps; that made my presence mandatory for two reasons. The reception was scheduled for 5 p.m. The lecture was to start at 3 p.m. in Tel Aviv. If everything had worked out on schedule, that would have given me just enough time to attend both events; so I proceeded. I delivered the lecture which was extremely well received by the audience. But it produced a mild earthquake in Washington. It was not the text that created the uproar, at least not once we had cabled it in the following day. (I should confess that what I sent in was a slightly

edited version of the remarks I had made.) The key sentence in the speech, which caused the uproar, had been reported widely and had reached Washington before my fuller text was sent. I had made a number of very frank comments about President Carter, Bob Strauss and some of the other players in the Middle East peace process. I was probably too frank in some respects. I toned down my comments when the text was cabled to Washington. My text was essentially a commentary on the mistakes made by the Egyptians, the Israelis and the U.S. after Camp David which had led to a complete lack of progress on the implementation of certain aspects of the Camp David framework. Toward the end of my lecture, I realized that I was running late; the session had started late and I was speaking longer than planned. I could visualize President Herzog becoming very upset if I showed up late; he was a real stickler for protocol. So I hurried the tail end of my remarks, trying to bring the analysis into the present; that is to say, two years after the presentation of the Reagan Plan. That Plan by then was certainly moribund if not completely dead although it was U.S. official policy and there were no plans to change it. By this time, the Reagan initiative had been rejected by both the Jordanians and the Israelis. We just left it on the table. In an effort to get through my lecture quickly, I spoke some hyperbole; that is sometimes the temptation for speakers if you haven't carefully drafted the text in advance. So towards the end, I said: "Once Israeli withdrawal from Sinai was completed, there was a brief final flowering between the end of April and the beginning of June, 1982. There were many normalization agreements which had been signed back in 1980 which finally began to come to life. There were exchanges of delegations planned and the beginnings of new trade agreements. All of this withered and died in the bright, pitiless sun of the Israeli movement into Lebanon in early June, 1982. The Reagan initiative on September 1 was a genuine effort to recreate momentum, to relaunch the Camp David agreement with some embellishments, but fundamentally on the same terms. The timing unfortunately, in my judgment, was abysmal, the tactics of its presentation worse and the outcome, so far, nil." In conclusion, I would go on to say, "there were a lot of mistakes implicit in this record for all three countries..." Then I summarized the major mistakes made by the three governments.

Earlier in the speech, I had also made a reference to Reagan when he became President and the situation existing at the time, which was not well received by the Reagan White House. I said: "One of the big problems that occurred in 1981 was that President Carter was defeated and then President Sadat was shot. That meant that two of the three men who had invested so much in making Camp David succeed were no longer players. Moreover, in our case, President Reagan came in with no personal stake in the success of his predecessor's administration and with a rather different view of the world, which I understand was described this morning by Professor Spiegel (Steve Spiegel had given a talk to the same group in the morning describing the differences between the Carter and Reagan's policies in the Middle East). I think it is quite relevant that the Reagan administration looked at the Middle East differently than the Carter administration. It looked at it in more "East-West" terms, needing more strategic alliances against the Soviets. They never repudiated Camp David. While the new administration had less than a fervent emotional commitment to complete the process, they certainly adopted it and increasingly, as time passed, they saw the virtues of not allowing it to die". That reference to Reagan's "less emotional commitment" to Camp David was picked up and condensed in a couple of the wire stories to read "U.S. Ambassador says that Reagan had less interest in the peace process", which isn't what I said. However, the real problem with the speech was the one sentence: "The timing was abysmal, the tactics were worse and the outcome, so far, nil." That

was a wonderful piece of rhetoric that came out of my mouth spontaneously. I had not thought of it before, but it suddenly came forth as I was desperately trying to finish my remarks to head off to Jerusalem.

The Israeli journalists in attendance, and there were quite a few, didn't find anything very startling in my comments. For them it was all ancient history. Some had heard me say similar things before. Tom Friedman of The New York Times had not attended, but an AP stringer was there. He filed a story highlighting the one sentence. Friedman told me later that he got a call from his editor in New York asking him about "Sam Lewis attacking the Reagan administration"? He said that he didn't know anything about it; he was then told that I had given a speech, parts of which had been reported by the wire services. So Friedman began to call people who had attended and quickly put together a story in a hurry. That appeared in The New York Times the next day, along with other wire stories. They all focused on this apparent attempt by a U.S. ambassador to attack his President's foreign policy -- a rare occasion, to say the least. Moreover, I had not considered the timing. I totally ignored that factor, which shows you how far away you can get from the United States when you are in another continent. The lecture was being delivered one week before our Presidential elections, but that fact just did not occur to me. Reagan was way ahead in the polls; no one had any doubt that he would be reelected. Nevertheless, it was a week before elections and the press immediately leaped on my alleged remarks as criticisms of Reagan's Middle East policies. Needless to say, this episode did not improve my standing in Washington. As soon as the wire press reports became available, I immediately started getting phone calls asking me what the stories were all about. I explained the situation and was requested to send the text of my remarks back as quickly as possible. The NEA Bureau, Assistant Secretary Dick Murphy and others, drafted some press guidance for the Department's press spokesman to use. It was very low key, saying that the "offending" sentence had been taken out of context; if all my remarks were read, it could be clearly seen that I had not attacked Reagan and that I supported the administration's policies. Before the guidance could be used to any extent, several provocative stories landed on Shultz's desk and in the White House. So I also got a frantic call from my friend Charlie Hill. I explained the whole situation and he of course went to bat for me, but he did say that he thought I would be getting some flak out of the White House. Indeed a couple of stories appeared in the following days citing White House sources clearly indicating considerable irritation there with me. There were also stories quoting State Department sources which in essence said that I would probably not remain in Tel Aviv past the elections. There were references to the fact that I had been in Israel for over seven years and it was well known that I was planning to leave my post in the near future. The implication was that since my tour was coming to the end anyway, I had decided not to worry about diplomatic discipline. The totally impromptu and unconscious nature of the event was not totally credible to the Israeli press which by now had built up a mystique about me. The press and the politicians had come to believe that I calculated very carefully every move I made; they could not believe that I would say anything without having given very careful thought and calculation. In this case, that view was not even close to the truth.

Once Shultz read the transcript -- the tailored version that I sent in -- he became more relaxed about the episode. I think he would have even if he had the full version. Bob Strauss is the one who would have been even more furious than he in fact was, because, while praising him for having been a great negotiator on Panama and the trade treaties, I suggested that he had run into

a cultural barrier. He just did not fit the image of a Middle East negotiator that the politicians in the area were accustomed to dealing with. The Texas informal style did not hit a responsive chord in the Middle East with either Sadat or Begin. I said that I thought Strauss would agree with me that he was miscast and in fact, had resigned from the position as mediator as soon as he could do so gracefully. In any case, my comments did not sit well with him; he wrote me a sardonic letter. I tried to pacify him by sending him a fuller version of my remarks that he had not seen; had I sent him the complete text, he would have been even unhappier.

As I said, Shultz, after reading what I had sent in, concluded that my comments had been quite thoughtful and appropriate and that I had been a victim of poor reporting. I later found out that Larry Speakes, then the President's spokesman, said that Reagan had asked for a text of the speech; I assume that he read it. After having read the text, the Department prepared some additional guidance for Alan Romberg, the Department's deputy press spokesman. That made very clear that Secretary Shultz retained full confidence in me and had high admiration for my diplomatic efforts. That really ended the episode in the U.S. It died down in Israel soon after that. But I felt embarrassed about having slipped up. I wrote a hand-written letter to President Reagan, which I sent to Shultz via Charlie Hill. In my note to the Secretary, I said that unless he had some objections, I would appreciate it if he could hand my letter to the President in the next few days. I tried to reassure in dignified terms the President that I fully supported his policies, which was the truth at that time. I then proceeded being the U.S. ambassador to Israel. A month later, I received a very nice letter from President Reagan which said: "Dear Sam, Thanks very much for your good letter and don't give the problem you mentioned a second thought. I have long since learned that several thousand miles distance plus the press selectivity in reporting excerpts is insurance against getting exercised over anything I read under those circumstances. You know, the truth is, we thought we were off to a pretty good start on the September 1 plan. Then Arafat had his second meeting with the King who did what seemed to be an about-face and everything went on hold. I appreciate all you have been doing. Thanks again for your congratulations and good wishes. Sincerely, Ronald Reagan." That was a very graceful note and one that I appreciated. That ended that episode.

Despite the prediction of a few of my State Department cohorts, I did not leave Israel right after the elections. I stayed on until the following June, as I had agreed to do with Shultz and Peres. This story shows how useful it is in having the confidence of and good relations with the Secretary of State or the President or the executive assistant. When you make a mistake, and clearly I should have shown greater discretion in the language used in a particular phrase, if people in key positions have confidence in you, you can survive without great difficulties. If on the other hand, these people had been unhappy with my performance, I would have given them a very good excuse for replacing me quickly. That is also true for the press; if it is "out to get you" it can do so quickly and easily. Fortunately, my relations with American journalists were always quite good; they were generous in their comments about my work to the extent that they wrote about it. The American press in Israel knew me personally; I had always been a good source for them; they certainly were not interested in piling on. That is not always the case.

When Peres took office, he essentially confronted four gnawing problems. In the first place, he faced an economic crisis -- raging inflation which in September, 1984 reached almost 1200% annually on a monthly basis. The government was running a budget deficit of over 15%, which

was the basic cause of the hyper-inflation. The foreign exchange in the Bank of Israel was dwindling rapidly; the reserves at the time were less than \$1 billion -- which was very low. Shamir had wrestled with this crisis, but obviously had not made much progress; in fact, the economic situation was deteriorating daily. The second issue was Lebanon. Israel seemed mired in that country; could not leave it, but was almost desperate to leave particularly as casualties to its own troops were rising. Rabin, who became Defense Minister in this government of national unity, devoted himself for the first few months to trying to find politically and military acceptable ways to extricate Israel forces from Lebanon. The third issue was the peace process which was frozen. Peres was very anxious to start it again, particularly with Jordan. The fourth issue was Egyptian-Israeli relations which were very tense and strained. The main sub-issue was the future of Taba, but there were others as well. Finally, there was the general problem of Israel's poor condition in the world after the Lebanon war. Its reputation in the world was very low; it was not improving with the passage of time. Syria was a difficult neighbor that looked increasingly dangerous; there seemed not to be any apparent way to ease that relationship. The Israeli public was in a very sour and nasty mood. The last few years had been tremendously divisive; Israeli governments were being seen as part of the problem and not the solution. There was a real public yearning not only for a government of national unity, but for a leadership that would heal the divisions and bring the country together again. So Peres took office at a particularly difficult period in Israeli history.

What is not sufficiently remembered is that the government formed in 1984 was not Peres' government. It was a genuine coalition, with Shamir as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and the Cabinet was split 50/50 between Labor and Likud. There was an "inner" Cabinet of ten members -- 5 Labor and 5 Likud. All major decisions had to have "inner" Cabinet approval. If a Minister was not satisfied with the decision of this leadership group, he could appeal to the full Cabinet, but any issue that was likely to split proponents and opponents along party lines was doomed for failure. The coalition government scheme required that at least some members of one party support the initiatives from the other. It was a formula for deadlock, but interestingly enough, the years 1984-1986 saw Peres and his Cabinet essentially find solutions to all the major problems. He was particularly successful at changing the mood of the Israeli people who once again became hopeful and uplifted and who in turn lowered the temperature of the public political debate which had been extremely vicious in the 1982-1984 period.

One of the main reasons Peres was successful with his economic initiatives was that he was able to play a "good cop, bad cop" role with Izhak Modai, the Likud Minister of Finance. No previous Prime Minister had ever involved himself very deeply in economic policy issues; they had primarily concentrated on political and national security issues. Certainly Shamir never touched economic issues; he left all of those burdens to the Finance Minister. Peres, who had an interest in economic development although not a professional economist, understood that if Modai's stabilization -- austerity -- program which the Cabinet was slowly tending to adopt was to succeed, he personally would have to do much of the "heavy lifting". Modai, who had a very quixotic personality, was an anathema to the labor union federation, the Histadrut. He was effective with the business community, but a total economic program to be successful needed to have the support of labor. It needed to surrender for a time its historical periodic wage increases. The government would have to reduce some of its tax collections and the business community would participate with a number of actions which would help stabilization. Peres and Modai

worked remarkably well together; they worked hand in hand for a long period until they had a parting of the ways.

One of the key challenges to make the austerity program successful was to find increased American financial support. That was crucial to stemming the hemorrhage of the foreign exchange reserves. I had just returned from Washington when Peres took office. I met him soon thereafter for a couple of long meetings and made it very clear that he would be welcomed in Washington, even during an American election campaign when normally foreign visitors are not received. But Israel was special and Reagan and Shultz were prepared to receive him; they were prepared to find ways to help Israel in the stabilization program, if Israel showed any willingness to take some tough actions. I told Peres that he should not visit Washington if he were not prepared to commit himself and his government to the austerity measures that were required. He did go in early October, after having received a tentative approval from the Cabinet for a package of measures. Peres had good meetings in Washington. Shultz, as an economic expert, spent considerable time discussing stabilization. He had to be concerned not only with the economic rationale, but with legal and political realities in the U.S. He, with the help of the Secretary of the Treasury and the Department Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, worked out the details of how the package might be sold to the Congress, despite Israel's less than shining image in the U.S. and certain legal restrictions. Also the assistance of people like Herb Stein, former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors and a close friend of Israel, was instrumental. He had great credibility with Congress as a conservative economist. A Harvard professor, Stanley Fisher, was also very helpful; both he and Stein provided very useful advice to the administration on processes that might be used to achieve stabilization. Since they were also individually trusted by the Israelis, their advice was well received by all. We could, through them, criticize the Israeli plans when we felt they were not going to meet their targets unless stronger and more courageous political actions were taken. Using such an informal, non-governmental channel, made it easier for the Israelis to accept the U.S. advice.

Essentially, the U.S. committed itself to providing a safety net of additional assistance, which would not be drawn upon unless absolutely essential, but that would be made public in order to bolster confidence in Israel and in the world community -- the money markets in New York and the IMF particularly. I think, this had been a Modai proposal of long standing; he had been the Finance Minister in the latter stages of the Shamir government. But the safety net proposal became the centerpiece of my discussions with Peres from the beginning of his regime. It was the key ingredient to sustaining Israel's credit rating, which was in danger of plunging. The fact that the U.S. was prepared to come to the financial assistance of Israel -- I believe it was approximately \$1.5 billion in loans -- was of crucial importance to the money markets. This loan guarantee was worked out in some difficult negotiations with Treasury and Congress. The safety net was never used, but it was a vital psychological ingredient in reestablishing confidence in the Israeli business community and the New York money markets. I think that this arrangement was made possible by Peres' personal credit with Reagan, Shultz and other American leaders. Shamir was part of the Israeli delegation as a sign of the bipartisan nature of the Israeli program. Peres was very persuasive during the many lengthy discussions of how Israel would extricate itself from its economic crisis. There were also discussions on the peace process and how that could be revitalized, which was of great interest to Reagan and Shultz.

This period of heightened activity culminated in the Spring. The "package deal" of stabilization measures was approved by all elements of Israeli society in November, 1984. The U.S. safety net assurances went into effect at that time. By January and February, 1985, the package began to unravel. It continued that downward spiral in the Spring. It was very difficult to keep Israeli officials from returning to their more dissipate ways; the budget cuts were deep; the austerity program in general was difficult for the Israeli public and the Knesset to accept; it contained a lot of pain. So in the Summer, 1985, just after my departure, another crisis erupted. That in a way was even more worrisome because this was the second effort in a process that had already gone awry once. Another series of difficult negotiations ensued in both Washington and Jerusalem. Another package was hammered out and this time it stuck. Within a few months, Israeli inflation dropped sharply. This stabilization program was the great achievement of the Peres era -- the 1984-86 period. The safety net was never used; it was only part of the package. The more important ingredient, I think, was the close consultation, advice and concern that flowed between the two governments on how to tame the economic monster. Personalities played a large role; I don't think if Shamir and Carter had been the two leaders or later, Shamir and Bush, such close collaboration would have been possible.

We went off to a particularly nice scuba diving trip towards the end of September. A friend of mine, Howard Rosenstein, who had taught me diving, had bought a live aboard diving boat -- 90 foot vessel -- which he had acquired in Cyprus or Rhodes, had brought to Tel Aviv where it was refitted. He then sailed it through the Suez Canal around the Sinai to Elat -- where he was going to berth it, taking diving parties down the Red Sea. He asked Sallie and me to accompany him on his inaugural voyage through the Red Sea, which we did between September 22 and October 1. We did a lot of diving along the way. The boat held 14-16 guests and had several decks. It was a great break from a lot of unpleasantries.

The dismal Fall also saw a change of ambassadors in Beirut. That was a welcomed change. Ever since my arrival in Tel Aviv, I had a lot of problems with some of our ambassadors in Beirut. We had very different perspectives on Lebanese-Israeli relations, as you can well imagine. Bob Dillon, who had been the ambassador in 1981-83 was a solid professional officer -- an Arab specialist. He was totally opposed to US-Israeli cooperation in Lebanon. He was in Beirut when our Embassy had been blown up and was in terrible psychological shape as a result. He handled himself with great professionalism, but was certainly scarred by that experience. He was replaced by Reg Bartholomew, with whom I had worked closely during the Ford administration when we were both deputies on the Policy Planning staff. Reg was a very gung-ho, able officer with a politico-military background. He had considerable appreciation and admiration for Israel. When he arrived in Beirut in October, 1983 he brought a different attitude towards our then existing policy of working with the Israelis in trying to solve the Lebanese mess. I make a point of this change because on November 7, Reg and I went to Rome together to meet with Ken Dam (the Deputy Secretary), Richard Fairbanks, Rick Burt (Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs) and others. We discussed the Lebanese problem. I had an opportunity to spend many hours with Reg which we spent exchanging information about the views in the respective countries. He accepted my invitation to come to visit Israel as soon as possible to meet some Israeli leaders. I had extended similar offers to other ambassadors in the region, but none ever accepted because of concerns about the reactions from their host countries. Dillon had refused even to consider the idea. We agreed that closer cooperation was needed between Lebanon,

Israel and the U.S. on Syrian policy. He also saw the need for US-Israel strategic cooperation in the region which was then reemerging as an important topic in Washington. When Shamir and Arens had visited the U.S. in July, they had begun to touch on this point very lightly in their conversation with President Reagan. They had suggested the need for a more formal strategic cooperation which had been permitted to languish after the earlier abortive effort made in 1981 by Begin and Sharon.

When Shamir and Arens returned to Washington on November 27 for three days, the subject was broached once again, initially in their meeting with the President and then thoroughly with Defense and State officials. It came up again in their later meeting with Reagan. In the course of those three days, a whole new network of cooperation was weaved. For example, they agreed to establish a "Joint Politico-Military Group" which was formally inaugurated in January, 1985. Under the aegis of that group, the military and civilians of both governments would meet periodically to arrange for serious and practical ways to cooperate in case of threats and contingencies in the region. That was a much more elaborate scheme than we had ever considered in the past. Subsequently, this effort turned out to be extraordinarily successful and the mechanisms are still in place today. In 1981, a formal "memorandum of understanding" with little content had been negotiated; that was soon "suspended" after Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights. This time, Hanan Bar-on, the Deputy Director of the Foreign Ministry and Mendi Meron, the Director General of the Ministry of Defense -- who had both been involved in the difficult effort in 1981 -- were the key representatives who worked out with us the details of the Reagan-Arens-Shamir agreement. The 1984 arrangements were successful because these two men were wise enough not to insist on a charter for the group. The minute an effort is made to record in writing precisely what subjects are to be covered, which are not to be dealt with, what the detailed ground rules are, the broad objectives get lost. In this instance particularly, the broader ambitions of the Israeli military would have been in such conflict with Weinberger's reservations that another failure would have ensued. In the final analysis, only an agreement to establish a group was reached. It was left to the group itself to decide what subjects would be usefully addressed. That formulation was accepted by Shamir, Arens, Shultz and Weinberger. I believe that the avoidance of legalisms and formality enabled this mechanism to succeed; it has become increasingly professional and useful. I credit Hanan Bar-on for having the wisdom to taking this approach and for selling the concept to his government. It had been the Israeli tradition, and Begin would certainly have insisted upon it, to establish such a group under a great rubric of a grand, ambitious document that would have spelled out every last detail. Shamir was less concerned with such legalisms; he was willing to settle for a much more amorphous approach. That group not only became an avenue for cooperation on Lebanese affairs, but was also a forum for discussion of the Soviet role in the area, long-range strategic considerations towards Syria, events and trends in other parts of the world. They even got involved in a discussion of Israeli economic matters. Shultz took the lead in giving good advice and counsel on how to get Israel's inflation under control; he was a recognized expert in economic affairs and therefore had a greater impact than other Secretaries of State might have had. The meetings of that group became important bench-marks.

The peace process had been stalled for a long time, although we were by now trying to rejuvenate it. The Reagan Initiative was tabled in 1982. We were then focusing on involving Jordan in the negotiations. We did differ with the Israelis on a number of key issues; e.g. further

settlements on the West Bank. But late 1983 saw a real change in the relations. In the final wrap-up sessions of the Arens-Shamir meetings, first with Reagan and then with Shultz, the two governments came to substantial meeting of the minds on some of the key questions and how to address our differences. Rumsfeld was also very much involved in these meetings. On the first day of the visit, a working group on Lebanon was established. That was the first time in the tortuous history of the "Lebanon affair" that American and Israeli officials, representing both defense and foreign affairs agencies, sat down together in a working group trying to address, as professionals, the dilemmas that each country faced. Unfortunately, by the end of November 1983, it was far too late for such a dialogue; most of the damage had already been done and there was little to be salvaged. But at least the interaction between the two governments were greatly smoothed.

There was one interesting sidelight that should be mentioned. Rumsfeld was appointed as Middle East emissary -- the third in one year -- at the beginning of November. He had very little contact with the Middle East. He had been Secretary of Defense, White House Chief of Staff, a distinguished leader of the Republican Party -- a very able guy. He headed for the area soon after his appointment. I got a call one day, saying that he would like to meet with Reg and myself in Cyprus, before he formally arrived in the Middle East. It was essentially to be a tutorial session. The Air Force flew Reg out of Beirut, which was still a tricky business because of the military situation. Reg had to fly by helicopter to one of the aircraft carriers anchored off-shore; that was a risky venture because the landing areas were not entirely secure -- they were not safe from any missiles that unfriendly hands might want to fire. Thankfully, Reg made the trip safely; the Air Force also picked me up at Ben Gurion airport. We met at the Ambassador's residence in Nicosia for several hours. That was an extraordinarily interesting meeting. Reg presented his views of the situation, I gave an overlook of Israel as I saw it. We discussed what we considered the mistakes of the last few months and the prospects for the future. I made some suggestions on how Rumsfeld should deal with Shamir when he got to Jerusalem. Rumsfeld was a very good listener. I told him that I had watched Shamir operate for several years with Americans. He was a very slow speaker; most Americans are uncomfortable speaking with someone who is slow in responding. We characteristically are uncomfortable with "dead air" during conversations. So when an American tried to elicit some response from Shamir, he was distressed when he did not get an immediate response; he wouldn't wait, but rather continue, never getting a response from Shamir. So I suggested that when meeting with Shamir, he let some "dead air" occur; if he waited long enough, particularly in a small group, he would find that eventually Shamir would open up and he would get a better sense of his thought process. Rumsfeld accepted that and when he came to Israel, he followed my advice; my impression is that of all the visiting Americans who dealt with Shamir over the many years, Rumsfeld was more successful than all others in engaging Shamir in a real dialogue because he accepted the process that required periods of silence.

There was an interesting result from that Cyprus meeting. In all the years I had been in Israel, I had never gone to Syria, primarily because none of my colleagues in Damascus ever thought it would be a good idea for me to come there. But the Air Force plane in Nicosia was to take Reg back to Damascus -- which I think was probably a first for him as well -- from whence he would return to Beirut overland. I think that Rumsfeld was going to go with Reg and then return to Damascus later. The plane was stationed at Ben Gurion; so after its stop in Damascus, it was to

go on to its home base, with me on board. So I found myself in a U.S. Air Force plane landing in Damascus. An honor guard for Rumsfeld had been mustered by the Syrians, so there was a lot of activity at the airport. Our representatives in Damascus were not anxious that the Syrians know that the U.S. Ambassador to Israel was on board. So while Rumsfeld and Reg and party were disembarking, I peeked through a porthole, trying to see what was going on without being spotted. I watched with some degree of amazement at this mystic place called Damascus which had always been "forbidden fruit" to me. I had a funny feeling of being in Damascus, but hidden from view -- something like a stowaway. In any case, all went smoothly and we took off and I got back to Israel safe and sound. So my first visit to Syria was surreptitious!

I had gone back to the U.S. to accompany President Herzog. I stayed to attend the Shamir-Arens meetings. After that, I went on home leave. So I was absent from the latter part of November until the latter part of January, 1984.

Q: In an earlier part of this series of interviews, you referred to Shultz' unhappiness with our Ambassador to Syria, Bob Paganelli. When did that happen?

LEWIS: That occurred just before the signing of the Lebanon-Israel agreement -- early April, 1983. Shultz was on his way to the area, trying to complete the negotiations. Habib had carried them to almost the final stages, but couldn't quite get over the last hurdles. Shultz stopped in Cairo and held a regional ambassadorial conference. It was at that meeting that Paganelli sharply criticized our Lebanese policies and Shultz' approach to the resolution of the conflict. Others joined Paganelli, so that only Roy Atherton, then our Ambassador in Cairo, and I were supporting the plan to complete the agreements, having reached the stage that it had. Paganelli almost got fired after that conference having upset Shultz to considerable degree.

I would like to continue our discussion of the end of 1984. I have described how the Lebanese affair came to a close. The rest of 1984 was devoted to a variety of issues. One of the key threads in that period was political. The Lebanese affair had turned out very badly, with Israel slowly but surely withdrawing its troops without having achieved any of its objectives. On the contrary, the Shiites in Lebanon were becoming increasingly antagonistic to the Israelis. They had been friendly towards Israel when the invasion began; thirty months later the Shiites that had taken over the PLO role of resistance. The problem of terrorism in southern Lebanon had not improved; in fact, it may have deteriorated. Israeli casualties were rising, day after day. If I remember correctly, by the time the war formally ended in August, 1982, there had been roughly two hundred Israeli soldiers killed. In the following 2 ½ years, several hundreds more were killed, so the total casualties exceeded the war losses by a good deal. All these human losses, when added to the rapidly deteriorating economic conditions in Israel -- inflation accompanied by stagnation -- and to the fact that Shamir had failed to establish himself as a strong Prime Minister -- paling in comparison with Begin and being undermined by Sharon -- made it clear that a national election would have to be held, which was finally scheduled for June 23, 1984.

The late Spring, 1984 was devoted to electioneering. Elections always raise problems for American ambassadors in Israel. It is very difficult to escape the Israeli political cross-fires. He is always in the media's crosshairs in Israel; he speaks publicly frequently; he is the subject of press reporting and commentary; he just can't disappear during any period, particularly an

election one. As a government, we of course had a preference in the election, which we did not express, even though it was deeply felt and most Israelis perceived it. In any case, we all had to be very careful during this election campaign to be seen as behaving in a completely impartial fashion between Peres and Shamir. I hoped that Labor would win because I thought that the Likud had failed miserably in its Lebanon policy and that it would not be very helpful in restarting the negotiations, as called for by Camp David and the Reagan Initiative. Nonetheless I was very cautious and impressed upon my staff the need to act accordingly.

In late May, Rumsfeld resigned as Middle East negotiator; he had reached the correct conclusion that the possibilities for further negotiations on Lebanon were not in the cards, at least for the foreseeable future. The broader peace process was at a complete standstill. Arafat had once again approached Hussein very gingerly; he had visited Jordan in the spring. He and Hussein had discussed how the two might join forces in the negotiations. Hussein had visited Washington, but no progress was in sight. We were not putting forth any new initiatives; we were standing firmly on the Reagan Initiative of 1982. The Israelis under Shamir were not prepared to discuss broad negotiations under that rubric or any other one. More importantly, the U.S. had finally come to understand -- belatedly -- that until the Lebanon problem was under some reasonable control and until the Israelis were withdrawing, there would be no receptivity in Jerusalem for broader discussions of peace in the area. The Jordanians, who were the key to the restarting of negotiations, had perceived our weakness in Lebanon -- our inability to counter Syria -- which raised for them the need for great caution. The King knew full well that if he showed the slightest hint of interest in negotiations, Assad would crack down on him very hard. Since the U.S. could not counter that pressure, there was no chance that the King would take any interest in negotiations. So the peace process was at a dead end, both in Jerusalem and in Amman. The U.S. government's credit in the region was very low, although, paradoxically, our relationship with Israel was again reaching a high point, in light of the December, 1983 meetings, our joint efforts on strategic cooperation, and Reagan's clear and strong support of Israel in the UN.

Once it became clear that Syria was the "bad guy" on the block, Reagan was much more comfortable in showing his pro-Israeli sentiments and in supporting his ally in the Middle East. Certain nations would propose UN resolutions of condemnation of Israel for continuing settlements in the West Bank, or for the many alleged Israeli transgressions that the anti-Israeli bloc members would conjure up. Then Jeane Kirkpatrick, our Ambassador to the UN, and Reagan and Shultz in Washington would make it quite clear that we would veto any anti-Israel resolution. So the 1984 period was one of a rather close official US-Israel relationship, both in the political and the military spheres; the election merely slowed down the tempo of that cooperation. We spent much of the time before elections on routine business. I was certainly busy, but nothing of great significance occurred in this time frame. It gave my family and me and another family from Washington a chance to charter a yacht in June out of Cyprus and tour the Turkish coast and the Greek Islands for about two weeks.

As we approached the elections, the tensions mounted. The polls were showing that it would be closely contested. A number of Israel-Egypt issues arose just before the election, which took a certain amount of our time and effort. The Taba problem continued unresolved and as long as that situation prevailed, the Egyptians were using it as an excuse for keeping the Israelis at a distance. Taba is a tiny piece of coast near Elat on which stands a hotel built by Israel, just across

the Egyptian border. Its sovereignty was contested by Israel after the Peace Treaty. Ultimately, after years of frustrating U.S. mediation, the issue went to international arbitration and eventually the whole area was ceded to Egypt. The hotel became Egyptian-managed, but it still has a lot of Israeli clientele. In 1984-85, this was still unresolved and the chill in Israeli-Egyptian relations was an issue that continued to require a lot of our attention. We were continually trying to convince the Egyptians that progress on Taba could only come if they met with Israeli leaders; keeping them at a distance was counter-productive. We urged that Shamir be invited to visit Egypt, which Mubarak finally did. The last time that had happened was for Sadat's funeral in 1981. Shamir was viewed by the Egyptians as a "hard liner" with whom they could not deal. While boycotting Shamir, they did invite other Israelis, which just made Shamir even more rigid on the various issues at dispute with Egypt. Roy Atherton and I spent considerable time trying to push, cajole and prod the two parties in an effort to warm up the relationship which was crucial in the long run to Middle East peace. But in the Israeli pre-election period, it was a non-starter.

Arafat and Hussein met in early August, 1984, just after the election while Peres and Shamir were negotiating about forming the national unity government. After that meeting, Arafat announced that Hussein had agreed in principle to link his country to the future Palestinian state. It was another occasion when it appeared that Hussein and Arafat finally were singing from the same page. But as usual, that sense was quickly dissipated. The coalition deal between Peres and Shamir was struck about mid-August. (That is the arrangement I described earlier, in which each would take a two year term as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.) A Cabinet was hammered out, as well as a laborious coalition agreement. After Knesset approved, Peres was sworn in as Prime Minister on September 14, 1984. That was the beginning of the brief Peres era.

In the latter part of August, it was clear that the major issue confronting the new Israeli government was the economic crisis. The inflation in Israel was going through the roof. In fact, when Peres took office, the current monthly rate of inflation was equivalent to nearly 1200% annually. Hyperinflation was king. That forced Peres to give highest priority to economic stabilization. That required U.S. advice and emergency financial assistance to support the Israeli treasury. He and I agreed to discuss this issue even before he took office because I was leaving for Washington on consultations at the end of August. We met at the Tel Aviv Hilton around the swimming pool on a Saturday afternoon. We sat there in the sun in full view of all the photographers; it felt that the whole country was watching. We discussed the future of his government and what U.S. assistance he foresaw. There were a lot of pictures taken that day, all of which appeared in the newspapers, accompanied by all sorts of convoluted speculation about the themes of our discussion. It was reported that I was giving Peres his instructions on who he should appoint to his Cabinet as well as other similar nonsense. It was sort of fun. That session with Peres enabled me to return to Washington to brief Shultz in some detail about Peres' problems, opportunities and requirements before he was even sworn in as Prime Minister. While in Washington, I was able to get a pretty good sense of what the U.S. could or could not do for the new Israeli government.

As I said, I met Shultz on a couple of occasions during the first week of September. In one session, which was just between the two of us, I was able to discuss very frankly with him what had transpired during the previous year or two. He expressed considerable frustration with his inability to restart the peace negotiations. He told me that he had now concluded that the Reagan

Initiative had been a mistake and that it would not result in the desired outcome even if it succeeded. He had given considerable thought to it and asked me to keep his view strictly to myself because the Initiative was still official U.S. policy. The Secretary had come to the conclusion that the most practical and desirable outcome would be an autonomous regime for the West Bank and Gaza within a shared sovereignty between Israel and Jordan. It was a modified Benelux formula. [In retrospect, that may very likely be close to the final outcome. So Shultz in 1984 had come to the correct conclusion, although there is still quite a road to travel.]

One of the extraordinary matters that has been little noted is how the U.S. managed during the Peres period to extend a lot of conditioned assistance to Israel. Our aid came with a lot of tough economic conditions, but packaged so that there was no nationalist backlash, as had occurred in other countries when similar approaches were attempted. One of the principal reasons for this success was that Shultz was viewed as a strong Israeli supporter as well as being a wise and highly respected economist. His advice and that of Herb Stein and Stan Fisher, Shultz's unofficial expert advisor team, roughly paralleled what both Modai and Peres and their economic team knew had to be done. Of course, Peres and Modai faced formidable political barriers both in the Knesset and with other Ministers. The U.S. was insisting on some changes -- privately, but persistently -- and at the same time dangling the carrot of increased aid. That pressure along with the "safety net" that had been established, worked together to make the stabilization program a success. That was a story of highly skilled economic and political diplomacy between the two countries.

Peres still had the problem of Lebanon. Related to that was the question of whether Peres could persuade Hussein to join the peace process. One of the King's stated many reasons for evading Peres was that until Israel had evacuated Lebanon, he could not engage in any kind of dialogue. Peres and Hussein had of course met secretly a number of times over many years. Hussein had communicated with Peres and other Labor Party leaders frequently in secret before 1977 when Likud took over the Israeli government. There had even been a few -- very few -- contacts in the Likud period. The two principals knew each other and respected each other, but Hussein could not be enticed -- prematurely from his point of view -- into the peace process. He still had to contend with the Syrian menace and was not going to move until Israel had disentangled itself from Lebanon. He still had a major PLO problem, which he shared with the Israelis.

Yitzhak Rabin, as Defense Minister, was essentially in charge of Lebanon policy. I remember vividly my first meeting with him after becoming Minister. I had known him quite well since I used to play tennis with him every Saturday. I met him in his office in September privately just after the Cabinet was sworn in -- and he came as usual right to the point. He asked me to arrange for a secret and serious probe in Damascus with Assad. He wanted to test whether Assad was at all ready to start peace negotiations. Rabin had always viewed Syria as the strategic key to achieving a broad peace agreement. Syria was also key to the solution of the Lebanon problem. I reported immediately to Shultz and we did in fact carry out some delicate probes, but I had to soon report to Rabin that we had not found any room for optimism. Assad was not interested in any negotiations -- direct or indirect -- with Israel at that time. Then Rabin began to examine his options for how to withdraw at minimal costs, without any deals with the Syrians. Laying his political and diplomatic groundwork took him about four months before he could demonstrate to the Likud Cabinet members, or at least a majority of them, there were no good alternatives to

partial unilateral withdrawal. There was no possibility of negotiating with the Lebanese, based on the by-now moribund agreement. He also had to show that the cost to Israel of maintaining a forward political position in Lebanon was far too great. He had to win over enough Likud Cabinet colleagues because the character of the Cabinet of national unity required some bipartisan support of any initiative. Sharon, who was a member of the 10 member Inner Cabinet, was certain to be opposed to any sign of withdrawal. That meant that Rabin had to convince at least two of the other four Likud members to support him. He did that very skillfully by going through all the diplomatic motions of first trying to negotiate some agreement with the Lebanese government, while having us conduct the probe of Syrian intentions. He also tried to work out something with the Druze sect in Lebanon. He tried a variety of approaches, all unsuccessfully. In the meantime, Israeli casualties continued to mount as well as the domestic political pressures for some kind of resolution. By January, 1985, Rabin was able to report to the Cabinet he had always thought that would have to be the outcome: a withdrawal to the border area sparing Israel any further losses. His presentation convinced a couple of the Likud members -- David Levy and perhaps Moshe Arens -- to support his plan. Shamir may also have supported Rabin, ultimately. In any case, Rabin played a very skillful political game to achieve what he had long perceived as necessary. He could not have reached that stage without having tried all other avenues first.

The withdrawal was begun on January 14, 1985. Rabin presented a three stage plan for unilateral withdrawal. By the Spring of that year, the withdrawals were well along; it took about five months for the process to be completed with several thousand Israeli forces leap-frogging over each other while the Shiites sniped away at them. Of course, the broader Lebanon problem was still unresolved. The Israelis had succeeded in putting the issue aside as a domestic political matter because both parties, or at least majorities thereof, were in support of withdrawal. That took the issue out of the domestic political arena and helped keep it under control as a divisive factor in Israeli politics. The withdrawal was completed by early June just as my term in Israel came finally to an end, with only minor military units remaining in the area just north of the Lebanon-Israel border with General Lahad militia. The last Israeli troops came home three years after the start of the invasion in 1982. At the beginning, Begin and Sharon had promised a campaign of a week's duration with minimal casualties. In fact, during the three years, 650 Israeli soldiers died and over three thousand were wounded. It was a war with some of the highest Israeli casualty counts ever encountered. More than half of the deaths occurred after the war was over in the summer; they were victims of sniper fire, primarily from the Shiites and other Syrian surrogates.

By the Spring, 1985, Peres, Modai and Rabin had turned Israel's economic condition in the right direction, with considerable U.S. assistance, and had found a manageable solution to the Israeli presence in Lebanon, which was far short of Israel's original goals. The peace with Egypt remained very tenuous; it was working well, but it was hardly a warm relationship. No Egyptian tourists were coming to Israel; the culture agreements remained frozen. The dispute over Taba was the excuse for keeping a proper, but cold, relationship. Peres felt throughout the Fall that although his highest priority in the long run had to be the peace process, that he was not in a political position, facing a divided Cabinet, to make any major moves until after economic stabilization had been successfully launched, after the Lebanon situation was under control and after the relationship with Egypt had improved. He understood that the key to the last goal was Taba, or at least it was until that issue could be politically neutralized and removed as a central

point in the dialogue between Egypt and Israel. Then Peres thought he could undertake a major effort to restart the peace process. He discussed his priorities and views several times, at length privately with me and then with Shultz when he was in Washington. It was for that reason that Shultz determinedly rejected all suggestions that were repeatedly made from a number of sources -- journalists, Middle East experts, the Israeli left and its American supporters -- that a new Middle East negotiator be appointed. Such an appointment would probably have had to be accompanied by a new initiative to succeed the stalled Reagan Initiative, but Shultz understood that the situation was not yet ripe for such an approach. He and we couldn't tell our critics that we were following Peres strategy. Shultz was calibrating his approach to the peace process to be in synchronization with Peres' plans. Unfortunately, it took Peres too long to improve relations with Egypt.

That was an unhappy story. Peres tried very hard, starting in the Fall, 1984, to put together a package deal with Egypt which would have taken Taba off the agenda. Negotiations proceeded throughout 1985, long after my departure; finally, in January 1986, Peres actually had put a package together that he knew authoritatively would satisfy Mubarak that he tried to get his Cabinet to swallow. The crux of the plan was to invoke arbitration. The Cabinet met all night; Peres had won over enough Likud votes to achieve a majority -- but then he became fatefully conciliatory and agreed to propose some Likud amendments for the package to Mubarak -- who rejected them. The deal collapsed in mutual acrimony and it then took until August, 1986 for the two governments to agree to submit the Taba issue to arbitration. That was just one month before the end of Peres' Prime Ministership. So two years had passed during which the peace process was on hold pending approval to remove Taba from the Egyptian-Israeli relationships. In the meantime, Peres kept talking to Hussein in private messages, trying to get the King involved in the peace process. But Hussein was not ready for a formal diplomatic initiative. By the time the circumstances were ripe, Peres was no longer Prime Minister but only Foreign Minister -- and Prime Minister Shamir was very skeptical of Peres' initiatives. In the Spring, 1987, Peres, now Foreign Minister, met secretly with Hussein in London. Tom Pickering was by then our Ambassador in Israel and became a key player in this diplomatic process. Hussein and Peres reached an agreement on how to launch a new peace initiative that Peres brought back to Jerusalem very proudly. Shamir refused to accept it, in part because he was highly offended that Peres had carried out these negotiations in part behind his back, and had informed the Americans of the results before he had told his own Prime Minister! We were not very deft in our participation in this process since we were trying to help Peres and at the same time maintain honest relations with Shamir. The Peres agreement died. (Peres blamed Shultz for not coming down strong with him to persuade Shamir.) I believe to this day that had Peres been able to resolve the Taba issue within three months of taking office, as he should have been able to do, then a Jordan-Israel agreement could have been signed while he was still Prime Minister. That might have changed the course of history. The Taba issue took the whole two years of Peres' stewardship. In the final analysis, we had to send the Department's Legal Advisor, Abe Sofaer, to shuttle between Cairo and Jerusalem to put a deal together. It was a terrible diversion in the Peres era which hampered the Prime Minister and blocked his ability to really focus on negotiations with Jordan.

There were other diversions in 1984-1985. Cap Weinberger visited us in October, 1984. By this time, his views toward Israel had mellowed considerably now that the Lebanon war was over. He

got along well with Peres and Rabin. His visit was much more pleasant than those he had made a couple of years earlier. During this period, I spent time on a lot of different issues. I was seeing Peres and Rabin very often. I was immersed in the economic issues which brought me into contact with Modai often. I was the conduit to this Israeli government for Washington advice on the stabilization program. At the same time, I was moving into a phase-out psychology. Everyone knew I was leaving in June.

In February, we started participating in the long farewell process that didn't end until June. Every organization in Israel wanted to have a formal function to say goodbye to Sallie and me. We were fodder for five months for the gossip columnists. We attended parties, dedications, including the naming of a forest near Jerusalem for us. Peres was extraordinarily gracious throughout the period. He made a point of personally participating in many events; he spoke at the dedication of the forest. The naming of forests was a custom in Israel for large donors, which we were not, but many of our Israeli friends had paid for planting a lot of trees in the Jerusalem national forest. The small Lewis arboretum is in the same general area as the Hubert Humphrey Parkway, a project I helped dedicate sometime earlier, together with Muriel Humphrey and their three sons. The Lewis Forest was a lovely gesture which we greatly appreciated. There were many other very nice gestures, but the "farewell season" stretched out much too long. It was an exhausting few months. The combination of social and organizational events together with the discharge of my regular duties, including an increasing media workload which included farewell interviews with all the major journalists was almost too much for us. We were pretty well played out by May 1985.

I would now like to start with a series of events that took place in December 1983, which became major *cause celebre* in Israel, although they were almost overlooked by the U.S. press and by my colleagues in Washington. I have previously referred to my private meeting that took place at the end of 1982 with Simcha Erlich, then Vice Premier and Minister of Finance in Begin's Cabinet and leader of the Liberal Party. He was a strong supporter of the United States and a good personal friend. That meeting figured a year later in my bitter encounter with Sharon.

I had left Israel for what turned out to be an unanticipated two months' absence. I left on November 19, 1983 to return to Washington to participate first in a visit to the U.S. by President Herzog, and then in important meetings with Prime Minister Shamir--Begin's successor--and Defense Minister Arens--Sharon's successor after the publication of the Kahan Commission review of the Sabra-Shatila affair. Both were in Washington together, in part as result of a warming trend in the U.S. relationship that had been underway for a few months. After attending both sets of meetings, I was planning to take home leave. As it turned out, I didn't return to Israel until January 26, 1984. I had not been in the United States very long when this affair exploded in Israel; I had to deal with it at long distance, which is probably why I didn't react to it as quickly as I should have. Had I been in Israel, the whole business might have been put to rest sooner.

On December 4, I went to a Redskin football game. I am an avid Redskin fan and the Redskins were Super Bowl-bound that season. It was at that moment a dramatic news story was developing in Israel. I learned subsequently that on that morning's TV news show in Israel, the

correspondent, Shimon Schiffer, who was then and still is a very important political commentator, reported a very garbled version of the meeting I had with Erlich a year earlier. To this day, I don't know the full story, although I discussed it later with Schiffer, who swears that he was provided the information in a credible fashion, but it was clear to me that he was given a very garbled story. It was alleged that there was documentary evidence to support the story; it has never been produced and I am sure it does not exist because what Sharon and his henchmen put out was quite different from the facts. Schiffer reported that there was a "protocol" (the Israeli term for transcript) of a conversation, the details of which had come to his attention; those details were allegedly supported by a witness to the conversation. This conversation was supposed to have taken place shortly before the Kahan Commission had completed its report. The "protocol" allegedly had me saying to Erlich, in reference to Sharon, that "that man must go. You must understand that Begin is not going to be invited to the United States, as he wished to be, because of him. Furthermore, US-Israeli relationships had suffered because of him". Erlich allegedly replied: "Sam, we are aware of the problem. I promise he will leave the government. The Kahan Commission will pass its verdict. The Prime Minister (Begin) is already aware of the mistake he made when he made him Defense Minister. After the Commission's report is published, Begin will assure that he is put aside in a position of no importance". Schiffer's report claimed that there were three people present at the meeting: Erlich, myself and Naftali Yaniv, who was the spokesman for the Agriculture Ministry. (I think that Erlich was at that time temporarily in charge of Agriculture because of some changes in the Cabinet.) He was said to have been there as a translator, had taken notes and made the transcript. Schiffer also said that the conversation was recorded on tape cassette. He went on to say that after Erlich's death--he had died in mid-1983--his secretary had passed this document together with other documents and the cassette to Erlich's widow, Zila. Just before his report was to be televised, Schiffer had called our Embassy press spokesman and asked for a comment. The spokesman, certainly under the DCM's guidance, said that I had met with Erlich from time to time, sometimes at the Minister's request, but that he couldn't confirm any of the details of any conversation.

As I said, I was completely unaware of this series of events. But the TV report started a major uproar which reverberated for weeks thereafter. It led to a sharp confrontation between Sharon and me. Sharon urged that I be declared *persona non grata*. I have a file about an inch and a half thick of press and public comments which were made over the following three weeks in Israel. The initial press stories, in the Jerusalem Post and other papers, accepted the fact that a meeting had taken place. Schiffer was viewed as a credible correspondent and the press therefore assumed the veracity of the story. This view was reinforced by the fact that the Embassy's spokesman had not denied the essence of the story; he refused to comment. That position was viewed as tantamount to confirmation. It is an attitude that prevailed in Israel; I had long ago learned that unless you immediately jump on a distorted version of a story, it was assumed to be correct and will be accepted as fact in all sorts of subsequent discussions. Had I been there, I would have immediately issued a flat and vigorous denial. But I wasn't and in fact, the Embassy did not contact me immediately, which was another mistake.

The next morning in Washington, I attended a briefing for Israeli correspondents on the Shamir-Arens talks and on other aspects of the US-Israeli relations. During this briefing, one of the Israeli correspondents asked me about the Schiffer report; that was the first I had heard about it. As you can well imagine, I was upset, to put it mildly. I didn't have the text of the Schiffer

report, so I couldn't really respond in any depth. I did dismiss the accuracy of the report, as described to me by the Israeli correspondent. After the briefing, I called the DCM--Robert Flaten--and was briefed. He told me what the Embassy had said. Flaten's view, supported by the Embassy's press spokesman, was not to take the Schiffer report too seriously; their advice was not to dignify it further by any comment from me. They expected the story to blow over quickly. That unfortunately was not good advice; I knew it was not good advice, but for some reason I accepted it. So we took no immediate action to set the record straight. The problem was that there were elements of the story which were true. For example, there had been a meeting; it had been about the sorry state of US-Israel relations; Sharon's name had been mentioned by Erlich. So I could not flatly deny the whole story; we would have had to confirm part of the story. That was undoubtedly one of the reasons why the Embassy thought it wiser not to deal with the story at the time; if it were to grow, then it would have to be dealt with.

Over the succeeding days, the story spun out of control. I was in Washington trying to prepare myself for a major address that I was to give on Tuesday January 7 in Baltimore. I was to be honored by the presentation of the Louis Brandeis award from the Zionist Organization of America. It was that organization's annual convention. I was going to talk about the peace process and US-Israel relations. I had not yet written it and so I was very preoccupied with this task. That also diverted my attention from the uproar in Israel, which I should have paid more attention to. In the meantime, back in Israel, all the major press were running the story. Interestingly enough, the most accurate report appeared in Ha'olam Ha'ze, a part of the popular press which did not have much credibility, but which often carried some very interesting political stories. The editor was a veteran left-wing politician, Uri Avenery. Ha'olam Ha'ze talked to Schiffer and to Yaniv, the Agriculture Ministry spokesman who attended the meeting. So that paper printed a fairly accurate story, which indicated that no transcript existed. It stated that whenever I met with Erlich, whose English was rudimentary--that is he could understand quite well if you spoke slowly, but could not express himself very well--he preferred to speak in Hebrew. So we needed an interpreter to translate his comments into English and to assist with my comments if Erlich was unsure about my meaning. Yaniv was a young civil servant in the Agriculture Ministry, whose head had earlier been Sharon. He was very loyal to Erlich and a fine person. Yaniv apparently reported the meeting as it had taken place; he apparently said that my meeting with Erlich was not unique. Whenever he translated, Yaniv said that he took notes of Erlich's comments because they needed to be translated. He also said that he may have written down a few of my comments, but that he did not attend the meeting to draft a transcript subsequently; that was not part of his assignment. After my meeting with Erlich, Yaniv was in a hurry to leave; he had with him some sheets of paper with the notes he had taken at the meeting and as he left, he dropped those notes on Erlich's secretary's desk. He could have thrown them out, but he left them behind. She took the notes and stuck them in a safe, where they stayed until after Erlich's death. After his death, the secretary, for reasons yet unknown, pulled out the documents in the safe and sent them to Mrs. Erlich. She was interviewed a week after the Schiffer report by a journalist and denied that there had been any transcript. Mrs. Erlich was somewhat more sympathetic to Sharon than her husband had been. But in any case, she did not support the Schiffer story which, as I said, alleged that there was a "protocol" of my meeting with Erlich. It is interesting to note that neither Schiffer nor any of the major press talked to her before the report was issued or immediately thereafter. There was a lot of speculation on whether there had ever been a meeting although I had never denied that such a meeting had taken place.

There were more questions raised about the existence of the transcript; I am convinced that there never was such a document. There could not have been given the way the meeting proceeded.

Sharon immediately picked up on the Schiffer report. Schiffer and Sharon had been close friends for many years in the past, although they had a falling out over the Lebanon invasion. Since that event, they had not been close. Schiffer had opposed the Lebanon war and became disenchanted with Sharon. Before that, he had been one of Sharon's favorite channels for leaks which supported Sharon's views. Despite their falling out, many Israelis and I suspected that the story had been manufactured by Sharon and Schiffer as a way of getting Sharon back into the headlines. I mentioned earlier the damning findings of the Kahan Commission. That Commission had demanded that Sharon resign as Defense Minister, which he did and then was given the job of Minister without Portfolio--he had no job. Sharon remained in the Begin Cabinet as a pariah. He was bitter at the way he had been treated and very unhappy with having been shuffled off to the side. He wanted to get back into the arena. As the US-Syrian confrontation in Lebanon began in the Fall of 1983, Sharon was saying that the U.S. was finally beginning to understand what he had tried to do in June, 1982. That was only one method of many that Sharon was using to try to get back into political power. He disdained Shamir and never took him seriously; he never accepted Shamir as Begin's successor. Shamir detested Sharon, but he was very careful how he dealt with him. In fact, Shamir just ignored Sharon. That made it hard for Sharon to find a way back, particularly since his reputation was still in low repute as result of the Kahan Commission report. Many journalists, other Israelis and I began to suspect that the whole Schiffer report and subsequent uproar may have been manufactured by Sharon, although none of us could ever find any evidence of such a plot and of course Sharon denied the allegation vigorously.

While the uproar in Israel continued, the Embassy kept its silence. Each day I would call from Washington and I would always receive the advice to not respond to allegations on the assumption that the flurry would die down soon. But I was increasingly concerned about the advice. On Wednesday, December 9, Sharon was interviewed by a TV correspondent; it was a medium that was tailor made for his demagogue style. During this session, Sharon gave out the text of the letter he had sent to Shamir two days earlier. In that letter, he demanded that Shamir initiate a full investigation of the charges that the American Ambassador had tried to influence domestic Israeli matters by trying to have an Israeli Minister fired. He said that that was unacceptable behavior and demanded a full inquiry. Shamir had ignored previous Sharon demands for that investigation; that led Sharon to write the letter and distribute it to the press.

The letter, addressed to Shamir, read:

"In its news broadcast last Sunday, December 4, Kol Israel broadcast a detailed report according to which the US Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Samuel Lewis, was active in a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister, the late Simcha Erlich, to have me removed from my post as Defense Minister as a condition for improving relations between the US and Israel. According to the newscast, minutes of the conversation, held before the publication of the findings of the Commission of Inquiry (the Kahan Commission) are in possession of Mr. Erlich's widow and that the notes were taken down by a civil servant who was present at the meeting. I do not doubt the authenticity of the report which again proves the intolerable and uninterrupted intervention by a number of ranking American

officials in Israel's internal affairs. Although this may be a case of foreign subversion against me, I feel that there is a vital question of principal concern to the government. It is inconceivable that a foreign Ambassador, even one of the most powerful and most friendly towards Israel, should engage in replacement of Ministers in the government of Israel and consequently in their nomination, just as it would be inconceivable that the Israeli Ambassador in Washington should seek to have figures replaced in the American administration. (*I might parenthetically note that Sharon, throughout the Fall, was leading a public campaign along with a number of other Israelis to having Cap Weinberger fired because of his alleged anti-Israeli attitude.*) I am absolutely convinced, Mr. Prime Minister, that you, who in the 40s, put up a valiant fight for the independence of Israel as the head of the bold Lehi organization against the mighty British Empire, are particularly incensed by gross foreign intervention in our internal affairs."

The rest of the letter was a diatribe which eventually led to Sharon's further discredit. He went on to say:

"I am furthermore aware of your long standing sensitivity to the subject of Jewish collaborators with foreign bodies and the handing over of Jews by Jews to win favors with foreigners. You will therefore probably understand and respond to my demand as follows: a) investigate the grave and subversive intervention by Ambassador Lewis in the internal affairs of Israel by an appropriate Commission of Inquiry; b) to submit forthwith to the state's legal authorities the minutes of the meeting between Mr. Lewis and Mr. Erlich and the minutes of every other conversation between them so that these notes can be submitted to a body which will investigate the intolerable activities of the American Ambassador, seek (?) and hear full evidence from the civil servant who assisted in the talk or talks. Indeed to bring the entire material as well as all of the direct and indirect material in the hands of Israeli authorities on the subject of American intervention in our internal affairs before the Commission of Inquiry. The inquiry I demand should be conducted in the widest possible scale. It is essential not in order to expose the direct responsibility of a number of American figures and circles to the grave mistakes committed in Lebanon, but in order to promptly take up a matter which concerns our independence and to put a timely stop to the serious process of intolerable intervention by some American circles in Israel's internal affairs, particularly at this moment when it is necessary to establish genuine foundations for strategic cooperation between Israel and its great friend, the United States. In the words of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin to that same Ambassador Lewis. 'Israel will not allow anyone to treat it as a banana republic and a vassal state'. Mr. Prime Minister, I have outlined to you the seriousness of the Lewis-Erlich affair in a telephone conversation that very Sunday this week when it was broadcast on Kol Israel asking you to take action. I await your early reply to my request."

Sharon was a shrewd person who could write, although he may have had some assistance in this letter from members of his staff. As I mentioned he held a TV interview on December 9, during which he elaborated on the themes in the letter with considerable additional embellishment. He said that the instance he cited was not an isolated one; there had been many other such occasions "just when we were tightening US-Israel relations. We have to define what is acceptable and

what isn't. I claim that there were many other actions by several US officials with Israeli collaborators to dismiss me from the post, within the framework of a deal which can be more or less stated as follows: You'll dismiss Sharon as a condition for improving US-Israeli ties. I didn't speak about this, but I was well aware of it. But I was taken aback by the report of the secret meeting between Lewis and Erlich. I am talking about the issue of subversion by several Americans and I have asked for a Commission of Inquiry". Then he talked about the illegality of such foreign activities. Then he went on to say: "Let me reminisce a little bit. Can you imagine the Soviet Ambassador in Israel thirty years ago trying to change the Israeli Foreign Minister as a condition for improving relations between the two countries? I am convinced that Ben Gurion would have demanded that he be declared persona non grata and would have ordered an investigation of the Israelis that might have collaborated with him. It should be borne in mind that for less than that, far less than what Erlich did, Aharon Cohen (a MAPAM leader who was accused of holding contacts with a foreign agent--a Soviet scientific institute representative in Israel in the late 1950s) was tried. No foreign Ambassador or government should be allowed to fire an Israeli Minister".

Sharon went on in that vein. He was pressed very hard about any proof that might be available to support his charges. He never offered any saying that he did not have any documents. He said that Erlich may not have liked him, but he thought that carrying his bias so far as to conspire with foreign elements to force his withdrawal from the Cabinet was beyond the pale. Then Sharon began to stress that a Commission of Inquiry was required to look into all of these charges; he was confident that it would find the corroborative evidence. Finally, he was asked straight out whether he had any evidence himself. He said that he would not divulge that information despite the fact that the TV interviewer was "his friend". He felt that the task of finding evidence was up to the Commission. In addition, he argued that since Erlich had promised me that Sharon would be discharged that this was evidence of conspiracy between the American and Israeli governments. He went as far as charging that the Kahan Commission was really part of that plot and that Erlich knew what the outcome would be, which enabled him to assure me that Sharon would be removed from his post once the Commission report was issued. That outlandish accusation also back-fired on Sharon eventually because the well established objectivity and thoroughness of the Kahan Commission was viewed as making the allegation totally ridiculous. When Sharon used the phrase "Israeli collaborators" and his reference to the 1950s spy case as a proper analogy with Erlich, who had been highly respected while alive and now dead and therefore unable to defend himself, that further added to diminish the credibility of Sharon's charges.

But at least for the time being his TV interview was very powerful. He speculated that the plot against him had been engendered by the Americans who wanted to get rid of him because they knew that he was opposing their nefarious policies in Lebanon. He, Sharon, was standing up for Israeli interests and that as long as he could wield some influence, he was blocking the U.S. from forcing a Lebanese deal with Israel which would have been very adverse to Israeli interests. He tried to paint himself as the guardian of Israeli interest against American misguided policies. I think that Sharon by this time was a very bitter, frustrated, wildly ambitious, undoubtedly patriotic--at least in his eyes--man who felt that he had almost reached the pinnacle of power, but had been unceremoniously blocked from reaching his ambition and had in fact been discharged from the Defense Ministry--as a result of the Lebanon crisis for which he had never been willing

to accept responsibility. He manipulated the Defense Ministry and the media as best he could in order to blame others for the failures in Lebanon until the Kahan Commission came along and put an end to that effort to revise history.

After the issuance of the Kahan Commission report, as I said, Sharon was removed from the Defense Ministry and in effect marginalized. His personal situation was aggravated by Shamir's assumption of the Prime Ministership because he thought so little of Shamir. That made Sharon very frustrated and angry at everybody. He always insisted that he was a great friend of the United States. In the TV interview that I mentioned and subsequently, Sharon developed a new line which in essence maintained the whole Lebanese problem was due to the fact that President Reagan had been misled and poorly advised by a cabal in the State Department. That cabal consisted of Phil Habib, Cap Weinberger, Sam Lewis, Nick Veliotos, Morris Draper and a couple of others. He maintained that he bore no ill against the U.S. government or President Reagan, but he did resent the poor advice that the cabal had developed which had led the President into great error in Lebanon and who had persuaded him that Sharon was a bad guy. (I might say that only Weinberger might have qualified to make that list.) The general conclusion on Sharon is that he was a brilliant field commander--tremendous initiative, creativity--although there would be some that would deny him even that. There were two officers who served under Sharon in the Sinai campaign, Motta Gur and Motke Zipori--who later had to work with Sharon on political issues--who believed that he had recklessly lost the lives of a number of his soldiers by insisting on a very quick quixotic operation which was not sound strategy. There were also critics of Sharon's earlier handling of Commando Unit 101 which he led in raids into Jordan leading to some political complications because of the number of civilians who were killed in the attacks. Nevertheless, Sharon's credentials as a field commander have been very high. More argument can be had about whether he was a wise military strategist. On that issue, there is far less agreement. Some of the same dichotomy appears in Sharon's political life. He was a very able tactician, but as a strategist, he was frequently found wanting.

By December 9, I had become very concerned with developments in Israel. By this time, I was sure that the furor would not die down and that Sharon would surely make a campaign of it. I now felt that some counter measures had to be taken, even though it was clear that Shamir was not reacting at all in the hope that the matter would blow over soon. That raised in my mind the concern that if I were to issue a statement, that might undermine Shamir's Fabian tactics. So I asked Bob Flaten--I believe on December 10--after having heard about Sharon's TV interview, to talk to Hanan Bar-on who was our closest contact point in the Foreign Ministry and a good personal friend. He was a very able professional who at the time was the Deputy Director of the Foreign Ministry. I wanted Bar-on, who was responsible for US-Israeli relationships, to talk to Shamir to explain to the Prime Minister what my views were. I wanted Shamir, through Bar-on, to know that nothing improper had taken place during my meeting with Erlich and that I was prepared to say so publicly. But I wanted to be guided by the Prime Minister's advice on what, if anything, I should say for the public record, I wanted Shamir to know that I was refraining from making any public statement until I had heard his advice. The first response came to me on December 11, via Bar-on and Flaten; it was essentially advice to do nothing. I was told that the Prime Minister didn't take it seriously and that he was not concerned about it and would prefer that I not make any public statement.

Twenty hours later, I received another call from Flaten. He just had heard from Bar-on. This time, I was told that the situation was heating up to the point where a clear public denial from me might be in order. By this time, eight days had already passed from the initial Schiffer report. On the next day, December 13, we issued in Tel Aviv the following statement:

"The Embassy has received a number of questions concerning a recent story about a meeting of a year ago between Deputy Prime Minister Erlich and Ambassador Lewis. We have consulted with Ambassador Lewis, who is presently on home leave in the United States, and are authorized to categorically deny that Ambassador Lewis at any time either recommended or advised Deputy Prime Minister Erlich or any other Israeli Minister or official that the then Minister of Defense should be relieved of his responsibilities.

That flat denial turned out to be quite useful, but it had come too late to stop the various stories, which continued to spin out of control. Some were, by this time, becoming favorable to me. Dan Margolit, in Haaetz, on December 9--the same day of Sharon's interview--wrote a wonderful column "in praise of the High Commissioner"--a nickname that had been earlier given to me. Margolit made a strong argument against taking any of Sharon's allegations seriously and furthermore said some nice things about my efforts. He, like many other journalists, included some negative comments about Israelis, who, while eager to talk to me and to come to my receptions and dinners, had not risen to my defense. He said: "The special position occupied by Lewis in high Israeli circles for a long time has been an established fact. At a Hanukah party six years ago (that was about six months after I had arrived) I saw Ministers, officers in uniforms and senior officials standing in line to talk for a few minutes privately with the Ambassador. Ministers told him what they did not dare leak to us journalists. Frustrated opposition members wanted to seek his assistance to weaken the Likud government, as it emerged recently from a statement made in a well attended meeting with him by members of the business community only a few months ago" (that was another event, but had some relevance to the Sharon attack). The article went on to ask how I had managed to become so well acquainted with Israeli affairs. He maintained that in a democratic society that was perfectly acceptable and that in fact there was no way that an Israeli citizen could be barred from talking to the American Ambassador or other diplomats.

One of the lead articles went on to say that there "was nothing wrong with this. No free democratic society wants or can restrict the freedom of speech of its citizens conversing with the American ambassador or other diplomats. The problem is to know where the limits are. Lewis is not the address for obtaining the answer to these questions. The limits have to be set by every Israeli. When this limit is exceeded by Erlich's, it is not excessive candor, but the underlying symptom that arouses concern. In the inept government of Menachem Begin, all values and norms for self-restraint were destroyed and eroded. Lewis didn't appoint himself High Commissioner of Israeli society. It was the society that bestowed on him this title at its own initiative".

That was an illustration of one approach to the issue. Some journalists essentially followed that line. But there were others who were writing, on a continuous basis, less favorable articles, some of which were on the nasty side. They still pretended to accept the basic argument that something improper had happened. On December 10, I had a telephone call from a journalist--Mira Avrech-

-a close friend, from Israel. She holds a unique place in Israeli journalism. She is essentially a gossip columnist; but she writes the most widely read column in Israel in the biggest paper Yidiot, and she is also very politically oriented. She is a very close friend of Shimon Peres and many other Israeli leaders in all factions, although perhaps her contacts are strongest with the Labor Party. At one point, she was a member of Irgun and therefore has long standing connections with people like Begin. In any case, she was a good friend; I had from time to time given her interviews. She was becoming concerned about the development of the Lewis-Sharon affair. She knew I was in Washington and away from the scene and she was very sensitive to press moods. When she called, she told me that she had agreed to appear on a major TV panel talk show that Dan Raviv was hosting. This was, at the time, probably the TV show with the second highest viewer audience in Israel. She was going to appear together with the almost legendary former chief of the Mossad, Isser Harel. The subject of the panel show was going to be the "Lewis-Sharon affair". Mira said that it would be helpful if I could give her a statement that she could use publicly; she thought that would reinforce what the Embassy had already said. And that is what I did; I gave her a further statement. She handled herself extremely well on the panel. She said, in response to a question from Raviv concerning Sharon's accusation of subversions and interference: "First, Lewis denies it. I talked to him today on the telephone when I knew I was going to be on your show. He emphatically denies that he demanded Sharon's ouster. In addition there is no proof that anything like that was ever said. I also called Mrs. Erlich. She told me that there are no minutes--'I received no minutes'. She also said that Yaniv had told her that no such minutes exist. Mrs. Erlich added: 'Sam Lewis can certainly sue someone for libel'".

Raviv then said: "But Schiffer insists that his report is correct". To which Mira replied:

"I have many reasons to believe that he was misled. First, I believe Lewis. He never misled me. Moreover, no secrets were likely to be discussed in the presence of Yaniv. Lewis is no political appointee. He knows the ropes. They have been keeping him in Tel Aviv for six years because they are afraid that if they send him to another post, he will quit. They don't want him to go. Everything said in that meeting was not really taken down".

Harel then said: "It doesn't even look serious to me for the reasons Mira mentioned. Even if those things were said, they were said by two people on a very personal basis, informally. The whole thing is trivial." Mira then said: "As an ambassador, you have to speak up if you feel that bilateral relationships would suffer if you don't." So her participation in this panel show was very effective and helpful. I never publicly commented on the affair again and neither did the Embassy. My denial, made through Mira, was carried widely by the press. The editorials, like the one that appeared in the Jerusalem Post the following day just blasted Sharon. The Jerusalem Post's editorial was entitled "Traitors All". It said: "The Cabinet yesterday did not discuss Ariel Sharon's demand for the appointment of a judicial committee...It is preposterous. Mr. Lewis can not be interviewed by any Israeli judicial panel and Mr. Erlich is dead." It went from there to totally destroy all of Sharon's arguments.

The Jerusalem Post at the time was anti-Likud and liberal. Mira Avrech followed up her TV appearance with an article in Yidiot on December 13, in which she covered the same ground. She also reminded her readers that Yitzhak Rabin, when he was Israeli Ambassador in Washington, had openly backed Richard Nixon's reelection, much to the dismay of traditional diplomats. She

also mentioned that Ezer Weizmann had jumped on Jimmy Carter's campaign plane, right after having left the post of Defense Minister, and had appeared with him in public. She also reminded people that this meeting with Erlich had taken place just a couple of days after Sharon had tried to humiliate Phil Habib by flaunting his secret agreement with Lebanon in a formal meeting with the Prime Minister. He was obviously intent on angering the U.S., raising the already cold temperature in Washington to near freeze levels. Her adding a commentary about the atmosphere that prevailed when I met with Erlich was a good idea. Avrech was also helpful in describing my conversation with her. She added to what had been said on TV by saying that I had categorically denied ever saying to Erlich that Sharon should be ousted. I told her and she quoted me correctly as saying that: "We discussed the deteriorating situation between Israel and the U.S. and the possibilities of restoring it. Never at any moment or under any circumstances did I recommend or advise Erlich on dismissal of Sharon from his job." She then asked: "What about the Kahan Commission? Did Erlich say two weeks after the publication of the report that Sharon would be ousted?" I answered: "We never even mentioned the Commission". Then I added: "So simple a document could not exist because such things were never said. But if someone does allegedly have such a document quoting me as saying things of this kind, the document is clearly forged." Avrech, in her article, went on to say: "There is no recording and as for notes, Simcha Erlich's widow denies ever receiving any. If they exist, there is no proof of their authenticity". So Mira was an important player in this saga.

Marriv on December 16 carried a very thoughtful, accurate article about my relationship with Sharon and Begin and my role in Israel. He reminded the readers that Sharon himself, before the Lebanon war and a year before my meeting with Erlich, had "leaked" the outlines of all of his plans for the Lebanon invasion to me, to Phil Habib and to other Americans. So when Sharon talked about "collaboration", he was vulnerable to the charge himself. The article also mentioned that Sharon had been a frequent visitor to the Lewis' residence and had tried very hard to co-opt me to his point of view on settlements during an earlier period of my Israeli tour.

By December 23, after three weeks, the brouhaha was beginning to wind down. There was still enough interest in it to generate a Knesset debate(!) about Sharon and me; it lasted for about an hour. There had been two private member bills submitted on December 21: one from Moshe Shahal of the Labor Party urging the government to establish the Commission of Inquiry demanded by Sharon, because he wanted a full investigation of all information that Sharon had shared with us about the Lebanon invasion and of other matters, thereby trying to turn the tables on Sharon by having a Commission which would look into other Sharon activities not covered by the Kahan Commission. The other private member bill was submitted by Ronnie Milo, a Likud member, now the Mayor of Tel Aviv and a sidekick of Shamir. (One could say that Milo was a stalking horse for Shamir.) His bill would have turned the tables in a different way. It would have investigated the contacts between foreign representatives and the opposition parties-- basically Labor. The Knesset debate was tepid; there were only about twenty members (out of 120) on the floor. Sharon did not show up for the debate. By this time, he was clearly in retreat. Yehuda Ben-Meir, then the Deputy Foreign Minister (also a good friend of mine), articulated the government's positions on the motions. He essentially said that the whole affair was a tempest in a tea cup. He read the Embassy's denial and gave a lot of kudos to Erlich, describing him as a true patriot; he was "shocked" that anybody would challenge his integrity. All of Sharon's allegations about "traitors" and "collaborationists" had really back-fired. Sharon had managed by

this time to make Erlich a saint, which was perhaps something more than he deserved. Nevertheless, since he was dead, his character did not deserve to be assassinated. The debate, according to the Embassy's report, aroused very little emotion. Shahal's motion was defeated by a tie vote; Milo's motion was withdrawn at the suggestion of Ben-Meir. The Embassy, in its cabled report, stated:

"Most observers were saying afterwards that the episode as ended has been a defeat for Sharon, who didn't even attend the session. The outcome is another example of the recent decline of Sharon's political fortune. He has placed himself clearly outside the Likud leadership and is openly criticized by many of his Cabinet colleagues. While he is still regarded by many, both inside and outside of Herut as responsible for Israel's problem in Lebanon and Begin's political downfall, the former Defense Minister is a stubborn persistent political figure whose outspoken criticism deeply disturbs Shamir. Our contacts are quick to warn that it would be premature and unwise to write Sharon off politically."

That was of course true because Sharon is still around even after many years of being a real problem.

When I returned to Israel a few weeks later, I said to Shamir privately at one point: 'I hope that my conversation with Erlich didn't cause you too much angst.' He replied that I shouldn't worry about it. There was nothing to be concerned about.

Around December 23, a cartoon appeared in Harretz; it had been drawn by the leading cartoonist in Israel, Zeev. It is a fascinating cartoon, a copy of which I still possess and which is hanging on our walls. It's entitled "At the Piano: Sam Lewis with the Zadikov Choir" (a well known choir). It shows me sitting at a piano, dressed in tails with an open shirt-which is what I always wore in Israel--playing a tune entitled "US-Israeli Relations". The music is very sweet; the bars are floating up from the piano to a window through which you can see a White House-like building in the distance. There in front of the building are Reagan and Shultz listening happily to the sound of my music. There is a choir of people who are singing with me. The choir consists of all of Israel's political leaders--Begin, Shamir, Meir Amit, Ben Elizar, Weizmann, etc. The choir is using documents--Cabinet decisions, protocols, reports--all secret documents--as their music sheets. The choir is singing its secrets to the United States to the accompaniment of my piano. Down in the right hand corner, there is an open safe--Erlich's safe. Sharon is shown as a lumbering elephant--as he was often in Israeli cartoons--coming out of the safe, carrying a sign in his trunk, lettered "Commission of Inquiry". As this elephant comes out of the safe, he is kicking over and breaking a lot of crockery filled with flowers. The vases are labeled "The Commission of Inquiry on the Sabra-Shatila Massacre", "the agreement Habib made with Lebanon", "the Israeli reactor on the Golan law". These are filed in a waste paper basket next to the piano. The cartoon was an extraordinary effort to depict the High Commissioner as the conductor of the Israeli choir. It sort of sums up the way the Israeli press liked to depict my role in their country after six and a half years as ambassador.

Unfortunately, this episode did not end my problems with Sharon. Up to this time, my relations with Sharon had been very correct. When we first arrived in Israel in 1977, Sharon was the Minister of Agriculture and responsible for settlement policy. He tried his best then to convince

me and through me, the U.S. government, that Israeli settlements in the occupied territories were beneficial. He tried very hard to cultivate me. We entertained the Sharons very often. We had private dinners with him. They invited us to their ranch. They came to some of our larger affairs. I went to his office; I took groups of American visitors to his office. He showed me around some of the West Bank settlements. Eventually it became clear to him that I was not buying his argument, but we maintained a sort of jocular stand-offishness. He would make cracks about our policy and I would return with comments in similar vein. All the exchanges were quite acceptable. From the period before the Lebanon war, through that war and afterwards, Sharon was Defense Minister. He became increasingly difficult and eventually impossible about the U.S. role in the area. He was very rude to Habib, Draper and sometimes to me, although I would be rude right back, as did Habib. We didn't let him get away unchallenged when he made nasty cracks. Maury Draper tended to be more passive which just encouraged Sharon to be even more outrageous. He behaved as all bullies do. After the Kahan Commission, he was fired as Defense Minister. He was convinced then that his demise was the result of a U.S. conspiracy with the Israeli government. It was of course true that the U.S. government, from the top down, was very hostile toward him and publicly so. He continued to dig, in the Israeli press, at American presidents, Weinberger and others. Washington had become very cold about Sharon, which was a complete turn around from the beginning of the Reagan administration; then it was very positive about him. It didn't take the administration long to turn around. Shultz was very bitter and angry with Sharon, during the Lebanon war and afterwards. Sharon became pretty much persona non grata in Washington.

I continued to have proper relations; when we had business to transact with him, we conducted it, politely. Of course, by 1983, he didn't have a Ministry, so that we didn't have much business to discuss. The American Jewish leaders who wanted to talk to Sharon--and there were always some even when he was in disgrace--would see him without any Embassy escort and we would not be involved. But up to the end of 1983, I tried to be perfectly professional with Sharon. If I saw him at a function, I would greet him properly; his response was usually quite cold. But we were speaking to each other. After the December 1983 episode, which was clearly an effort to have me removed from my post while I was out of Israel, I was furious. So I made a resolution that I would continue an official relationship with Sharon if my duties required it, but I would not have anything to do with him socially. I did not feel that I had any obligation to do so. So from January 1984 to when we left in June 1985, we never invited the Sharons to the residence. We did not even invite him to the July 4th, 1984 reception, although all the other Cabinet members were. I was very amused by the fact that within a few days thereafter, Sharon was circulating stories around town about what an insult it had been to Israel that he should not have been invited to our American Embassy for the July 4th festivities. He loved to talk about the "boycott" that had been imposed on him by Ambassador Lewis and the U.S. government; he kept this line going for the rest of my tour, as if we had an obligation to maintain social relationships after all of the events in December, 1983.

Eventually, the Sharon-Lewis-Erich story wound down in Israel at the end of December. I was still in the United States, on home leave, attending meetings in Washington, doing some diving and so forth. I returned to Israel at the end of the third week of January, 1984. From then for the next several months, Sharon continued his public attacks at every possible opportunity. Clearly, he was staking out his claim to replace Shamir as the Likud leader and therefore Prime Minister.

He was using his attacks on U.S. policy and me personally as a way to marshal the support of the Likud party members. He had no job in the Cabinet, although he had not lost his Ministerial title. He used his time to meet with Likud local branches; he sought and obtained platforms for his speeches, which were essentially allegations that U.S. policy, by now clearly failing in Lebanon--as was Israeli policy--was "due to the poor advice and almost criminal negligence of U.S. policy makers--Habib, Lewis, Weinberger, Draper and Veliotis". We were the five targets that Sharon lumped together as the architects of the failed U.S. policy. We were the cause of the catastrophic consequences for Israel of the Lebanon "failure", because, Sharon alleged, we had misled President Reagan, thereby leading the President to oppose the Israeli invasion; indeed, this faulty policy was responsible for the U.S. putting so much pressure on Begin that the invasion had to be halted prematurely, before complete Israeli success could be captured. It was therefore obviously, in Sharon's eyes, all the fault of the U.S. that had led to Israel having failed in Lebanon and it was clear that the same gang of five were causing U.S. policy in Lebanon to fail as well.

Weinberger was the only Washington-based official mentioned by Sharon. Cap was indeed a very central figure in U.S. policy making in Lebanon. He had been very skeptical about Israeli policy and was considered by many Israelis to be anti-Israel. He was the most vocal, prominent opponent of Israeli policy in the administration. He didn't miss any opportunities to publicly challenge that policy. He also argued most vigorously against sending U.S. Marines to Lebanon and was the strong proponent of removing them from there as soon as possible. For all these reasons, he was one of Sharon's targets.

This has to be understood within the environment then existing. During February and March, the final failure of U.S. policy in Lebanon became crystal clear. Therefore Sharon's speeches were made against the backdrop of the ignominious withdrawal of American Marines and other forces. The resistance of Amin Gemayel's government to Syrian efforts to extend its role in Lebanon was also collapsing. Furthermore, during the first week in March, the Lebanese government cancelled its ratification of the Lebanese-Israeli agreements reached in the preceding May. So both Israeli and American policies on Lebanon were turning out to be abject failures. That gave Sharon the opportunity not only to attack these policies, but to use their failures as a vindication of his actions. He attributed the failure of these policies to the fact that his path had not been followed; the Americans had forced Begin to "waffle" instead of giving him full support for strong actions in Lebanon. As I said, these Sharon diatribes were political ploys in his game to replace Shamir as party leader. It was clear in early 1984 that the Shamir government, which he had inherited from Begin during the preceding September, would have to face the electorate sometime during that year. Shamir's majority was too frail to last any length of time. In fact, on March 28, the Knesset set the date for elections. On April 13, the Likud Party held a meeting of its Central Committee to select its leader. Shamir had been viewed as an interim leader when Begin stepped down. Sharon launched his campaign for the leadership and pressed it vigorously in the weeks prior to the Committee meeting.

In fact, Sharon lost. Shamir was confirmed as the Likud candidate for the Prime Ministership by vote of 407-306. That was the closest that Ariel Sharon ever came to winning the Party leadership. It came only a year after he had been forced out of the Defense Ministry. So he was still unpopular with the general public, but he had retained and regained a lot of strength within

the Party. The vote was close enough to force Shamir to offer Sharon a Cabinet office. Sharon's campaign strategy, which involved savaging me and other American officials, made for a very unpleasant Spring in Israel. On at least one occasion in March, I raised with Shamir what I refer to as the "Sharon problem." I discussed with the Prime Minister Sharon's continuing attacks and insults on the United States. I felt that he was publicly poisoning the relationships between the two countries, which had not been that great to start with. Privately, Shamir was very unhappy with Sharon's campaign, but politically, he was not in a position to block him publicly. No one has ever succeeded in stopping Sharon's mouth in any case--not even Begin.

The difficulties between Sharon and me dragged out through 1984 and 1985, although not as acute as in the Spring of 1984 when Sharon was making a run for party leadership. Then, a year later, as I was preparing to leave Israel after eight years, I gave my first TV interview and the final chapter of my relationship with Sharon opened the week before we left. This was the only major TV interview during my tour in Israel. I had, (erroneously in retrospect) reached the conclusion at the beginning of my tour, that TV was not a good medium for me, because I did not speak Hebrew well enough to be interviewed. When you speak English in a Hebrew speaking country, the TV production uses sub-titles, which you can't control and may, therefore, not reflect the true essence of your comments. Moreover, the translation would never be a full one. So I decided that I would be better off not being interviewed on TV, except for some short comments or appearances. But no formal or serious interviews. I held to that position until just shortly before my departure when I was persuaded by the Kol Israel television correspondent, Ehud Ya'Ari--a friend--to do one farewell interview on MOKED, the major Israeli interview program, on May 22, 1985. There were actually two interviewers, Ya'Ari and Yoran Ronen, both of whom were very good. The interview in general received good reviews, particularly from journalists. During that interview, I was asked whether Sharon had ever given us in 1981 the detailed plans for the Lebanon invasion, I gave a brief and accurate response. That led to another explosion from Sharon, which lasted for the whole final ten day period before my departure from the country.

The first question asked of me was: "Mr. Ambassador, to what extent were you aware of the fact that Israel was going to open a war in Lebanon" I answered: "It was pretty clear to us by January or February, 1982 that the war was just waiting to happen and that there was a determination here not to let the PLO infrastructure in Lebanon continue much longer." Then I continued by discussing the kinds of provocations that we thought might trigger a war. Then Ehud Ya'Ari asked me: "Was there any specific American warning to the Israeli government before the war against going all the way to Beirut?" I answered: "The subject of going all the way to Beirut really only came up before the war to my knowledge in two conversations. One was I think in the December 1981 when Phil Habib was down at General Sharon's ranch. I think the meeting was at the ranch, as I recall. (Note: I was incorrect; the meeting was at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem-I was not present.) And Minister Sharon described in some hypothetical detail, the concept of what ultimately became known as "Big Pines". (That was the Israeli code phrase for the Lebanon operation). Habib was, as I was and others of us were, dumbfounded by the audacity of the political concept that seemed to involve. Habib reacted at that point very vehemently. I don't remember his precise words and I perhaps wouldn't want to quote them anyway. Ehud Ya'Ari quoted them: (he had already written a book together with Zeev Schiff on the Lebanon war, part of which described very accurately this whole meeting, based on Israeli

sources.) Ya'Ari said: "Habib said something like 'We are living in the 20th Century. Aren't we?'" I added: "He made it extraordinarily clear to Sharon that this was an unthinkable proposition as far as the U.S. government was concerned." Then I proceeded to describe the second occasion which occurred during Sharon's meeting with Al Haig in late May, 1982 in Washington. During that meeting, Haig acknowledged Israeli's right to self-defense, but said that if Israel responded to attacks, it had to do so in a way proportionate to those attacks. That would enable the international community to understand the appropriateness of Israeli reaction. I then added: "The words 'going to Beirut' didn't occur in that conversation with Haig to my recollection, but the point was unmistakable."

The interview set off a firestorm, partly because the press wrote about it as if I had revealed a great state secret! This added to already existing political pressures to reexamine the origins of the Lebanon War.

The debate heated up rapidly; every paper highlighted the story, often focusing on the alleged "shock" that an Israeli Defense Minister would have divulged to a foreign diplomat details of a military plan to invade Lebanon, even before discussing it with his own Cabinet or obtaining Cabinet approval. The incident provided fresh material for the many anti-Sharon journalists and politicians to use in calling for his impeachment or for another Commission of Inquiry to review the responsibility for the failure of the Lebanon War.

The next day, May 23, the Deputy Foreign Minister Yehuda Ben-Meir was interviewed on TV. He was asked about the allegation made against Sharon. He confirmed what I had said on TV, because there had been two Foreign Ministry officials--Hanan Bar-on and Eytan Ben Tsur--in attendance at the meeting, which had taken place at the Foreign Ministry. They had been shocked by what they had heard and had reported to Ben Meir what they had heard. He in turn had reported it to Shamir, the Foreign Minister. So while Ben Meir tried to avoid becoming entangled in the Sharon-Lewis debate, he did say that he had seen reliable reports about the meeting which confirmed the accuracy of my comments. The Minister for Communications, Moshe Zipori, who had been the Deputy Minister of Defense at the time of the meeting, also confirmed my report. Neither of them had been at the meeting, but there had been 16-18 people there, half American and half Israeli. Habib, Draper, Brown (DCM), Paul Hare (the Embassy Political Counselor) and Colonel Raines (the Defense Attaché) had attended. So there were a lot of witnesses at the meeting; furthermore there was a protocol made by the Israelis and the Embassy had submitted full reports to Washington. I had not been there because I was in the U.S. at the time but of course I had later read the reports and heard oral accounts from our officials. In light of all the witnesses and the existence of written reports, it didn't seem wise for Sharon to object to my factual statements.

But he went ahead and called a press conference in May 23. He said inter alia: "Not only did no meeting take place at the ranch six months prior to the war, but I have never detailed any operational plans (he began to use the phrase "operational plans" to clear his role)." He said also that he had warned senior Egyptian officials that Israel might invade Lebanon. That statement did not sit well with the Egyptians. He went on to justify himself as best he could. He denied that Phil Habib had ever been at the ranch. He did admit that there had been a meeting at the Foreign Ministry, but he tried to explain away his initial assertion, which had been to call my statements

"blatant lies. Lewis is a liar." He used the Hebrew word "gass", which I was told meant "gross, piggish, course".

He repeated the accusation that I was lying several times in the course of the next few days in a series of interviews that he gave. He continually lumped Habib, Draper, Veliotos, Weinberger and Lewis as the cause of the war. He tried to justify himself by asserting that he had tried repeatedly to warn the United States that unless it quickly resolved the PLO problem in Lebanon, Israel would have to take on the task in its own way. He denied that he had ever mentioned the code phrase; I had never said that he had--I had said that "it later became known as 'Big Pine'." So, in as many ways as he could, Sharon tried to depict me as a liar by picking up some inaccuracies or vagueness in the answers to the two TV questions. Since I had answered the questions extemporaneously, I probably wasn't precise on all details.

The whole controversy sparked a very interesting debate, once again reviving the question of whether the Lebanon war was justified. Eventually, some of the commentators asked the question that if Sharon were trying to warn the Americans even by going too far in telling them the concept of an operation, how could six months later Ronald Reagan saying that the U.S. had no idea of Israeli intentions? The President seemed to have been totally surprised and affronted by the Israeli invasion. That question did raise a problem for the U.S. because I had publicly confirmed that we had indeed been given the broad concept of what turned out to become "Big Pine". It is true that we didn't have the operational details, but we were certainly informed about many of the strategic details. Habib had reacted negatively, as he should have. That made Presidential surprise somewhat hard to sell.

That explains how Washington handled the uproar in Israel. When Sharon called me a "gass" liar, the Israeli correspondents in Washington asked the Department's press spokesman, Bernard Kalb, for his comments. The Embassy had immediately reported my TV interview and the subsequent furor giving the NEA Bureau the opportunity to draft press guidance, which totally supported my version of events. We had been told that this guidance would be issued as a press release. At the very last moment, someone--and I don't know who, but I suspect that it was Shultz--decided that it would be better not to become involved in the debate because of concern that the next question might well have been about why the U.S. had not taken stronger steps to prevent the Israeli invasion. So Kalb said that he could not answer the questions because they would involve discussions of diplomatic exchanges which are never discussed publicly. The position taken by the Department infuriated me, particularly after having been assured that the Department would strongly support me. I put out a "clarifying" statement, describing more fully what I knew and what I had said. Then I called Dick Murphy, the NEA Assistant Secretary and Charlie Hill, Shultz's Executive Assistant (and my former Political Counselor) to express in colorful language my reaction of anger and disappointment to the Department's response to Sharon's attacks on me. That brought a change in the Department's position. On May 24, the next day, Ed Djerejian, then the deputy press spokesman, in answer to another question about the dispute, said: "As we said yesterday, without going into the details of diplomatic exchanges, we can confirm that Ambassador Lewis has described the United States' position on this matter with complete accuracy. We strongly object to any suggestions to the contrary. I will repeat that. We strongly object to any suggestions to the contrary." Then he meandered a little, but didn't go beyond that, although he tried to square this admission with U.S. comments made months later

that the Israeli invasion had caught us completely off-guard.

After making his public statement, Djerejian went on "background", which was also fully covered by the press. He said: "We want to emphasize that beyond what was generally and publicly known, the United States government had no prior knowledge of the invasion of Lebanon." Apparently, what the Bureau meant to say when it drafted that language--which Djerejian was instructed to stick to and not abandon for one inch--was that we obviously didn't know specifically about when the invasion would take place or how it would proceed. The press, of course, interpreted that comment as being contradictory to what I had revealed and others had known. We had had all sorts of warnings that something was coming.

I should note, parenthetically, that the opposition had seized on my comments to score points against the Likud and Sharon. The Likud had then to defend Sharon for political reasons. So my comments had become the subject of a fierce internal Israeli political dogfight. The statement that I put out was made at the beginning of a final meeting I held on May 24 with the American press at the chancery in Tel Aviv. That was the last time I met with the correspondents as a group. I started out, in light of all of what had been said in the previous few days, by providing a clarification. I said: "I had no intention of intervening in internal Israeli affairs or encouraging any escalation of the public debate, which has erupted in the wake of my interview. I make this statement now merely to pay my debt as I conceive of it to the need for historical accuracy. The statement that I made on television, which produced such controversy, was in response to a question on an unrehearsed interview program. Since that interview and the reactions to it, I have reviewed the files and I discovered that I was indeed, as I thought I might be at the time, mistaken about the location of the meeting. But my recollections of the basic facts was accurate. The meeting did take place, the content was as described on television." I said: "I was careful to characterize Minister Sharon's presentation as hypothetical." I reviewed again who was present at the meeting and where it had taken place. I finished by saying: "The thrust of my answer was crystal clear and that was that such a meeting took place, that Phil Habib and other Americans were present and reported on it. At that meeting, Minister Sharon did present a hypothetical concept for a military operation in Lebanon. It was not a detail plan of operations, but in light of hindsight and what I read subsequently in the Israeli press and books by Israeli journalists, I can see it clearly resembled what came to be known as "Big Pines, although of course that name was not used during the meetings. Phil Habib reacted in vehement fashion. I do remember that he told Minister Sharon that the concept was unthinkable as far as the U.S. government was concerned and that is really all I want to say on the subject." I did get some questions on the issue, but I pretty much stuck to the line I had taken in the opening statement.

Of course, that did not end the dispute. Several more days ensued with the story being headline material. Sharon gave another interview in which he vehemently attacked me again. Every political correspondent commented on the affair. The Washington Post carried three or four stories on the debate. Tom Friedman of the New York Times wrote one or two stories more, more or less factually describing the exchanges that were occurring. I too was holding further interviews because these were my final days in Israel I met probably with eight or ten of the leading journalists or groups of journalists in the country, summing up my eight years as Ambassador, answering questions about past and current U.S. policies. I had a very long--two or three hours-session with the Jerusalem Post editorial staff, together with my wife Sallie. The

Sharon-Lewis debate of course arose during these interviews and I basically answered them the same way as I had done for the American journalists. There was some elaboration necessary which became fodder for some additional stories. So, without intent, I was keeping the story alive as well as Sharon. One of the things I told the American correspondents, as example, in answer to a question, was that I thought the invasion of Lebanon had been a tragedy for both Israel and Lebanon and very harmful to the United States, not only because we had been diverted from the Middle East Peace process and because of the damage that the invasion had inflicted on the two societies most closely involved.

At one point, there was a question about Begin. The question was whether Begin had been true to the Camp David agreement in permitting new settlements against the wishes of Carter and others. I answered that I did not think that the Prime Minister had lived up to the spirit of Camp David, although I did admit that it was obvious to me that Begin believed that he had not violated his commitments to Carter--which was the opposite of Carter's views. I am convinced that Begin felt that his commitment for restraint on new settlements was for only a three month period after Camp David. My comment even brought Begin out of his retirement; he had not been heard from in months. But in light of my comments, he actually gave a couple of statements to the press. Some journalist called him at home and read him my comments about the settlements issue. Begin said: "The outgoing Ambassador, Sam Lewis, never told me that the settlement policy in the territories was in contradiction to the spirit of Camp David, though we used to meet frequently." Begin then pointed out that my comments were new to him, but that I was entitled to think as I did and to express my opinions. He went on to note that his government's policy on the territories were well known to the American administration and that Carter clearly realized that after the three months' settlement freeze following Camp David, further settlements would be established. He also commented on the Sharon affair by saying that according to the Department's statement, it was clear that the Defense Minister had not divulged any operational plans. He finished his statement by saying some kind words about my work and about the good relations that he and I had enjoyed.

After the passage of a few more days, John Goshko of The Washington Post, under a headline that read "Ambassador was accurate on his report of Sharon's plans, State Department says." In the meantime Phil Habib was interviewed in California by Israeli correspondents; he refused to talk about the details of the meeting, but he did vouch strongly for my credibility on the subject. The fact that I had given a rare "on the record" interview made the whole episode seem much more dramatic to the Israelis. Everybody in Israel, of course, always looks "under the rocks" for possible motives. The press was full of speculation about my motives; questions were raised and answered about why I, all of a sudden, decided to attack Sharon--that was the way my interview was incorrectly always characterized. The answer according to the journalists and pundits was that I had suffered in silence, more or less, for three years despite Sharon's continuous attacks and that I had finally decided to get even. Some journalists, who had been very unhappy about U.S. policy because we had not tried hard enough to stop the invasion, described me as the architect of that policy, which also included sympathy for Israeli actions in Lebanon. David Landau, the foreign affairs correspondent for the Jerusalem Post--a brilliant journalist, left-wing, anti-war--had always been very critical of me because I was too close to Begin and other Likud leaders. He always had voiced the opinion that I had not been tough enough on Likud and that my reporting to Washington must have influenced Haig in his sympathetic view of the Israeli

invasion. He wrote an article entitled "Speaking for Sharon". In it he said: "I wish Ariel Sharon had commissioned me to defend him from the attack from out-going Ambassador Samuel Lewis. I could have done a much better job than he did with this pathetic misrepresentation of the facts in his television appearance." Then he went on to make me essentially the villain who had "played ball" with Begin and Sharon and who had led the American government in being far too tolerant of the Israeli government's excesses. So I received mixed reviews in the press, although on the whole, I think the press was much more in my corner than in Sharon's, although he also received some sympathy from a number of commentators. There were also those who were critical of me for having raised this issue in the way I did.

About May 27, I attended a meeting with Foreign Minister Shamir in his office. I said to him, as I was leaving, that I had hoped that my interview and the subsequent furor that it raised had not caused him any unnecessary angst. I apologized for any political difficulties that I may have raised; it had not been my intention to do so. He told me, very graciously, not to worry about it. Of course, this episode appeared in the press the next day characterizing my conversation with Shamir as an "apology". That was just another illustration of how few things in Israel remain out of the public domain for very long, particularly if they have political connotations.

A week later, the leading commentator for Haaretz wrote an article quoting Proverbs: "He that rolleth the stone, it will turn upon him", essentially suggesting that my statement on TV, which he was certain had been well planned before hand--since I was too smart to speak without having calculated the consequences--had come back to point out once again that the U.S. government knew a lot about what would happen and did far too little to head it off. The controversy continued to play in the press for another ten days, in almost every paper. Finally, in my last days in Tel Aviv, as Bob Flaten was beginning to act as chargé, I had an interview with NBC Today Show; the same issue arose. That night, Peres, then the Prime Minister, who had remained completely silent throughout this period, but who was a good friend, gave Sallie and me a farewell dinner. It was an extraordinary event which took place at the Peres official home in Jerusalem. Every member of the Cabinet and his wife was invited. This was a Cabinet of national unity, which meant that both Likud and Labor participated in it. One of the more interesting questions was whether Ariel Sharon would attend. He did not--fortunately. Shamir wasn't there either because he had to be in London that night. He and the Foreign Ministry had already hosted a formal dinner for us a few days earlier. The Peres dinner was an absolutely wonderful evening. An excessive number of accolades were spoken; Peres presented me a very large book about one meter high and 3/4 of a meter wide covered with felt. It was a tribute to Ben Gurion that Peres had written along with Abba Eban. A limited special edition had been printed in Paris in both French and English. The Israeli painter Agam had been commissioned to do a series of plates to illustrate the book. So the book contains about 15 original Agam plates depicting various aspects of Ben Gurion's life. Only 70 copies of this book were ever printed and we were fortunate enough to receive one copy, which was a beautiful memento of our years in Israel.

I should add, that on the night of May 23--the day after my TV interview--I had sat next to Peres at a banquet at the Knesset which was honoring the retiring chief of the Israeli equivalent of our Government Accounting Office. During the ceremonies, Peres passed me a note which said: "Sam, unfortunately I did not see Moked, but everybody is praising you immensely. I heard over the radio what Sharon and what Ben-Meir said: that Sam Lewis never lies. I shall refer to this

matter openly and clearly. You surely are free to take any steps you feel proper. SP". That last statement alludes to something that I had said to Peres privately earlier at the dinner. As I have said before, I was really upset at being called a liar by Sharon. I recalled immediately what Mrs. Erlich had said two years earlier about the previous Sharon attack--namely that I should have sued him for libel. I was thinking seriously about doing so in May, 1985. Sharon was embroiled at the time in a libel case against TIME magazine. It was a quixotic thought, but I did consider the possibility very seriously. I mentioned this possible course to Peres at the dinner and probably asked his advice; that I believe is the reference in his note.

In the next few days, I thought about that libel suit possibility a lot. I talked to two of the most distinguished Israeli lawyers on a very confidential basis. I asked whether they thought that bringing a suit was a practical idea. Both thought that it would not be, because Sharon, as a Knesset member, has parliamentary immunity. It was true that immunity was not all encompassing, but both lawyers had serious reservations that my suit would be allowed to be pursued. Moreover, they really didn't think it was worth pursuing, although both were willing to take the case if I insisted. I took their advice and dropped the matter.

On June 2, the same day of the Peres farewell dinner, Akiva Eldar, the political correspondent of the Haaretz--now here in Washington as that newspaper's correspondent--wrote the following short story:

"US Ambassador to Israel, Samuel Lewis, considered filing a libel suit against Minister Sharon and had consulted a number of lawyers on the issue. Lewis was mainly offended by Sharon's remark calling him a liar as well as Sharon's accusations that Lewis' reports to Washington had damaged US interests and had not been reliable. Lewis thought of filing the suit after he leaves his post, but apparently decided against it when told that Sharon has parliamentary immunity. Lewis leaves his post this week. He returns to Washington and will come back to Israel at year's end to do some research at the Dayan Center. Last night Lewis declined to comment on the libel suit issue."

That was the last installment, almost. On June 9, an article appeared in the New York Times written by Anthony Lewis under the headline "What Lebanon Meant--Force Can Be a Delusion" in which he said, inter alia:

"The story of how General Sharon bullied and deceived his Cabinet colleagues so that he could have his large scale political war has been told before. But a fascinating new account has just come from Samuel W. Lewis, who is retiring after years of distinguished service as American Ambassador to Israel. Mr. Lewis said that in December, 1981, six months before the invasion, General Sharon described his ambitious war plans to US diplomats who were dumb-founded by the political concept and considered it unthinkable. When General Sharon denied the Ambassador's account, the State Department took the pointed step (?), stating that 'Mr. Lewis had spoken with complete accuracy'. This history is highly relevant today because Ariel Sharon is. One might have expected the man with the futile deaths of 654 Israeli soldiers on his conscience to fade from the political scene, but Sharon is not faded. And the philosophy he expounds, force as a political solution, is very much alive..." The rest of the story is in the same vein.

That, I believe, is enough about Sharon and Lewis--perhaps already too much. But my relationships with the General do provide an interesting footnote to history.

Q: I believe it would be useful if you could describe the peculiar and unique situation of the Consulate General in Jerusalem, which operates independently of the Embassy in Tel Aviv. That situation has I believe on occasions caused some difficulties.

LEWIS: The Consulate General in Jerusalem is a unique story in American diplomatic history. It had been established before the State of Israel came into being; it was founded in the 1840s and had been maintained through the Turkish and British dominion over Palestine. It became a well established center of American activity in the region. The Principal Officer was usually an Arab specialist. When Israel was founded in 1948, an American embassy was established in Tel Aviv. For the following thirty years, there was considerable tension between the Embassy and the Consulate General. The C.G. was never under the formal jurisdiction of the Embassy for diplomatic reasons. The US has never recognized, and does not do so today, the *de jure* Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. Our position has always been that we will not do so until the parties in the dispute agree on the final status of the city. The State Department always believed that the Consulate General had to be maintained as a separate consular and reporting entity. The CG is responsible for providing consular services in the city of Jerusalem and its environs; it is also responsible for reporting on and maintaining contacts with the Palestinians living in the West Bank. The Embassy in Tel Aviv, at least until now, maintained responsibilities for activities in the Gaza Strip, which became an occupied territory in 1967. So the US government has divided the responsibility for dealing with Palestinians with the Gazians relating to the Embassy while the West Bank and Jerusalem inhabitants have been the responsibility of the CG in Jerusalem.

When I arrived in Israel in 1977, the tradition for many years had been one of great hostility and arms-length relationship between the two American establishments. That attitude was particularly acute as it impacted on the personal relationship between the Ambassador and the Consul General. I am told that in the 1950s and 1960s, the Consul General would not permit the Ambassador to visit Jerusalem without his permission. The CG also prohibited the Ambassador to fly the American flag in the limousine once the car had crossed the city limits. It was the CG's position that once the Ambassador had crossed that line he was "no longer in Israel". This position was maintained in the face of the fact that much of the Israeli government was headquartered in Jerusalem which of course required frequent visits by Embassy officials to the city. By the 1970s and 1980s, the whole Israeli government, except the Defense Ministry was located in Jerusalem. Over the years, the tensions between the principals and their staffs did not diminish. There are a lot of stories about the animosities between the two American establishments. I must say that when I arrived in Israel, the relationship was not nearly as bad as I had been led to believe. But there were still "territorial" disputes and some tensions. We had a very good Consul General, Mike Newlin, in 1977. Mike was an Arabist who had a great affinity for the Palestinian cause. He was also a very disciplined and able officer, which brought some objectivity to the situation. The Israelis had always deeply resented that the Consul General did not report to the Ambassador in Tel Aviv and worst of all, had no official relationship with the National Israeli government. The sole exception to that rule was on consular matters where the CG and the Consular Section of the Israeli Foreign Ministry had continuing contacts. That was a

function essentially of Israeli policy. Since we didn't recognize the *de jure* status of the Israeli government in Jerusalem, it did not recognize the official existence of our Consulate General, although, as I said, there were contacts on certain matters. And, of course, the Consul General and his staff dealt regularly with the Mayor of Jerusalem and other municipal officials. Other Israeli officials never set foot in the Consulate General building or the private home of the Consul General. They never attended his Fourth of July reception; in fact, I am not sure that after a while the CG even invited them. So there were continuing tensions between the Israeli government and the CG. The Foreign Ministry was quite suspicious of the activities of the CG; they viewed our representation in Jerusalem as a nest of PLO supporters who were conspiring with the Palestinians against the welfare of the Jewish state. The fact that the CG didn't report to the Embassy heightened that suspicion.

I worked very hard throughout my whole tour to get this problem under control. I believe I had considerable success and I am very proud of what we accomplished. Essentially, I took the view that both establishments were representing the US government; we took the same orders from Washington from the same policy makers. I firmly believed that we needed to work together; we needed to exchange information. In some cases, I thought that joint Embassy-CG messages to Washington were appropriate. Above all, I felt strongly that the two staffs and their leaders had to collaborate as professionals and could not let the bureaucratic rivalries that had existed in the past interfere with the achievement of US goals. I understood that we might hear different versions of the same story: we in Tel Aviv would hear then Israeli point of view whereas the Consulate General would hear the Palestinian version. That fact of life should not inhibit us from pursuing US government policy. I think this approach worked quite well. From the beginning, I thought that the key to close team work was a respect that the Ambassador and the Consul General had for each other. If in addition they liked each other and might even be friends that would have added another dimension. So the CG and I talked frequently over the phone and in fact saw each other personally quite often. That brought the staffs closer together and they were able to work with each other reasonably well. I cultivated the relationship and Mike Newlin welcomed it. He was very gracious. I began the practice of trying to stop at the Consulate General as often as I could while I was in Jerusalem. I would then spend some time discussing issues with Mike and later on with his successors, Brandon Grove, Wat Cluverius and Maury Draper. I am not sure that my efforts were ground breaking, but I do believe that I had more contacts with the CG than had my predecessors. I invited the Consul General -- I urged him -- to come to our weekly staff meeting in Tel Aviv which he frequently did. That was helpful because it enabled some of my staff to hear the CG's views first hand. He found the visits helpful both for substantive and administrative reasons; we provided considerable administrative support for the CG. For example, we handled the CG's budgetary matters since it didn't have a full time B&F officer. The regional security officer, stationed in Tel Aviv, provided services to the CG.

As time passed, certain issues would arise which would engender concerns in one establishment or another. Typically, those tensions rose either between political or the administrative sections, but I found that we were able to minimize the frictions as long as the principals could maintain frequent communications. I urged all of my staff to be remember that in the Embassy-CG relationship, we were the giant in size and much closer to the Israeli government so that we could deal with issues that often frustrated the CG. So when the CG had a problem with the Israeli government as it frequently did, its only recourse was to get the Embassy involved on its side.

The issues most often dealt with travel in the occupied territories or consular matters or picture taking. We were the only American establishment that could represent the CG in its relationships with the Israeli government. Eventually the CG got the Israeli military government to at least talk to it about consular cases. There were a lot of American citizens living in the West Bank; some invariably would become involved with the military government often about anti-Israel activities. These citizens had the right to US representation. So over a period of time, the working relationships between the Embassy and the CG became closer, even though it increased our workload as the sole recognized representatives to the Israeli government.

I also decided upon my arrival in Tel Aviv that it was extremely important that I have an important role in the selection of the Consul General. That had to be done on an informal basis by means of my network in Washington. I can honestly say that I had a major role in the selection of Grove and all his successors. I wanted to make sure that the Consul General would be someone who would carry on and perhaps even enhance the cooperation that Mike Newlin and I had engendered. It just happened, therefore, that all of the CGs that followed Newlin were old friends of mine. So I was pleased with the evolving cooperation between the Embassy and the Consulate General. The basic problem still exists and will always exist until there is some resolution of the Jerusalem problem. It is a crazy organizational relationship, but it is manageable. It is unheard of elsewhere that an Embassy is not located in the same city that is viewed as the capital by the host country.

Another ingredient that improved the teamwork between the Embassy and the Consulate General during my tour was the long series of visits by Secretaries of State, starting with Vance in the pre-Camp David period. There were also frequent visits by the special emissaries. Habib particularly, while the principal Middle East peace negotiator, was coming to and leaving Israel almost every other day. He shuttled between Beirut and Jerusalem. It became very inconvenient for me to drive to Jerusalem so often. Part of my staff was essentially relocated to Jerusalem to support the peace process. The Embassy, historically, had leased a suite in the King David Hotel for the use of the Ambassador and senior Embassy officials who had to spend nights in Jerusalem; it was also used as an office when necessary. But the Habib shuttle was so intense that a suite was just not adequate. We were forced to use the Consulate General's facilities, particularly his communications channels. Mike, Brandon, Wat, and Maury cooperated fully and we began to use the Consulate General as a second set of offices whenever we had official visitors who needed government support. We would hold meetings in the CG, often in its secure area. We would use its secure telephone to communicate with Washington so that we wouldn't have to drive back to Tel Aviv every time we wanted to talk to Washington. We sent cables from the CG, although the top of the message made it clear that the text came from the Embassy or from Habib. In this way, the Consul General became involved, and sometimes members of his staff, in the peace process. That made them a part of the team which under previous situations they would not have been allowed. The CGs made substantive contributions and brought another dimension to bear on our deliberations. This practice became well established and as far as I know, still prevails today. In any case, during my period in Israel, the new involvement of the CG made considerable difference to the collaboration between the American establishments in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. So today, even though the Consulate General is an independent operation not under the control of the US Ambassador to Israel -- as would be true in all other countries -- there developed a *de facto* team operation much of the time I was in Israel.

Q: I wanted to also ask you about your impressions of Aaron Yariv and Teddy Kollek.

LEWIS: They were both close friends. General Yariv died a few months ago. I knew him well, although I knew Teddy Kollek better. I regard Teddy and his wife Tamar as very close friends of Sallie's and mine to this day. Both Yariv and Kollek are examples of the best of Israeli society and leadership of an earlier generation. Yariv, who had been the Director of Military Intelligence for a number of years going back to before the Six Day War, was the most successful of all Directors. He survived in that job without ever becoming involved in a lot of difficulties, which was no easy task. After he retired from the Army, he became an informal advisor to the government. He was a very balanced, moderate, serious and sensible gentleman. He impressed every one who knew him with his sound judgement; his advice was always dependable. His military record was very distinguished, but I will always remember him as being a very fine human being. Sometime after his retirement, he came to the conclusion that Israel needed some kind of strategic policy think tank, separate from the government. Such did not exist in Israel at the time. There were a couple of research institutes -- one at Tel Aviv University and one at Hebrew University -- but they did not deal with strategic policy issues. They were essentially academic research institutes. So Yariv decided to build an institution somewhat analogous to the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. That became the model. He raised the necessary funds by himself in the United States and managed to collect a fairly substantial endowment. Then he went to Tel Aviv University and asked them whether they wanted to be the host institution for his new center. He made it quite clear that the new center would have to remain independent because he didn't want it to become another academic institution. He wanted his center to be perceived by the government and other segments of Israeli society as a solid base for policy research whose output had relevance to current problems and the Israeli decision making process. After very difficult negotiations, he managed to convince Tel Aviv University to give the new center its independence. I believe that that center has become one of the ornaments of Israeli society. Yariv, after having launched the center successfully and having headed it for a number of years, was on the verge of retiring when he had an automobile accident and a stroke at the same time. He never recovered from these two afflictions and died a few months later. I always will regard him as a good friend and, as I said, an outstanding example of an Israeli military generation which created the IDF and brought it to a very high state of professionalism. I met him first in 1977 when he came to see me as a member of a group which was forming a new party, the Democratic Movement for Change, led by General Yigal Yadin, Israel's most famous archeologist, as well as the IDF's first Chief of Staff. He had retired from the Army many years earlier, but he now launched the first major "third" party. Yariv became active in that party and that is how we met; we remained good friends for the rest of his life.

Kollek was the mayor of Jerusalem for my whole tour. He was MR. JERUSALEM. We became very fond of the Kollaks, Teddy and Tamar. They are very fond of my wife Sallie. We took every opportunity to be together with them, even though Jerusalem was officially not under my jurisdiction. I had admired Teddy from afar for a long time. I felt fortunate that I could work with him, closely on several occasions, on some of the trickier aspects of the our Jerusalem policy, which he very much resented. He did not like that we would not recognize all of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. He made his displeasure eminently clear by never going to the Consulate General's Fourth of July parties. Historically, the CG had two parties: one in east Jerusalem,

where we had a branch office, and one for west Jerusalem. During Wat Cluverius' tenure, Kollek succeeded in having the CG host only one Fourth of July event, for both the east and west Jerusalemers. When that happened, Kollek attended as a symbolic act of his approval for the CG's new approach. I think Teddy is one of the great heroes of his generation. He made Jerusalem a different city. He raised funds for it abroad. He did everything a mayor could do to foster an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence between the Jewish and the Palestinian communities. He of course could not solve the basic political issue, but Jerusalem, as it is today, is a memorial to Teddy Kollek. The city's budget would never have been adequate to fund any of the modernization projects that Kollek built. He developed new parks, new schools, new clinics, all funded by the Jerusalem Foundation which was the recipient of all the funds that Teddy raised privately abroad. He was crusty and some people often found him difficult to get along with because he was always outspoken. He called as he saw them without reference to diplomatic niceties, which he might have learned during his early career during and after the War of Independence as an intelligence agent and diplomat. He had been the right hand man to Ben Gurion for many years. I am sure that, if he had chosen national politics, he could have become a serious candidate for the Prime Ministership. I am not sure how a Kollek regime would have fared. He didn't enjoy party politics. In the 1970s, he decided that he would devote himself to Jerusalem, although he never abandoned his allegiance to the Labor Party. He was a close friend and ally of Shimon Peres throughout his career. That fact may also have dissuaded him from pursuing a national stage which might have been put in competition with Peres. I remember that sometime in 1988, after I had left US government service, I had returned to Israel for a visit. We had dinner with Kollek during that trip; he was then in his late 70s. This was a period during which the Labor Party was in great difficulties. The peace process had stalled; Peres' fortunes were declining. He and Rabin were at sword points; Shamir and the Likud were very much in ascendancy. Teddy told me that evening that he thought that he might have made a mistake in not becoming a candidate for Prime Minister because the Labor leadership then did not seem up to the challenge. He worried about the future of the country if the Palestinian issue was not resolved and if a peace were not established. But he admitted that by then, he was too old to start in national politics. I am not sure in any case whether he would have succeeded, but we will never know because he had waited too long to consider a run for Prime Minister. We have to remember that he became Mayor first in 1964; twenty-eight years later he ran once too often and was beaten. He knew well before that last election that the time to retire had come. He in fact had announced that he would retire in view of his advanced age, even though he was still maintaining a schedule that a man half his age would find daunting. But he was getting very cranky and his health was beginning to fail him. He felt frustrated and limited by his advancing years. The trouble was that his own "Independent Jerusalem" party had no readily available successor; like so many other great men; Teddy could never bring himself to groom a successor. He tried a couple and then dumped them. The same thing happen to de Gaulle, Churchill, Roosevelt and many others. They don't want to consider that age will catch with them and that the world will have to go on without them. That thought was too threatening. Kollek didn't either, so there was not anyone from his party that had a chance to win the election. The Likud had fielded a younger, very attractive candidate, Ehud Olmert. Peres particularly and Rabin also pleaded with Teddy repeatedly to run for office because he was the only who could hold the city against the right wing at a very delicate moment in the peace process. They were concerned that if a right wing candidate won, he would bring the religious conservatives with him and that the hard won comity that existed in Jerusalem would be lost. Kollek weakened under the flattery and the

pressure; he ran and was beaten badly. It was a terrible way for his career to end. Many of his friends abandoned him; many didn't vote at all because they agreed with him that he was too old. So they just abstained. Peres and Rabin bear some of the responsibility, but Kollek was their only hope to keep hold of Jerusalem. Teddy left office very dejected and somewhat irked, having devoted nearly thirty years to Jerusalem as mayor. He is still very active today trying to find ways to help the city, although his successor is not being very gracious and receptive. He is slowly, but surely, pushing Kollek out of the picture in a way that he certainly does not deserve.

Q: Kollek was one of the first people to warn Washington about Philby, the British spy. He had known Philby in Vienna. He knew that the first Mrs. Philby was a member of the Communist Party. He warned people in Washington to be careful about Philby. His advice was not heeded sufficiently.

LEWIS: I guess I had heard that story. Kollek, of course, had very close contacts with the CIA and the State Department because, as I mentioned, his early career was in intelligence work. He was the Mossad's (or its predecessor) representative in Washington.

I have never seen any one as good in inspiring groups to support certain causes as Teddy was. His cause was of course Jerusalem. He had lots and lots of friends, particularly in the United States. I benefitted to a certain extent from his wide network because we are both cigar smokers. I used to smoke mine very publicly when I was in Israel. That was well known as one of my traits. Teddy was also known as a cigar lover and received gift boxes of Havana cigars from all over the world as token of admiration. He could never had smoked them all. So he shared his surplus with some of his friends. He always gave me at least once a year and sometimes twice a year a box of Havanas. He continues to remember my addiction and whenever we see each other, he gives me some cigars, although of course his supply has greatly diminished. That love for cigars was a bond between us in addition to a lot of other attachments.

Jerusalem is littered with monuments to Teddy Kollek's success for raising money. He was very particular about the designs of the buildings that were put up during his tenure. He monitored very closely the investment of the funds that he had collected world-wide. He has left a legacy in Jerusalem that few others leave anywhere. He left his collection of artifacts, which was quite extensive, to the Israel Museum.

Q: I would like to turn for a moment to the group of observers that were stationed in the Sinai passes. You mentioned earlier the unfortunate demise of the head of that unit, Ray Hunt. I would like to know a little more about that program, how it got started and how it operated.

LEWIS: That operation was called the "Multi-National Force and Observers" (MFO). The idea rose from the stalemate that had occurred in the Security Council after the signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. As we drafted that treaty, it was understood that the Israeli would insist that an international force be placed in the buffer zone once they had withdrawn from the Sinai Peninsula. They also insisted that, unlike the UN Peace-keeping Force that existed in Sinai between 1956 and 1967 (UNEF II) and which was withdrawn suddenly at Nasser's insistence, this new force had to be in the Sinai with a firm guarantee that it could not be withdrawn unless both Israel and Egypt agreed. As we drafted the peace treaty, we included a provision providing

for a multi-national force of UN peace-keepers. But we were very much aware that the Soviets opposed the Camp David initiative and did not play any role whatsoever in that effort. We thought it very likely that they would veto in the Security Council any proposal to establish such a force. Nevertheless, the treaty calls for a UN peace-keeping force. Because we thought it highly unlikely that the Security Council would approve this provision, we drafted side letters for Carter to provide to Begin and Sadat, assuring them that the U.S. would see to the provision of a multi-national force outside the UN framework, if the Security Council could or would not approve it. As we suspected, the treaty, although widely approved by many countries, never received approval by the UN. That was one of the UN derelictions that have annoyed me since Camp David. The Soviets made it eminently clear that if any resolution relating to the peace treaty were brought before the Security Council, they would veto it. The US, for reasons that I then and now believe were quite erroneous, didn't challenge the Soviets. I always thought it would have been much better to table a resolution of support for the peace treaty, including a mandate for a peace-keeping force, and leave it up to the Soviets to exercise their veto against a very popular agreement. They would have had to accept an international onus for their veto, but the US government decided not to force the issue. So the peace treaty never had a UN blessing until many years later.

Upon signing of the treaty, we started to form a peace-keeping force, outside the UN framework, as we had promised to do. We decided to use a UN force as a model, but to use a somewhat different structure. Michael Sterner, then Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA, was assigned to lead the negotiations between the three major countries involved: Israel, Egypt and the US. He was supposed to come up with a formula for a multinational force which would satisfy the requirements spelled out in the peace treaty and which would satisfy the Israelis who were the ones that were insisting on a force. Egypt really didn't want a force in Sinai, but Israel would not have signed the treaty without it.

Sterner did an outstanding job of negotiations. I was personally very much involved when the negotiations took place in Israel. I thought he handled himself extremely well. In the final analysis, we established a unique structure, headed by a Director General of the MFO, who was to be headquartered in Rome. That DG was to be an American civilian. He was in many respects the analogue to the UN Secretary General. The international force that was to be present in the Sinai would consist of approximately 3000 people, drawn from a dozen or more nations under the command of a non-American general. It was understood that we would seek for that position someone who had had some experience in leading a multinational force from the NATO command structure. In fact, we chose a Norwegian as the first commander. Each of his successors have been Scandinavians, although none of their troops were involved. The first commander was a brilliant soldier/diplomat. He had been on the NATO staff for a long time and was very skilled in the diplomatic side of his tasks. The major challenge was to get contributions of troops. One of the most important aspects of the negotiations was the agreement we managed to get approved that unlike UN peace-keeping forces which are totally funded by the UN budget, in this case Egypt, Israel and the US would each pay one-third of the costs of the operation. That provided major incentive in keeping costs down. It also was concrete demonstration that the force was being established for the benefit of the two signatories to the peace treaty. It was a formula that I have often argued should be adopted by the UN for all of its peace-keeping operations wherever the benefitting countries can afford it. These forces are established for the

benefit of the countries involved and should therefore be supported financially by them, instead of the international community at large. Recently, the UN has taken that approach in one or two cases.

Vance, Hal Saunders, the Assistant Secretary for NEA and Sterner with many other State officials were involved in seeking participants in the force. Initially, we were met with a lot of skepticism even from our best allies, like the British and French. They were very concerned about their participation because the Arab world, except Egypt, had rejected the peace treaty. That raised in their minds the effect of their participation on their relations with Arab countries. They depended to a considerable extent on the oil from the Persian Gulf states as well as their exports to Saudi Arabia; that gave them considerable pause, because they viewed their participation in the multinational force as potentially damaging to their political and economic interests. Carter and Vance had to lean very hard on some of the European governments to contribute their troops.

Christopher was enigmatic. He was highly disciplined, kept to his impossible daily schedule, read his briefing books, listened impatiently to arguments among the senior staff, then adjourned meetings with a few cryptic words intended to have someone else hammer out a consensus on the issue and bring it to him for approval. For a few weeks he seemed to appreciate having my historical perspective on many of the organizational and bureaucratic challenges the new team faced. He obviously valued my advice on Arab-Israeli issues, and I played a key role for 6-8 months in the senior Middle East policy team (with Martin Indyk at the NSC, Ed Djerejian in NEA, and Dennis Ross -- (held over from the Baker era). Chris always treated me with utmost courtesy and personal consideration -- but somehow, as a Policy Planner, I didn't click with him.

By my 63rd birthday (Oct. 1), I was fed up with working 16 hour days with so little positive impact on the Clinton Administration's manifold foreign policy problems. Our Arab-Israel policy was about the only bright spot. I now felt comfortable leaving that in Dennis Ross's hands.

Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis'
Speech at the Dayan Center,
Tel Aviv University
October 30, 1984

Thank you very much Itamar, it is a pleasure indeed to be at the Dayan Center. Moshe Dayan was not only a great statesman and a great hero of this country but also a close friend of mine and that fact has been one of the many things that has enriched the seven and a half years that my wife and I have been privileged to be in Israel.

I want to start with a disclaimer. This is not a speech and not a lecture. It is a series of personal musings about the subject. And it is most emphatically not a statement on behalf of the United States Government. I wouldn't want my government, my president, my friends in Washington to catch any flack from any other government or from ex-administrations for anything that I say this afternoon. I'm here as a seeker after the truth in an effort to give you a personal impression of some of the factors that went into the stalemate that occurred after Camp David in the peace process and unfortunately persists to this present time.

I unfortunately couldn't make the morning session. I've been trying to find out from Elie Rubenstein and others what was said. And you'll have to forgive me if I say something that they've already said. I don't want to rehearse the history and I'm not going to talk much about Camp David itself, though being there was a central experience in my life. I'd like rather to concentrate on what's happened since Camp David and why the promise of the second part of the Camp David agreement dealing with the settlement over the West Bank and Gaza has not prospered.

There really are three separate periods you have to look at though and inevitably we have to mention from time to time a few events in those periods which hinged on the stalemate and ultimately overcame the best efforts of a lot of very dedicated people from all three countries. The first period from 1979 to the end of 1980 was the period of great opportunity, unfortunately, missed opportunity. The period from 1981, the Reagan administration, until the beginning of the Lebanon war was a period in which there were some possibilities of renewing a process which had come close to stalling already and some false dawn. The period since the beginning of the Lebanon war has been a period of really total stalemate with certain events, particularly the launching of President Reagan's initiative of September 1, 1982, adding a certain amount of excitement and turmoil to the diplomatic landscape but not producing movement. Most of the period that is really of interest to me in this afternoon session is the first period.

Beginning with the end of the negotiations for the peace treaty and the signing of that peace treaty in March of 1979 up until the end of the Carter administration, that moment of signing that peace treaty was a period of high hopes and expectations. Certainly the atmosphere that surrounded the treaty signing in Washington was extraordinary. And even here, although it was a bit outweighed, as I recall by the importance of Maccabee's winning the European cup, it still produced quite a bit of excitement. For the period beginning in May of '79 until the end of '80, delegations from the three countries met, adjourned, remet, readjourned, exchanged thousands and thousands and thousands of words of documents of ideas, drafted position papers, ate enormous quantities of food (much to the ill benefit of most of the participants), traveled back and forth between Egypt and Israel and sometimes Europe; and at the end of the Carter administration, Sol Linowitz, who was then our chief negotiator, submitted a very scholarly, lengthy report to President Carter just before he left office on why it had not yet succeeded and what should be done to enable it to succeed in the future. Some of the points that Sol made, I think, in retrospect will stand up rather well historically. But I'm not going to quote him, I'm going to give you my impressions.

There were a whole lot of elements that conspired against success. When the autonomy talks, as they were called, began in May of 1979 at Beersheba with Secretary Vance present during the visit of Anwar Sadat to Beersheba, there was a moment when it seemed that all three delegations believed that these negotiations could be carried out in rather short order. One of the most difficult negotiations around the period of the signing of the peace treaty had to do with the famous joint letter which established the framework for the autonomy talks. That joint negotiated letter from Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat to President Carter dated the 26th of March, the same date as the peace treaty said, inter alia, that the two governments agree to negotiate continuously and in good faith to conclude these negotiations at the earliest possible

date and they agreed that the objective is establishment of the self-governing authority in West Bank and Gaza to provide full autonomy to the inhabitants. Egypt and Israel set for themselves the goal of completing the negotiations within one year, and so forth.

That letter as I say, was a tortuous negotiating exercise and ended up basically just restating language from the Camp David agreement. But two of the points became very controversial as time went on because rather than continuous negotiations which were visualized, negotiations were quite episodic. And each government for its own reasons found it necessary after two or three days of convening of delegations to go back home, report to the political bosses, take stock, leak their own versions of what had happened to the press, build political barriers against attacks from local oppositions and lick their wounds.

And then the United States role for the ensuing month or two would generally be to try to find a place to have the next discussion and if possible assist in reaching an agreement on the agenda. It was a totally different negotiating environment, therefore, from the Camp David environment which was described I'm sure this morning: an environment in which about thirty people were locked up literally for thirteen days and nights until they came to agreement and in which there was no contact permitted with the media except through one official spokesman for the conference. That difference in the physical circumstances was I think a factor which led ultimately to the failure to these negotiations. But surely it was only one of many.

At the heart of the problem of this period and indeed perhaps a problem which continues up to the present time was the fact that there was a mutual misperception in the Israeli government and in the Egyptian government. Once again I have to say that this is my personal perception. No one else should be blamed for it. A mutual misperception of the true priority goals of the other side. And this is something which has commented on from time to time here in Israel and in the various memoirs of those who have written already about the period. And it came of course to a head shortly after Camp David.

The Camp David accord itself was the high water mark of bridging between these different priorities. The agreement if you look at it is a mixture. Part of it is a framework for a treaty with Egypt pure and simple. Part of it is a framework of what is close to being a comprehensive approach toward a long term settlement of the Palestinian problem. Though that work comprehensive doesn't appear in the document.

Now my Israeli friends at Camp David and certainly more in the months thereafter, and well into 1980 or '81; I believe that it's fair to say that most of the Israeli statement involved in this exercise were convinced that the portion of the Camp David agreement which dealt with the Palestinian problem was of much less importance to Egypt than the treaty. And then, in fact, many would have said and did say it was merely a cosmetic icing put on the cake of the peace treaty to permit a certain amount of diplomatic rationalization to be made to the Arab world by President Sadat. And one could cite lots of evidence as to why Sadat was not enormously worried personally about the Palestinians.

President Carter, as a matter of fact, in a session in which I was present, made a remark to some of us that after a particularly frustrating discussion of the Palestinian part of the Camp David

agreement, said I really don't think that anybody worries at all about the Palestinians except me. And that remark replied both to Sadat and to Begin. And I'm sure it was an exaggeration, but it was the way Carter felt at that moment. Through the period of negotiations before Camp David, during and after, this question of whether Egypt really just wanted its territory back and peace, and the rest of it was what it had to do as a minimum to avoid being attacked too much by other Arab countries bedeviled, I think, the negotiations.

And then on to the other side, there was undoubtedly in Cairo in that period a perception of some confusion about the Israeli priorities. It was clear to the Egyptians that Israel wanted peace - no question about that - and was willing to concede a lot of territory for peace and eventually ceded all of the Sinai for it. There were many Israelis saying that there was a genuine desire to find a new formula for the West Bank and Gaza which could ultimately lead to a permanent settlement. There were others in Egypt who perceived the talk about the West Bank and Gaza and what Israel was prepared to concede on those territories as window dressing - the necessary window dressing to get the Egyptians to agree to the peace treaty. So there was, I think, a mutual misperception on both sides, not wholly resolved to this day.

The second factor which certainly influenced the stalemate was domestic politics. Here, I think the problem was more in Israel than in Egypt, though Egyptian politics is always a bit murkier to penetrate for an outsider. And I have no doubt that Sadat had his own domestic constituency problems. Certainly one of them ultimately led to his assassination. But it was very clear with respect to Israel where a coalition government with a variety of options about the future of the territories was led by a prime minister who had a deep ideological commitment to permanent Israeli control of those territories but who had been led by a difficult negotiating situation for a great objective at Camp David to sign a document which certainly implied and went more than just implication in admitting the possibility that in a final status negotiation, five years hence, it was at least possible that those territories would be transferred to someone else. And it's clear that Prime Minister Begin stretched very hard at Camp David to deal with this contradiction in his own mind and found language which satisfied him with a lot of encouragement from Moshe Dayan and Justice Barach and others to convince him that he could sign a document which left this issue sufficiently ambiguous to satisfy his own conscience.

But once he returned to Israel, he was, I think, truly shocked to discover the strength of opposition in his own party to what he had just signed. All of you remember, I'm sure, the marathon Knesset debate that occurred here just after Camp David. And I saw in Begin often in those days a sense of incredulity that his own loyal supporters in Herut, in particular, would think of rejecting his great work for peace and would not accept on face value his assurances that he would not really compromise any of his ideological principles or theirs. And the final vote, if you recall, while overwhelmingly for the agreement or for the package of agreements, still had a very large number of Begin's own party against him. That fact made, I believe, tremendous impression on him which stuck with him throughout the rest of his peace diplomacy and made him extremely wary in the autonomy negotiations of agreeing to any form for this new concept of autonomy which his own domestic constituents would see as meaning inevitable transfer of territory to Jordan or someone else. And I think it lent an element of rigidity to the Israeli positions during the negotiations which was very difficult for even the most skillful negotiators to overcome.

Equally complicating from the domestic political side was the coalition nature of the negotiating team. And here I will touch on the next factor which is one that I would call the choice of negotiators. In a strange way all three governments made, in retrospect, questionable decisions about their negotiators and their negotiating style. And I wouldn't spare my own government from this by any means. In the Israeli case, it was clear that the dominant personality in the Israeli delegation at Camp David, intellectually, and the one with the greatest influence over the outcome was Moshe Dayan. Certainly Barach and Weizman played important roles, but I think all those there would agree that it was Dayan's own ideas and restless intellect which pushed the process forward time and time again at Camp David and before it and afterward in the peace treaty negotiations at Camp Madison, as the hotel was then called in Washington by the Israeli delegates. Suddenly, however, just as the great triumph of the peace treaty has been signed and one is gearing up to launch these pivotal autonomy negotiations, the foreign minister who was indeed in many respects a key architect of the treaty, learned that he would not be directing the negotiations for the autonomy talks, but that instead, for reasons ostensibly of coalition political requirements, there would be a six-man ministerial negotiating team headed by Dr. Burg. Of course, Dayan would be a member. Well, anybody who knew Dayan probably could have anticipated the outcome. And he himself told me before he died that he took that as a sign that there would be no autonomy agreement. And he had no desire to be a part of that kind of negotiating structure feeling it was unworkable. And indeed it proved to be almost unworkable, though not quite. And that's not to say anything critical of the individuals who were on the ministerial team, who were hardworking and loyal and often creative. But that kind of structure meant that when the Israeli delegation went to a conference, three or four or five ministers all had to be there to speak for the delegation and watch each other. And when they came back from the conference, that group had to struggle with inter-coalition politics about, not the principles of the negotiation, which were well laid out by the cabinet in advance, but all of the details. And I think this fact really hampered the Israeli negotiators in taking advantage of openings and moments when some Egyptian flexibility would fleetingly appear.

On the Egyptian side and the Israeli side as well, and here I really do demonstrate one of my biases, and to some extent on the American side, though less so, there were too many lawyers. Now you got to have lawyers at international negotiations. The American delegation at Camp David did not have a lawyer, except Cyrus Vance, who is an international lawyer of some repute, but we didn't have anybody else. The Israelis had several, the Egyptians were almost all lawyers. But President Sadat was not and neither was President Carter. And I would submit that with this kind of negotiation it's all too easy to allow the lawyers to dominate the policies, unless you're very careful on the roles they're assigned. And I think this seemed to be the case in the autonomy talks from both Egyptian and Israeli sides.

The negotiations moved from a beginning of concentrating on broad principle and became immersed within a matter of weeks in infinite detail - legal detail about how this autonomous entity would be administered, down to great levels of precision, the kind of precision that a city council might have to consider in lining up its own duties. The lawyers contributed, I think, to that trend, though they didn't create it. Perhaps what created it was a difference in style between the Egyptians and Israelis and a difference in purpose about the negotiation itself.

If one can go back for a moment to the Isma'iliya conference, a bilateral conference in which we were not involved, just after Sadat's visit here, it was clear at that conference that Sadat gave a lot of evidence to the Israelis for this thesis that all he really wanted was a general statement of principles to deal with the West Bank and Gaza that would permit him to go ahead and negotiate his own peace treaty and let the Palestinians and the Jordanians come in and do the detail work on the autonomy program. He didn't want to get too deeply involved in that. Unfortunately, at Isma'iliya and at subsequent conferences before Camp David, that concept of a broad framework of principles gradually changed to an increasing insistence on great specificity in detail as to how precisely autonomy would function once inaugurated. And the further we got into those details, the further we were away from reaching any agreement.

Why was that? I think for two reasons: The primary one was another factor which was one of the great flaws and perhaps the fundamental flaw in the design of these negotiations. And that is that Egypt, in the absence of Jordan, and in the absence of any Palestinian representatives, took upon itself to speak for the Palestinians in these negotiations. And yet it became very clear early in the negotiations that the Egyptians at that time at least had very little direct knowledge of or understanding of the factors on the ground in the territories, what the territories were really like, after a dozen years of Israeli occupation. And they were very wary, the Egyptians, of getting into detail because they felt uncomfortable; they might agree to something which would jeopardize Palestinian rights without realizing it and put themselves open to tremendous attack subsequently from the other Arabs.

On the other hand, the Israeli delegation understandably, the more they thought about what autonomy might mean and the more Begin's rather generalized concept which he presented first to President Carter and then to President Sadat in December of '79, the more the staffs in the Ministry of Defense and the Foreign Ministry in particular, began to look into the fine print of how the territories operate today, in economic terms and security terms, development terms, legal terms, they began to find more and more and more problems with autonomy as a concept. And, inevitably, they tried to pin down as specifically as possible all of the possible alternative pitfalls that one could imagine for Israel's security coming out of this negotiation. So as the Israelis got more and more interested in detail, the Egyptians, hemmed in by their lack of any other Arab participant and nervous about representing those Palestinians in absentia, became more and more rigid about dealing with those precise details.

I mentioned another factor a moment ago, the personalities of negotiators. I've mentioned the political problem that the style of ministerial team negotiation adopted by the Israeli's presented. I think from the American point of view we had a different problem. Our first chief negotiator, Bob Strauss, had just completed an extraordinary tour de force, negotiating an international trade agreement and getting it through the Congress unanimously, one of the best pieces of diplomacy and politics that anybody has done in the United States for a long time, and President Carter turned to Bob Strauss as a highly successful negotiator with a lot of political smarts and close to him personally as his representative. Bob Strauss had never been near the Middle East before and admitted it and he didn't want the job, but he accepted it as a loyal servant of the Administration. But I think it did not take him, and it certainly didn't take me, more than about fifteen minutes of exposure to him in his environment to realize that he was really ill-suited for the particular kind of subtle third party mediation that this required from the United States. He tried a lot of his

negotiating devices which had been honed on dealing with the Japanese and the Germans on trade matters and in Texas politics and they just didn't work in this environment. There was a real cultural problem between Bob and the Middle East and I think he would admit it if he were here today. Almost from the minute he took the job he was conspiring to get out of it and it took him about six months to manage that.

He was replaced by Sol Linowitz, a very distinguished lawyer and a man of great subtlety and formality and dignity. And, incidentally, Bob Strauss' informality, which was very effective in domestic U.S. politics, proved to be something of a drawback in dealing with the more formal Egyptians and certainly rather formal Israelis. Sol Linowitz had I think, and has, the personal qualifications and the personal style that could have made him a very effective and successful mediator for the United States in this tri-partite strange kind of negotiations.

Here the problem was not style but timing, and this comes to the question of timing, which I believe was crucial in the ultimate stalemate. There was a sense that this was do-able after the peace treaty. There was a lot of political momentum, there was a real commitment from Begin, Sadat and Carter. Unfortunately, the negotiations began in a rather leisurely mode and went on in a rather leisurely mode for six or eight months, and I remember getting instructions during that period to try to go in and convince our friend here that time was a wasting asset and that we should step up the pace and have more meetings and get past the formalities and do away with the opening statements and get down to work. And I got very polite stalls, the same kind of reaction in Cairo.

We the Americans did have a sense of worry about the timing, but in retrospect we didn't have nearly enough of a worry. And it was precisely this period of the first three or four months when the international environment was accepting of this kind of negotiation, when the momentum from Camp David was running, when you had a smell of victory around this process, that in retrospect we had the opportunity. I believe today that if we had to do it over again, and knew what we know now, which unfortunately history never gives you that opportunity, we could reach agreement on that autonomy package in four months, starting from where we were starting in May of 1979. By the time Sol Linowitz took the job, the time factor had turned very much against us. In the first place, what seemed like a sensible period of one year for this negotiation, now suddenly seemed very short, only a few months left. I remember Cy Vance tried to convince both the Egyptians and the Israelis not to put a time limit in this letter. He said, "I've had experience with this kind of thing and a time limit comes back to haunt you." And indeed it did come back to haunt us because as Linowitz got pretty much involved in high gear in early 1980, already enough troubling events had occurred to change the psychology surrounding the negotiation and the suspicions surrounding that target date began to rise almost geometrically, suspicions that we, either we Egyptians or we Israelis, are going to be pressured by you Americans to make some unwise and dangerous concessions in order to get done within a year, and those suspicions began to make the positions of the parties more rigid rather than less.

It's true also that time had begun to divert the attention of the American Administration. President Carter had been devoting for two years at this point an extraordinary amount of personal energy to the Middle East Peace Process, something more than any other president has ever done or, I suspect, ever will do. But beginning with the invasion of Afghanistan and, more

importantly of course, the hostage crisis in Iran, his Administration in 1980 began to be more and more and more sucked into a preoccupation with these other issues, particularly the hostage crisis which ultimately, as we all know, probably was the deciding factor in his defeat in the November elections. So while we kept up a lot of diplomatic energy throughout 1980, I have to say that our President's weight in the equation was diminished, and given the crucial factor he played at Camp David itself, that certainly was an element in the ultimate stalemate.

I have also touched on the problem of the press, and I'd like to come back to it now, and it's not only the press I want to mention as factors in this stalemate, certainly I don't want to give it more importance than it deserves. One should put it this way I think, that the nature of the structure of this negotiation, very public, moving from one country to another, episodic, with a lot of time between meetings to debate endlessly in the press every aspect of the negotiation itself, removed substantially what flexibility there was for the diplomats to use in the closed doors of the diplomacy behind the scenes. And, moreover, a series of external events certainly impinged on the politics of both countries and further complicated, I think, the efforts of the diplomatic actors. For example, one only has to recall that as one got passed this one year deadline in April, early May really of 1980, without reaching agreement, and the last meetings before that deadline were very acrimonious, there were such unfortunate, extraneous factors which impinged on the attitudes of the Israeli Government toward the United States and the Egyptian Government toward Israel, and the U.S. Government toward Israel. Events such as President Carter's now quite famous change of the vote in the U.N. Security Council in mid-spring of 1980, a mistake about the wording which led to great embarrassment for him and great distrust, I might say, here. The introduction by one of the members of the Knesset in May 14, 1980, of the quite superfluous Jerusalem bill which set the Egyptians' teeth on edge and produced a period of several weeks of angry debate about Jerusalem which was really quite irrelevant to the current negotiating climate but succeeded in poisoning that climate very substantially just at the moment when the autonomy talks were at a stage of considerable delicacy.

You will recall that in May of 1980 there were the tragic events in Hebron of the shooting of the Yeshiva students followed by the expulsion of the mayors and subsequently of the bombing of the mayors. All of that period certainly contributed from the outside to the feelings of distrust and drawing back on the part of the Egyptians from risking going to an agreement with Israel under these circumstances, risking in its own sense its position with other Arab nations. And there were a lot of other external events later which are perhaps best forgotten. But the historians, I think, will read this interaction between the external world and the room of the negotiators as being one of the major issues which cause negotiations to fail. Surely any negotiations which drags on for eighteen months without success is going to be plagued by external factors in this region. It's too volatile an area. That's why in retrospect we should have made far greater efforts to do it three months before the external world could come to bear in all of its hoary detail.

There are a couple of other factors that I think I will mention just in passing, which I do think affected the stalemate: one was the fact that, while it was true that both governments put a lot of emphasis on these negotiations, it was also true that all three governments, and I certainly associate my own, were determined that nothing would throw that treaty off course, and that the provisions for withdrawal under the treaty and exchange of ambassadors and the panoply of peace between Egypt and Israel, the concrete achievement that had been gained, would not be

lost. There were moments along the way when, in order not to ruffle the Egyptian feathers or the Israeli feathers in a way which could interfere with the delicate progress up to the final moment of the treaty implementation, I think we drew back from pressing a compromise formula which had good chances of achievement and I think the Egyptians and the Israelis also treated their interlocutors with excessive tenderness, both of them preoccupied with the implementation of the treaty.

Another factor which it seems to me ran all through this period is the problem of cultural gap between the two Israeli and Egyptian societies. Many of you are much greater experts on this than I am. I can only tell you from personal experience, I spent an enormous amount of time, over three years, explaining, or trying to explain Egyptian behavior to Israeli negotiators and my colleagues in Cairo did the reverse, never very successfully, and it didn't matter really, seemingly, whether they were in direct contact with each other or not, they were still misunderstanding each other just as consistently face to face as they had been at long distance. And much of the U.S. role was pacification and interpretation of cultural sensitivities to one party or the other. I'm convinced, as I've said this in other forums here, that there is something intrinsic to Arab society which makes it very difficult, and I'm told it comes out of ancient Beduin traditions. Very difficult to negotiate give and take, face to face, on an issue of national honor or personal honor. You must use intermediaries to deal with these issues in Arab society and then once an agreement is reached, you have a very fancy reunion and you slaughter a sheep and you accept the result that has already been reached. But you don't really negotiate about a matter of honor directly with your adversary because to make a concession to him directly is a great loss of face to you as an individual and you can afford to make concessions only to someone else who will convey it to your adversary.

Now I can give you many different examples how this played out in these negotiations but I'll just cite one. I remember very vividly in Herzliyya at the Sharon Hotel, we were having one round of the autonomy negotiations, everybody was eating together, talking together, Ministers from both sides were there and by this time they had become quite good friends, they had been seeing one another for the better part of two years off and on and they really liked each other as individuals. We sat down to formal sessions, each would make their formal statements, there would be no sign of give and take, give and take amounted to restatement of positions with a little more bellicosity from both sides, then you would adjourn and each would go back to his own rooms and Sol Linowitz would scurry back and forth from one room to the other, talking first to one then the other. So in what was ostensibly a direct negotiation, progress was made in what we now call proximity talks model. And this is the kind of microcosm, it seems to me, of a cultural problem which we had seen also in the Lebanese negotiations, a very parallel circumstance back in 1983, and I suspect will continue to dog Israeli problems of negotiations with Arabs so long as those negotiations continue.

I think that there are undoubtedly a lot of other factors that bogged us down in those years but certainly after 1981 there were some important new ones. And the biggest new one was President Carter was defeated and then later in 1981 President Sadat was shot. And I think no one can underestimate this point. These three men went through hell to reach the Camp David Agreement and each of them made great sacrifices and took great risks in his own mind to sign that document. And Carter also took great risks and won temporary political gain for it. They had a

personal stake in it, they had convinced themselves it could be done and then they began to leave the stage. Moreover, in our case, President Reagan came in with no stake in that success of his predecessor's administration and with a rather different view of the world, that I gather was well described this morning by Professor Spiegel, so I won't touch on that, but I think it's quite relevant that the Reagan Administration looked at the Middle East very differently than the Carter Administration; looked at it much more in east/west terms and strategic alliances against Soviet alliances terms. They never repudiated Camp David, in fact Secretary Shultz when he took office in the summer of '82 knew very little about Camp David and was very skeptical about it. A few months ago he said to me and he's said to a number of people since: "You know, I have read and re-read the Camp David Agreement, and now each time I read it I realize what a document, what a work of genius it really was." But they didn't come into office thinking that way, certainly Al Haig didn't and Shultz didn't either when he took over. So our Administration had less fervent, emotional commitment to complete the Camp David process, though they certainly adopted it and saw in general the virtues of not allowing it to die.

But there were a lot of other things that happened in 1981 that really put the "kibosh" on this whole game, and I think probably the most significant of all was the so-called "Ofira, Osiraq, double-cross." You all will remember that with great difficulty Prime Minister Begin succeeded in getting Sadat to come to a summit meeting in Ofira on June 5, 1981 and their purpose was to renew the momentum and the spirit of the negotiations. Two days later the Iraqi reactor was bombed and I gather from my Egyptian contacts and from those of you who know lots of Egyptians, that there is no one in Egypt, and perhaps nowhere in the Arab world, who will ever believe that this wasn't a deliberate attempt to set Sadat up for involvement in and psychological tying to the Israeli action. I don't believe that but I'll just tell you that there are too many Arabs that do and it left a sensitivity in Egypt to a wariness about summits, which incidentally still exists.

There were other advances of that summer and certainly as the summer wore on there was a brief flowering for a moment of hope when there was yet another summit at Alexandria. And Sadat and Begin went back to the idea of a broad principles document which they had abandoned in the course of these negotiations long since. As a result of that summit we held one more ministerial level autonomy conference and it was interesting to me particularly because Roy Atherton, then our Ambassador in Cairo and I were the two co-delegates for the United States, we having at that time no special U.S. negotiator. And at that ministerial meeting in Cairo we came some distance toward agreeing on a document of general principles. Whether it would have amounted to anything ultimately I can't say, but there was a renewal of some hope and progress though a great scepticism remained on both sides, and then of course, just a few days later on October 6, Sadat was assassinated.

By the end of the year, though the formalities went on, the game was really over. And it's certainly true that throughout the rest of '81 and the first half of '82 Egyptian-Israeli relations were dominated by carrying out the final withdrawal, the tragedy of Yammit which we all had to witness on television or in person, soured the atmosphere here toward Egypt and toward the peace, and soured the Egyptian attitude toward the Israeli government in very significant ways. Yet, once withdrawal was completed in 1982 there was a brief final flowering between the end of April and the beginning of June, and those many normalization agreements which had been

signed back in 1980 began to come to life again and there were exchanges of delegations planned and the beginnings of new trade agreements, all of which withered and died in the bright pitiless sun of the Israeli move into Lebanon in early June.

The Reagan initiative on September 1 was a genuine effort to recreate momentum, to relaunch the Camp David agreement, with some embellishments, but fundamentally on the same terms. The timing was, in my judgment, abysmal, the tactics of its presentation worse, and the outcome so far, nil.

In conclusion, I would say that there are a lot of mistakes implicit in this record for all three countries. And I won't try to recapitulate all of them. I think you can infer from my remarks what I think some of the mistakes were. But I would say for each of us there was one over-riding misjudgment. For the Egyptians, I think there was a very great overriding misjudgment when Sadat said, "Well, Hussein, you won't come and join," parenthetically it's not surprising he wouldn't come and join because Sadat had persuaded him and President Carter, I guess, in different ways that it was best that Jordan not be present -- it would be too difficult to reach agreement if they were there. It probably would have been too. But the fact that he wasn't there and had no signature on that document made it difficult to persuade him later to accept Camp David as his framework though we tried very hard. In any case, when it didn't happen, Sadat said, "I will take on responsibility for the Arab side of this negotiation." That was a terrible fundamental error if you wanted to succeed. In retrospect it's very clear. The Egyptians were hamstrung when they took that role without having any Palestinians or Jordanians at their sides, and the Reagan initiative is certainly intended to remedy that mistake.

I think Israel's overriding misjudgment was the one I've already suggested. I believe that most Israeli actors for a long time believed that what to Egypt was a choice of peace, and a peace which would make Egypt able to bridge between Israel and the Arab world and would enable Egypt to take the lead in resolving the Palestinian problem -- too many Israelis thought that that choice of peace was a choice of Israel as a strategic ally against the Arab world. That's an overstatement, but I would submit not too exaggerated a view of many Israelis after Camp David and during these years we've been discussing. I think that's an illusion which is now dispelled, but a lot of water has gone over the dam.

On our side, we had at least three major mistakes and probably a lot of others. I've suggested we mismanaged and misunderstood the importance of time and urgency, though we understood it better than the other two partners. We made some weak, or incorrect decisions in negotiating style, personalities, hesitance in pushing some of our ideas which both parties, we believe in retrospect, wanted us to push. And finally I think, we perhaps tried to play this role of honest broker, mediator, catalyst, participant, partner, whatever you'd want to describe it -- we wanted to play it only with carrots.

JAMES H. BAHTI
Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1978-1979)

James H. Bahti was born in Michigan in 1923. He graduated from Michigan Tech with a B.S. degree in engineering in 1948. Subsequently, he received a M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Mr. Bahti entered the Foreign Service in 1955, serving in Germany, Egypt, India, and Saudi Arabia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990

Q: You then had sort of a different assignment, the Sinai Field Mission, from 1978 to 1979.

BAHTI: I was supposed to go out there for a two year tour and my wife was supposed to live in Jerusalem, which she did. She was finishing up her work as a nurse in the Department of State. I knew Ray Hunt, I was interviewed for the job. He said that if I could come out right away I could be his deputy. Well, I really had not planned to leave right then, but that was the condition and so I left my wife at home with the house, the packing, the whole schmear. It was kind of a dirty trick, but it was an interesting job working between the Israelis and Egyptians. In some respects it was a non-job since the director's job and my job in total was perhaps a job and a half. There was a lot of make work stuff, a lot of reporting which even then seemed kind of silly. Camel reports and Bedouin sightings.

Q: Camel reports meant?

BAHTI: You saw so many camels. And camels usually meant people. Boredom was the biggest problem and some people who get bored tend to drink. We had a bar there and cheap liquor, we had some drinking problems, some people sent home, there were fights. But we had a lot of contact with the Egyptians and Israelis. That was gratifying to me since it was my field, so to speak, and there was this glorious day when all three flags were flown above our compound. Up to that time we did not fly any flags, although it was clearly an American mission. It was mostly contract people, E-Systems from Texas did the bulk of the work. The State Department and USIA people were the communicators and liaison officers with the Israelis and Egyptians. It was there that for the first time the Israelis and Egyptians met under peaceful conditions in the Sinai to work out the terms of the agreement as it would apply on the ground. It was a pleasure to see these young Israeli and young Egyptian officers fraternizing and being genuinely friendly. They are the ones who are going to get killed if there is another war.

My tour was cut short because peace broke out and it was pretty hard to justify a mission of that size so I left after thirteen months. My wife in the meantime had been living in an old town house in Jerusalem. I would get there every three or four weeks for a long weekend so I saw a lot of Israel and especially Jerusalem in that time. I also got to Cairo a couple of times. So I call that tour my second Egyptian tour. For my wife, that meant two moves in less than a year.

Q: Did you have much contact with our embassies in Tel Aviv and Cairo? How did that operation mesh?

BAHTI: There were personal problems -- my wife did not fit in any staffing pattern -- she was supposed to be supported by the embassy in Tel Aviv but lived in Jerusalem. The Consulate General in Jerusalem was not as supportive as I thought they might have been. The liaison

officers would visit there occasionally and make deliveries or whatever was needed.

When there was a violation of the armistice agreement, when there was an overflight by an Israeli plane or helicopter, or an Egyptian would stray across the line, we would send off immediate flashes to each embassy, Tel Aviv and Cairo and to the UN delegation in New York and to the Department in Washington. When those things happened that relieved the boredom. We spent a lot of time keeping the people busy, games and the like. We were surrounded by Ghanaian troops who were our protectors as they were in charge of the territory where we were located. We had a lot of contact with the embassy and we would invariably call upon them when we went into town. My boss, Ray Hunt, tended to go to Cairo more often than to Israel- -his wife lived in Cairo. When, for instance, we were preparing for this exchange of documents ceremony the Israelis came in and supplied certain of the equipment, flagpoles and stanchions and all to keep the crowds back -- and they painted them all Israeli blue. I sent out a message to Cairo saying that this may create a little problem for the Egyptians. Ambassador Eilts said in effect, "You are damned right this will cause a problem -- can't they be painted white or something?" We explained to the Israelis that Israeli blue would not do -- so they came in and painted it all silver. We consulted with both embassies because both ambassadors were present at the ceremony.

Q: The ceremony was doing what?

BAHTI: Exchanging instruments of ratification of the Camp David accords. This put the Camp David agreement into effect. It was a big day, the press was out there in force. The Department was thinking of sending out a lot of people. I said, "Hey, there is no place here to stay." We were talking about doubling up, but it did not work out that way. They came out in the morning and left in the evening. We would occasionally give dinners for the UN people or the Israeli defense or Egyptian defense people. It never happened that the Israelis and Egyptians were there at the same time until the last few months we were there. It was quite an experience. I am glad I had it. From a career point of view it was in no sense a traditional job, but I was getting a bit long in the tooth anyway. It was a lot of fun. I met a lot of people with whom I still keep in touch.

KENTON W. KEITH
Special Assistant to Deputy Director, USIA
Washington, DC (1978-1980)

Ambassador Keith was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from the University of Kansas he served with the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1965. An Arabic speaking Officer, Ambassador Keith served as Public Affairs Officer and/ or Cultural Affairs in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, France and Brazil before his appointment as US Ambassador to Qatar. His Washington service included several tours in senior positions with USIA. Ambassador Keith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: When you arrived in '77, this was early on in the Carter administration. Each administration carries some people who are red hot on something. They hover around the White House. The Carter administration was somewhat ideological, as later the Reagan one was, two opposite ends of the spectrum. Did you find that the NSC or the people from the administration were trying to fish in troubled waters?

KEITH: Certainly not at first. I think that there were, as time went on, when President Carter's views about America's role in the Third World began to play out, then those issues had an impact on all of us and particularly within the advocacy function. The president's views on AID and how AID money should be spent, his views on human rights and the role human rights should play in our overall foreign policy, all of those views as time went on began to have a heavy impact on the way we did our work overseas. Some longstanding relationships had to be changed and modified. This was particularly true in Latin America, but it was true elsewhere as well. I think that there are people today who will look back on the Carter administration as one of ineptitude in certain areas, particularly in domestic policy, but I think that if you look at the perspectives that many others have from overseas, there was a lot of affection for Carter and there was certainly a lot of respect for his stand on human rights.

Q: How did that play in the Arab world?

KEITH: Certainly his image of fair-mindedness, of evenhandedness, was a major factor in the role he was able to play in the Camp David talks. For the first time, the major Arab protagonists came into these talks with a sense that the American president was going to play fair, with a sense that the American administration for once was not going to be a pawn in the Israeli camp. I think that if you look back through the books of people who were present in the negotiating process, that was borne out. Carter was just as tough on the Israelis as he was on the Egyptians. Some very important progress was made, building on the opportunities presented by Anwar Sadat's dramatic visit to Israel.

Q: Speaking of the Sadat visit to Israel, were you doing Arab affairs at that time?

KEITH: As it happened, I had left Washington and was working in Brazil. But of course it had a major impact on me, having worked on those issues for so long. I can't think of a more dramatic moment than that.

Q: While you were doing your thing in Arab affairs, did this include Israel?

KEITH: Yes. Israel was in my bailiwick.

Q: Did you find that there were different rules dealing with Israel from the Washington perspective?

KEITH: Different rules, no. I would say that there was a different interpretation of U.S. interests on the part different American administrations. Every administration for which I worked pursued what they took to be American interests. Most have felt that American interests were best served by maintaining a special relationship with Israel. So, the question is, did that amount to different

rules. It's hard to say. It certainly amounted to a different kind of relationship with Israel than we had with the rest of the region.

Q: I've never served in Israel, but I would think that Israel would at least in its multiplicity of communication outlets – newspapers, broadcasts, etc. – it would not be too difficult to get where America stood. Maybe they wouldn't agree with it. In the Arab world, there would be a problem of getting the American position out.

KEITH: With exception perhaps of Lebanon, the communication outlets in Israel were more like those in the West. Of course in Israel there has always been a very active marketplace of ideas and differences of opinion that always had voice – newspapers, TV, other media. And as I say, there were variations in the communications environment within the Arab world. We're not talking about opposite ends of a spectrum. In Lebanon, Jordan, and North Africa there moderate voices. And when we say "moderate" we are generally referring to people who are more or less supporting our aims. Still, the question of whether or not the Arab world could get our message is a good one. Often, it didn't. Our tools were not really very effective on a day-to-day basis. Take the VOA, for example. We had an excellent Arabic service over those years to the Arab world, but most people didn't listen to the VOA. The only time really that we had the kind of listenership we wanted was when bullets were flying. In the midst of crisis, people would turn to the VOA.

Q: What would they listen to otherwise?

KEITH: The BBC Arabic Service, the *Sawt al-Arab* (Voice of the Arabs) from Cairo, and along in the '80s came a station in Monte Carlo broadcasting in Arabic that was very influential.

Q: The VOA was basically separate from what you were doing.

KEITH: It's important to understand the relationship between the VOA and the rest of USIA. VOA has a charter which basically says that they are obliged to report fair and accurate news. VOA was not supposed to be reporting the views of the U.S. government except when they are clearly identified as such – as in "The following is an editorial representing the official views of the United States government." Now, that chunk of time when they're giving the editorial views of the U.S. government, how do they get those editorial views and how is that vetted, how can a person sitting across town from the State Department writing an editorial be certain that the views expressed really are the views of the U.S. government? That is a process that is sometimes troublesome and quite a tricky. In principle, there is a process that links the editorial offices of the Voice, the appropriate desks at State, and the appropriate policy and desk officer positions at USIA. Very frequently, there isn't perfect harmony. By that I mean a particularly harsh editorial might be flagged to attention of the USIA desk. We might object to that editorial on grounds of timing or tone, or even errors of fact. But Voice is resistant to "uptown" control, and there can be struggles that always take too much time to negotiate. There is a clear separation between the policy apparatus and the VOA news function that was always respected. Where the news office sometimes upset U.S. ambassadors in the field was in their choice of people to interview for news stories. Sometimes they would find people who were not really representative of anything but their own eccentric views. We were separated from the VOA, yes. We are separated from the

main function, which is the reporting of the news and presenting images of the United States through features on American life, the music programs and so on. Where we were joined at the hip was on the presentation of U.S. government policy through editorials.

Q: What about the pro-Israeli lobby? Did you find that would take exception or was that a problem?

KEITH: I wasn't ever in a position to hear direct complaints from Israel, but there was vigilance on the part of people who were concerned about the well-being of Israel with regard to programs, activity with Arab states, particularly anything that touched on Israel or direct Israeli interests. For example, there was congressional interest over the establishment of a USIA post in East Jerusalem that would be connected to the consulate general in Jerusalem rather than the embassy in Tel Aviv. An ongoing issue was our choice of certain Palestinian Arabs for exchange programs when and those particular individuals were not well thought of by the Israelis.

Q: How were they resolved? Was there pretty much a veto?

KEITH: It could never be said it was a veto. There were complications and the Israelis had ways of complicating programs and our lives, but they certainly didn't have a veto. Israel could say that you may leave on this program but you may not be allowed to return. You go back to the whole issue of the USIS program in Jerusalem. It continues to exist but under scrutiny. We have two cultural operations in the city of Jerusalem, one on the west side and one on the east side. The west side basically is for the Israeli population and the staff is basically Israeli, although they make an effort to reach out to Israeli. On the eastern side our staff is basically Palestinian and the programs are directed to the Palestinian population in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza.

Q: How did you coordinate the USIA message with the Department of State?

KEITH: The actual implementation of public diplomacy programs in the field is an integrated process. The ambassador or the consul general in the case of Jerusalem and senior officers in the mission are all part of the country team and that country team has its public diplomacy goals and activities with the PAO as principal implementer. That is an arrangement that has been in place for generations. On the question of coordinating programs between agencies on the Washington end, there are sometimes complications, differences. USIA has its own set of requirements. There are things that the Agency is supposed to be doing that are unique. Part of that uniqueness is legislated by the Smith-Mundt Act that set up USIA and prohibits USIA products from being disseminated in the U.S. State doesn't operate with the same restrictions. Thus, State's "public affairs" program, which seeks to develop understanding and support for our policies, is aimed at American citizens is an activity USIA officers can't be a part of. This is going to be a challenge when USIA is rolled up into State because Congress has always made clear that it did not want to see money that was appropriated for advocacy programs abroad used to influence American public opinion. Every time that the issue has been raised in Congress, the result has been an even tighter control, not relaxation. Congress watchers – and there are those at State who watch very closely – do not want that to happen. At the same time, the State Department has a role of making foreign policy more relevant to the guy in the street. We, USIA, have the tools to do that.

State has not. The public affairs function at the State Department has always been a under-funded.

But even if it weren't under-funded, its primary focus would remain the famous noon briefing. That is what everybody is focused on, not only in PA but in much of the Department. Then somebody comes in like Madeleine Albright who really does understand these public opinion issues and public diplomacy issues more than her predecessors have and she doesn't understand why it is that you can't make the housewife in Peoria understand that this is important to her. That is why there is a temptation to use as much of these facilities and these monies as possible to conduct a public affairs campaign. In the beginning of the process of negotiating the amalgamation of State and USIA there was a real lack of understanding on the difference between Public Affairs (that function designed to inform and communicate with Americans) and Public Diplomacy (that function designed for foreign audiences).

But getting back to the early years and the question of how USIA and State coordinated policies and programs over years, it was really pretty straightforward when it came creating media products whose aim was advocacy. Policy officers USIA went to meetings at State, the same meetings that were leading up the noon briefing, and then used this background idea was to help shape the media products such as VOA editorials, the Wireless File (a daily transmission to the field used for policy background and press placement), magazine articles and the like.

Q: How did John Reinhardt and Charles Bray work? Were they interested in the Arab side?

KEITH: I don't think that you could say that either would have been considered a specialist. Their concerns were not at that time focused on specific foreign policy goals, whether it was the Middle East, Europe, or Africa. They were fixed on creating a new agency, USICA, and both were broadly supportive of what the Carter administration wanted to do.

Q: What were those early days of "USICA" like?

KEITH: There was a period when everybody was staking out territory and looking for new ways of operating in this new environment. The absorption of CU posed the policy issues I've spoken of earlier, and it also required a new kind of constituency building and fence mending both in the Washington area and throughout a skeptical university world. That was a real challenge. I think it was extremely fortunate for the Agency that they were able to attract – because of the idealism of the Carter years – really top notch people who brought with them a kind of prestige in the academic world that was absolutely crucial at that time. Alice Ilchman was absolutely first-rate -- sensible and approachable. She was able to attract some of the best people in USIA to her staff as well.

Q: Did you get involved when you were wearing your Arab/Israeli hat in the choice of people for educational exchanges? I would think this could get very political.

KEITH: Yes, it certainly can get very political. In every city and every capital and every location, it was very political. On the Arab side, the people who were from the elite whose parents were Western educated tended to be moderate politically and pro-American. These

represented an important bastion of support, but they were a kind of elite. Should we have focused our attention on those people as they generally expected, or should we have focused our attention on people who weren't in that group?

Q: Of course, the elite that you're talking about is the easy group in which we've been doing it for years.

KEITH: That's right. So, you have a young assistant cultural affairs officer who has been out at the university and he speaks good Arabic and is out there practicing his Arabic and he meets students who are not well disposed to the U.S. They like him, but they're not well disposed to the U.S. or its policies. He comes back and argues very strongly that there are a couple of them that ought to be selected for programs in the United States. You get pressures sometimes from the country itself, from authorities in the country. Why are you picking this person? You have the same questions from ambassadors and the same questions from political officers and DCMs.

On the other hand, there are cases in which our exchange programs have been seen as valuable political patronage. One case in particular sticks in my mind: the supremely unqualified nephew of an Arab foreign minister who ended up with graduate scholarship in the U.S. So, yes, these programs can have important political coloration.

The same thing applies in Israel. We have had for years programs that have targeted Israeli Arabs. That has not always pleased certain people in the right wing of the Israeli government and the right wing is in power. It can make life complicated. They don't take people out and stand them against the wall, but they can make life quite complicated.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv (1978-1982)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: How would you describe the state of American-Israeli relations when you got there in '78?

COWAL: Well, I think the state of our relations has always been extremely close and has always been extremely difficult, both. I think when I got there, or certainly in the ensuing weeks and months, as we went through Camp David together, those were pretty high points in the

relationship. As it became clear – Lebanon was a leitmotif throughout the whole thing. There was always Lebanon. Something was always blowing up in Lebanon, and that was certainly a difficult issue. It was a difficult issue for Israel and it was a difficult issue for the United States, and it was a complicating issue, certainly, in the relationship between the United States and Israel. But I would say that relations as a whole were extremely good, if extremely difficult.

Q: When you got there, first place, did you have a feeling for the other side of the equation, particularly the Arab world, the Arab claims, complaints against Israel and all. Did you have any feel for that?

COWAL: I certainly had never served in the Middle East. I had never traveled in the Middle East. I didn't really know anything about the Middle East. I knew there was something called Israel. I don't know if I knew there was anything called Palestine. I think it was only as I began to meet, and I never met many Palestinians. I mean, after all, I was in the embassy in Tel Aviv, and Tel Aviv didn't cover East Jerusalem or the West Bank, which was covered out of a consulate in Jerusalem, which was, by the way, an often-contentious relationship between officers at the embassy in Tel Aviv and the consulate in Jerusalem.

We all get a certain amount of clientitis, and I think we each fall into those roles a little bit. But I learned mostly about the conflict and the Palestinians from my Israeli friends, who covered a wide spectrum, I must say, of ideological views. But, again, being the cultural attaché, I suppose there's somewhat in most societies a natural gravitation of the intellectual and academic elite toward the rather more liberal or open or whatever you want to call it part of the political spectrum. Certainly, in Israel, that was no exception, so that there are seven universities in Israel, and I think I – well, I know I knew a great number of people at each of those universities, and I knew the writers and I knew the artists.

They educated me to the fact that this was the twice promised land: really the whole history of Zionism and Herzl and essentially the coming back of the Israelis to what they considered to be their historic lands, and the whole Balfour Declaration and the working of this out with the British and the whole post-colonialism. Not unlike the Pakistan thing, which I had dealt with in my first assignment and which continues to be an issue today, sort of twice-promised land of whose house is that in Jaffa? The person whose ancestors might go back to biblical times or the person whose ancestors might go back to the Ottoman Empire who left it in 1947 and has not seen it since, but who still feel it's really his house there on that nice little street looking at the Mediterranean in Jaffa.

I think that during my time there that I regret that I didn't have more to do with Palestinians, but that was fairly difficult. What I did have something to do with were Israeli Arabs who compose a fairly significant minority in Israel and I can't remember any longer the figures, exactly.

Q: It's 10 to 20 ...

COWAL: Something like 10, 15 percent. The Druze community, which lives in Israel, which is kind of an offshoot of Islam and they live up in some mountains and villages near Haifa, which I visited. We also were responsible from the embassy in Tel Aviv for Gaza, which was then and

still is an occupied territory by Israel. And the Sinai stuff before the pullout in Sinai. So I had a little bit of a chance to see people on the other side, and I did as much of that as I could, but I really became educated in these issues by Israeli friends.

Q: To me, and I'm an outsider to this. I had a tour in Saudi Arabia early on, but that was it, and I'm not an Arabist or anything else like that, but a certain disquiet about the development of Israeli policy, which was one of maintaining itself. By the time you got there, it was beginning to be expansionist under Begin. We're talking about a colonial power, really, and there was at least at one time, and I don't know, I'd like to check on this, seemed to be an attitude that reminded me very much of the white South Africans, the Palestinians or ...

COWAL: Stu, you're right and you're not right.

Q: The four years there taught you?

COWAL: How complicated the situation is. All the factors are complicated. Geographically, first of all, it's a very tight space, as you know. South Africa, of course, has nothing to compare with it, although South Africa was an isolated little white majority down there at the tip of Africa, their territories were vast, and nobody was really threatening them. Whereas before the '67 war in Israel, the way the green line was drawn, and still is drawn, is just north of Tel Aviv. If you're on the highway between Tel Aviv and Haifa, which is a major city about 50 miles to the north of Tel Aviv, the whole country is less than nine miles wide. If you're in the Golan Heights, including the Israeli parts of the Golan Heights, the Syrians have all of the top of the Golan Heights, and therefore the embankments from which they can and have for years and years and years shelled the villages below them, which are part of Israel, as negotiated in the 1947 Accords.

So, geographically, it's very small. I think the size of the state of New Jersey, and it's certainly one state of New Jersey surrounded by a country which they haven't done very well at making friends out of, so that's one complicating factor. I certainly think the second complicating factor has to do with the history of Israel: how it came to be a state, and of course for that you have to go back to the Nazis in World War II and the persecution of the Jews and the fact that there are still, to this day, many Holocaust survivors in Israel, and certainly many children of the survivors of the Holocaust in Israel. For these people, they kind of wake up sometimes, I guess I would say from a collective nightmare, in a collective sweat. I don't think anybody who hasn't had that kind of experience can ever quite understand the psychological scars that it leaves on a people.

Although I believe, and I would say most of my Israeli friends, and probably 50 percent of Israelis today, would say that their security would actually be enhanced by giving up these territories – ironically, the less they have, the more secure they are – that's hard to get across to somebody who can look out of his window and see what he perceives to be hostility virtually in sight of him. The other thing that's so very difficult about it is that the extremists on both sides have frustrated the will of the majority on both sides for a number of years, and they hold the cards. There can always be the one guy who throws the bomb and the one guy who kills the soldier, and that makes it almost impossible for the politicians in Israel who would like to see a settlement to move forward, because then everybody says, “Well, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a

tooth. If we're hit upon, we've got to hit back. It's the only survival we have."

Of course, what does Israel depend on? It depends on superior military power, support of the United States. That's what it depends on, and so it's armed, in many ways, to the teeth. It also depends on very preemptive moves to ensure that there are no threats on their borders. One of the important events that happened while I was in Israel, having nothing to do with cultural relations, was the bombing by the Israelis of the Iraqi nuclear facility, the Osirak facility. Which in some ways you could say was a total provocation. The Israelis created a total provocation. They recognized that this nuclear site was being outfitted. It was clearly within a missile launch, and there was clearly, as we saw later in the war, the Gulf War, we saw SCUDs coming into Israel from Iraq.

Clearly, if the Israelis had not preemptively taken out that nuclear facility in, I think it was 1980, they would have faced the threat of a nuclear attack from as close by as Iraq. So you live in Israel with a clear and present danger. It was interesting, to me personally. I mean, coming from a place like Colombia, where there was certainly also – and we talked about this a little bit in our previous conversations. Although it was a much more peaceful time then than it has been in the last 15 or 20 years, there was already some drug violence, there was a lot of kidnappings, mostly for money, sometimes for political reasons. And so you always thought as a member of the American embassy staff, you could be targeted, you could be somebody that the guerillas would go after.

In Israel, you felt perfectly safe from things like that, but no safer than anybody else from the possibility of a terrorist attack if you crossed the street at the wrong time or you got on the wrong bus or you went to the Carmel market on the wrong Friday morning. There was a terrific sort of perceived vulnerability, and Israelis live with that, so it's historically complicated, geographically complicated.

I remember something once that I heard Golda Meir say, and it struck me then and it's always stuck with me. She died when I was there, but she said, "You know, we can forgive the Palestinians," or the Arabs. I don't think she said the Palestinians. "We can certainly forgive the Arabs for killing our children, but we may never be able to forgive them for making us kill their children." Because this state of warfare imposed on Israelis, who after all went to Israel, most of them, either as refugees from the Holocaust or those who got there in the early '20s and in the 1930s, they went basically as incredible idealists. They were socialists, if not communists, they believed in a different way of society being organized. They actually thought that some of the plight of the Jewish people over the centuries had been because they were special and apart and separate and too well educated and too wealthy and too egotistical, and so they set about to try to create this perfect little world in their little mini-state, in which there would be total equality. Obviously, this never happens anywhere, but there would be ...

Q: Sort of the Walden ...

COWAL: Yes, exactly. There would be great equality between men and women and all children would be raised in loving homes, and everybody would participate equally and work, and everybody would divide up the spoils equally. So the whole forming of the kibbutz movement,

for instance, which was never more than 3 percent of the Israeli populace actually lived in kibbutzim, but they thought of themselves not any longer as the merchant and the furrier and the jeweler and the doctor, but as the noble farmers, the Walden Pond, the Grant Wood, with the pitchforks, sort of thing.

So I think it was a terrible shock to many of them to discover that they were once again reviled and hated by many around the world. I don't think that was their idea in forming this state, so it was a very interesting place to be and to learn.

Q: We'll move on, but within the embassy, you're the new girl on the block.

COWAL: I must say, the only girl on the country team.

Q: It's interesting, we'll talk about that, too, but when you arrive at a new country and many of the people are wrestling with the problems and all, how did you find it? Did you find the embassy at all divided, because we present a rather solid front politically about Israel of firm support, but certainly within the Foreign Service there is disquiet on a broader front. It seems to be – every time we do something for Israel, it ends up as a negative in the broader context of the Middle East.

COWAL: Right. Do remember that if we're talking about particularly the beginning of my tour there, by having achieved Camp David, which I must say I'm sure your talks with Sam Lewis talked about that a lot, but I think he played a very key role in Camp David as well. I think there was great unity of purpose, both in the embassy in Tel Aviv, and to a great extent, certainly between the embassy in Tel Aviv and the embassy in Cairo, if not always so much the other countries. But there were certainly in the State Department Arabists. By and large, the Arabists never served in Israel, and there was no such thing as Israelists, because there was really one country, and despite the fact that it was a big embassy, there were at any given time only 100 American positions there or something. So, although some people went back to serve in Israel more than once because they liked it, or because they learned Hebrew, or for all these reasons, you couldn't make a career out of it the way you could make a career out of serving in Arab countries.

But certainly through 1978, 1979, probably into 1980, there were some annoyances with the Israelis, and those could be felt by all of us. Although they were our best friends, they didn't always act as our best friends, and they certainly often did some things politically unilaterally that I think drove everybody nuts. They were very, very anxious to show all visitors their side of the story to the exclusion of other sides of the story.

There was also this incredible interest in Israel by American domestic interests. That's not unlike Cuba, that I'm working on now, of course, but it made it very difficult to achieve a policy. Whenever the American embassy would take kind of a strong stand against something the Israelis were doing or planning to do, of course, the Israelis could always run around your back and go directly to the Congress. One year that I was in Israel, if I'm not mistaken, one-third of all the members of the U.S. Congress visited Israel, in a 12-month period of time. So imagine a country where you have 200 individual members of the Congress or the House of

Representatives or the Senate visiting in one year.

You had all the politicians who always had to make the Ireland, Italy, Israel swing, because they had to appeal to the Italian, the Irish and the Jewish voters in their constituencies. So you had governors, you had senators, you had congressman and you had wannabes from all of these political constituencies in the United States. Certainly, there were sometimes annoyances that what would have been the prerogative normally of an American ambassador or an American embassy, particularly in a country that was as dependent upon us for foreign aid as the Israelis were – by the way, that foreign aid comes in the form of I think it's a quarterly check written to the Israeli government. I mean, there is no such thing here as an aid mission, because God forbid that we would try to tell them what to do about development issues. It's pure ESF, pure economic support funds. There's no development assistance in that equation at all, and as we all know, it's about a quarter of our whole foreign affairs budget. And it used to be more than that, proportionately, until Camp David, and then we felt obliged to try to match Egypt, which is of course a country with much more population than Israel. But at least we tried to match the dollars going to Egypt, which I assume was part of the settlement, with the dollars going to Israel.

Certainly, there were people annoyed at Israelis at given times. They were not easy people to work with. They made things very difficult, and I think for a lot of American embassy folks who had served in countries that we could say were a little bit more pleasant or compliant or less defiant, especially when we saw that, from our point of view, they couldn't survive five minutes without our assistance, I think there were those natural tensions. But there was also a lot of admiration for the people who had sort of put themselves on a world stage, and not only in political terms, who had put themselves on a world stage for the really remarkable achievements in agriculture and in medicine and in science. I think my job, particularly, gave me an exposure to the beautiful side of Israel.

Q: There's something I'd like to ask. As a cultural affairs officer, one of the things that has struck me in looking, say, at what happened in Germany, after the Holocaust, basically the elimination of the Jew in German cultural life, Germany is no longer a world player. The movies, the arts and all of this, Germany is – it's sort of like taking the salt out of the thing. There's nothing there, yet the United States in all these deals has prospered so much, to a large extent because of the exodus from, particularly Germany, of German Jews to the United States. Yet I don't see, except in, say, maybe music and all, and please correct me if I'm wrong, much Israeli cultural impact on the world – Israeli literature or Israeli movies. Perhaps, the few of the painters one thinks about are really holdovers from another era. Could you comment on that?

COWAL: Yes, well, I mean, I think that's an interesting point of view. Some of it I agree with, some of it I don't. Obviously, the music is world class and world renowned, not so much in composition, but in execution, and a whole lot of the people who we consider to be Americans now were Israelis, I mean, were born in Israel. That would be Itzhak Perlman and Pinky Zukerman and Daniel Barenboim and Emmanuel Ax and Gil Shahan. I could name 100 who are really now just – they live on a world stage and that takes them from here to here to here.

Q: They're international.

COWAL: They're international performers of the highest caliber, but they happen to have been born in Israel, and actually many of them got their start as child prodigies through a foundation called the Israel-America Cultural Foundation, which was not an American embassy thing, but to which I was always invited when they would do concerts and judgments and recitals and so on. They'd be brilliant kids. I mean, they are kids, five year olds, seven year olds, violin virtuosos. Their money mostly comes from wealthy Jews in the United States. Isaac Stern gave them enormous amounts of money and would come out and do these trials, judging which kids were really the musical geniuses. So certainly it's in music.

The Weizmann Institute of Science is a world-class institution. I can't name you their Nobel Prize winners in medicine in science, but there are a number of them, so there are achievements in that field. The plastic arts are alive and well, if maybe not world class. The architecture stinks, for reasons I don't quite understand, because again, if you think about the Bauhaus and all of that, it was largely Jewish, or certainly heavily influenced by Jews. I think people who needed to build things requiring a lot of money went somewhere else, and that was usually to Western Europe or the United States. So that's one of the reasons. After all, it's a tiny country.

In terms of literature, there are several absolutely wonderful writers, who of course write in Hebrew. The most famous of them I suppose is Amos Oz, who I wouldn't be surprised if one day he gets a Nobel Prize. It's a really marvelous body of mostly novels, but some short stories and some plays as well. This year, I was very pleased that Naipaul got the Nobel Prize, who comes from Trinidad, where I later served. I think there's essentially the fact that we don't know more about Israeli literature is because it doesn't all get translated. I think there are some absolutely wonderful writers, and there's some wonderful theater there. There are three, or at least there were when I was there, really outstanding dance companies.

I would say, compared to – here's a country of a few million people. I don't know of any country that size which has as vibrant a scene in the plastic arts and the performing arts and literature as Israel. So, in that sense, I think to compare it to much larger places, Germany, with a population of 80 million people, and the United States, with 260 million people, I think you could say on sort of a per capita basis, Israel is really right out there. But it's a tiny country.

Q: Well, now, you're the cultural affairs officer. When you got there '78, what did you see your job was? Who did you replace, by the way?

COWAL: Well, I replaced a guy named Tony Cassanov.

Q: I think it was Louise Taylor, I think, had the job later.

COWAL: Yes, who was later in the job. The embassy in Israel had a lot of power, but even at that time, headquarters didn't want USIS posts, or, God forbid, ambassadors and embassy, to muck around in personnel policy. After all, the personnel decisions were supposed to be made by the Bureau of Personnel Management. There would be five candidates for a job, and in some kind of a bidding process the most qualified would of course always be selected, and then appropriately trained, and then sent out to the post. The embassy would simply receive this

person and say, “This is our new cultural affairs officer. This is our new political officer.”

Because Sam Lewis thought that culture was such an important part of this whole equation, and he’d gotten along very well with my predecessor as well, he made it a requirement that I come out and be interviewed by him for the job, unknown to the Foreign Service. So, on some pretext or another, he got USIS Tel Aviv to pay for me to fly from Colombia to Israel, and to meet the country team. It was some pretext, because obviously you couldn’t be flying people around the world to be interviewed for jobs, that just wasn’t the way the process worked. So it was something my urgent consultations were needed for, and I think it was, I don’t know, April or something of 1978, and I went out to Israel to be interviewed.

What did I see as I looked around? I saw an ambassador who unusually cared about cultural affairs. I saw the ambassador’s wife, Sally Lewis, who was and is a fantastic individual, and the two of them, in part because we were who we were and they were who they were, and they had an incredible entrée to this society. If the rest of us had it, they had it in spades. But they understood that country extremely well. They were very sympathetic, but they were not without factors of critical judgment, particularly Sam. Sally was, I think, even more taken with it in some ways than Sam was, and her job wasn’t to be critical. Her job was to make friends, and she made them, and she made them from every single segment of that society.

Insofar as I became a favorite of theirs, which I would like to think that I was, it was having entrée yourself, way beyond what an official position on the embassy staff would have done for you. But I was lucky enough to be given this access to many dinners at their house and many events that they sponsored. One of their outreaches to the community and to do things that they thought would put U.S. presence into some kind of balance was to do a series of cultural events at their house. Sometimes we invented these from sort of local talent, but usually we were lucky enough that virtually all – not virtually all – a huge amount of talent from the United States found its way to Israel on its own steam, because they came to perform with the orchestra, for instance.

We would try to work with their managers and ask, whether it was Marvin Hamlisch or whoever, would so and so be able to give us a night, a free night, at the residence, playing for the ambassador’s guests. So, once a month they would have a little buffet supper – these were organized by me – a little buffet supper for 65 of their closest friends and a Daniel Barenboim or a Marvin Hamlisch who would put on a wonderful performance, a little 45-minute, hour, presentation, a little chamber music group, a little piano, a singer or a poet. These were really wonderful and magical evenings, and I think I understood then and I think I probably used it forever onward, that understanding that you could get people to come to things like this.

Of course, Sam, in addition to having the 65 Israelis he wanted there would have 15 members of his country team there, and this was a chance for informal interaction with members of the Knesset, with ministers of government, with presidents of universities. Sam and Sally’s house was a beacon of light, it was a place that people wanted to go. It was a place where there were often interesting political discussions, and these sometimes took place around these soirees, these cultural evenings. So, again, I felt like I was a very important member, I was helping them accomplish their mission in Israel.

One thing that we would every year do an orientation for the Fulbright professors who were coming to live in Israel. I think each year we brought maybe 10. We had an America-Israel Cultural Foundation which was the Fulbright Foundation in Israel and America, Fulbright Program, in which the Israelis also contributed stuff like housing for the professors and so on. I was on the Fulbright Commission. I think I was treasurer of it, by virtue of my role as the cultural attaché. So each year we would sponsor a whole day-long orientation for the new people who were coming, and we would always ask Ambassador Lewis to sort of lead this off with just an off-the-cuff sort of thing about how he saw the state of relations between the two countries and what was the reality of Israel.

I can remember one of them where he spoke probably without notes probably for an hour, and it was absolutely fascinating. One of the people who was there was a member of the Fulbright board and he was at that time the head of cultural relations for the Israeli Foreign Ministry, an ambassador who later became ambassador to Washington, Moshe Arad, a very, very good diplomat and career foreign service officer of Israel. I remember very well the day he came to Tel Aviv for that little talk, and we didn't talk after it. He got right back in his car and had to go back up to Jerusalem, and he called me that day and he said, "You know, I had tears in my eyes when he was talking, because I've never heard anybody explain our reality so well, not even an Israeli. The degree to which this person understands, doesn't necessarily condone, but understands this complex reality in which Israel exists is remarkable."

I think I was just extremely fortunate to serve with these people. Basically, the whole country team were sort of superstars. The DCM was first Dick Viets who became ambassador in Jordan and ambassador to other places, and he was succeeded by Bill Brown, who became ambassador in Thailand.

Q: And came back.

COWAL: Right, and then came back more than once to Israel. The political officer was Bob Blackwill, who has now left the Foreign Service and has been appointed as the political appointee ambassador to India. A smarter person I have never known – not an easy person, but a super-smart person. The head of the economic section was Sam Hart, who became the ambassador in Ecuador.

Q: Incidentally, Sam Hart, when I interviewed him, was quite unhappy about his time in Israel, because he said, "We would do the normal thing that any good economic counselor does, analyze the Israeli requests and all, and submit it." He said the Israelis would sort of laugh and say, "Go ahead, it makes no difference." And they'd go to Congress and get exactly what they wanted.

COWAL: Didn't I tell you the same thing? I mean, whenever they got an answer they didn't want from us, they had 435 ways of getting what they wanted, and they usually got it. So, yes, it could be extremely frustrating. But here you sat in country team, it was for me like really playing in the big time. When I went to India, we were tilting toward Pakistan, so we had an outstanding embassy, too. It was Galen Stone and it was Louis Stahl and they were also very good people.

India wasn't quite the same because you weren't with Henry Kissinger going to make your career by being out there in India, because he didn't care about India, but everybody cared about Israel. In some ways, it was like playing in the major leagues, and then I went to Colombia, which in those days, nobody cared about, and then suddenly I went to Israel and it was really like moving up from the farm leagues to the major leagues. You knew even at the time that these were major league ballplayers. I think that made it fun, and I was describing the USIA staff, which had a public affairs officer, an information officer, an assistant information officer, a cultural officer, an assistant cultural officer and a center director head in Jerusalem, and I think that was it.

It was a tiny post by USIA standards in those days. Now it would be a large post by USIA standards because USIA doesn't exist anymore. But in those days, it was probably half of the size of the staff in Colombia, let's say, the USIS staff in Colombia, but enormously well selected with kind of an enormous staff. I think most of the staffs in the embassy were like that. There was a very good station there, I must say.

Q: Was that Philip Jessup? Was he there at that time?

COWAL: I can't even remember.

Q: Philip Jessup was the one who did a very long interview, which we have, I think with Sam Lewis, I mean, a very compelling interview.

COWAL: It may have been and I can't remember. I just remember it was a good station and a good military attaché's office, headed by a general whose name I also don't remember. But across the board, and as you see if Sam Lewis on interviewing me before I came, and I was not a section head, he hand picked that staff, or at least what he considered to be the 20 or 30 key individuals on that staff were hand picked by him. He just knew that he had a big job and he needed everybody on that staff to be capable of carrying out a role.

I can't speak highly enough of the job that he did there, or the job that the Lewises did, because they were very much a team. He could shout, he could be completely out of control. He was a person with strong opinions and strong emotions, and I've been on the carpet. Others I know have been on the carpet, but you came away with this enormous respect for this figure who was sort of larger than life. That's what it took not to be totally boxed into a corner by these Israelis who were larger than life.

My transition from a cultural career to a political career, which I came to have, was because I was control officer for Joe Califano, who was at that time the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. For the same reason that all politicians came to Israel, he came to Israel, and he had already been to Italy and he had already been to Ireland, and he was signing education agreements with these countries. Now, we later learned that the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare had no power to sign an agreement with a foreign country, so we had to redo this whole thing with the ambassador signing it. But he came out to sign an educational agreement for scientific exchanges and academic exchanges between the two countries, and he had also

done these in Ireland and in Italy, because obviously that would be very popular with the U.S. Congress.

He was a larger-than-life figure, too. He was very prominent politically. So he came to Israel, and because I was the education officer, the culture and education officer, rather than a member of the political section being his control officer, I was his control officer. So his visit to Israel called for him to call on the prime minister, who was Begin. So Sam and Califano and I went to see the prime minister. Califano came with two or three members of his staff. So we went to see Begin, and I don't think I had ever met Begin. Maybe I had met him socially, but I had certainly never been in a meeting with him, and I had never been the note-taker in a meeting. I find lost ballet shoes for the dance company, I don't do political reporting.

So, this meeting, which was meant to be a 20-minute courtesy call, stretched into an hour-long substantive discussion, I think mostly about Lebanon, but all of the issues. Begin decided that Califano was close to the president and a political figure and he wasn't going to miss the opportunity. He wasn't just going to talk about this little education agreement they had signed. He was going to launch into a full deal.

I was very interested to be in the prime minister's office. I had never been in the prime minister's office. So, as they were chatting, I was sort of paying attention to what they were saying, but I was also looking at the curtains and wondering about this, that and the other thing. We came out after this meeting, and Sam Lewis looked at me and he said, "Well, you'll have the reporting cable on my desk by 4:00 today." Reporting cable? What's a reporting cable?

So I wrote my first political cable, which I must say he went through, I'm sure making more corrections than he left things in place, but it was a damn good education. Of course, I learned that whether or not you've got a piece of paper in hand, you're in there in a meeting with a foreign head of government, you're always doing a reporting cable. You're doing it in your head if you're not doing it on paper. I had so many learning experiences of that kind in Israel, but mostly because Sam Lewis believed that I could do that kind of a job. I think those things are very important to people being able to see themselves as doing something other than what their current role at the time might be.

It was my exposure in Israel that really paved the way for Jeane Kirkpatrick asking me to be the political counselor to the U.S. mission to the UN (United Nations) in New York. When I said, "Why do you want a cultural officer to be the political counselor up here?" She said, "Well, it's because the UN is all about political theater anyway," which to a certain extent she was playing on. What you need in the UN is somebody who can present this case.

Nonetheless, I got my first exposure to things political while serving as the cultural attaché to the American embassy.

Q: I mean, I'll put down a couple of things that I'd like to ask you about for the next time. How did you find – I mean, this is relatively early on when women were beginning to rise to the executive ranks, the places where you could do things? How did you find being a woman there, and also being a woman vis-à-vis the Israelis? Two, what about the Likud? You mention all these

cultural things, and somehow I think of so many of the people that one thinks about in the Likud party were rather dour?

COWAL: I'll comment on this before we quit. You should know that Ariel Sharon had symphony season tickets which happened to be right in front of my symphony season tickets, so the days when he didn't show up, I began to wonder who was being bombed. But, nonetheless, again, this incredible – in Israel, everybody loves music and everybody loves sort of cultural things. The other responsibility I had as cultural officer that brought me very much into the political mainstream was that we ran a very large, for the size of the country, International Visitor Program, what we used to call Leader Grant program. I think we sent about 20 Israelis to the United States every year on grants.

Of course, because the Likud was in power and the political grantees were picked not by me, but by the country team or by the political section of people they thought were up and coming in both parties, and indeed they turned out to be – we didn't ever send Barak, because he was a military officer in those days. But we sent Yossi Beilin, who was a very important adviser to the Labor government, minister in the Labor government. We sent Ehud Olmert, who is currently the mayor of Jerusalem, who is a Likudnik. We sent him on a grant.

So I got to meet all of these people, because although they might have been, and were, selected by the country team and the ambassador, when it came time to planning their program in the United States or figuring out what they wanted to do, I was the one who took care of it. So I got to know everybody who went on that program to the United States quite well, and that was another insight for me into Likud politics or into national politics.

The Likud is very hard line on a whole lot of things, and I must say, if I were an Israeli, I probably would not be in favor of the Likud. I'm almost certain I would not be in favor of the Likud. I think it would be wrong to say that they were not equally as cultured and interested in the arts, because they are.

Q: I imagine that they had their religious right which was sort of beyond the pale as far as your reach was concerned?

COWAL: Yes and no. I mean, there is one university called Bar-Ilan University, and it's the religious university. I guess it would be the equivalent of Catholic University in Washington. I mean, it's quite definitely a religious university, where virtually every professor wears a yarmulke, and I think most of the students who choose to go there are religious. We certainly had good contacts at Bar-Ilan, but if you remember, you couldn't – the chief rabbi would come to the 4th of July party, for instance, and there's a chief Ashkenazi rabbi and a chief Sephardic rabbi, and they would both come. But you had to learn, for instance, as a woman that you couldn't shake hands with them.

Most of my Israeli friends, including my friends in the Likud, who are on the right side of the political spectrum – I would say there's a great religious and non-religious divide. People will joke in Jerusalem about leaving a neighborhood because it's gone black, by which they mean that the people with the black hats and the black coats have moved in, not with black skin. They

are way less than 10 percent of the population, and yet because of the historic roots of the state of Israel, they are able to control – and because of the political coalitions, which have been needed in order for anybody to govern in a really fractured political system – they have held incredible sway over lots of things in life that may not be very important, but nonetheless symbolically are. So that El Al doesn't fly on Saturday, and food on El Al is kosher food, and all hotels in Israel have kosher kitchens, which 90 percent of the population doesn't care about at all.

Q: I'm told the cuisine there is not something you would seek after.

COWAL: Insofar as it's adapted to the Arab world around it, it's pretty good. But insofar as it tries to transfer sort of not very good Eastern European food to a Mediterranean setting, not so great.

Q: Yes, this is tape five, side one, with Sally Cowal. We're going to pick this up, you were in Israel '78 to '82. We've talked quite a bit about your relations and how as cultural officer you worked with Sam Lewis and his cultural team. I did want to ask how you found being a woman, both in the Foreign Service and serving in Israel, how this played there. We'll want to talk, obviously, about the reaction to events in Lebanon and the invasion of Lebanon, and prior to that, how things were building up. Dealing with Gaza, how did this play out? You mentioned you have other stories, and I like stories, so do you have any ones that come immediately to mind that you can just sort of give a keyword or something like that.

COWAL: Well, I'll tell you about John Glenn's visit.

Q: John Glenn's visit, and also how the arrival of Ronald Reagan on the scene hit within Israel, when he took office in 1980.

COWAL: Right, and, of course, the other thing that was an important part of all of that was the hostages in Iran, which weren't so far away from us, and the fall of the shah and the militarization of Iran, of course, also led to a huge influx of refugees and Jewish immigrants from Iran to Israel. So those are all interesting and important things.

Q: Today is the 26th of February 2002. Sally, I almost shudder, because things are changing so rapidly that it no longer really makes a hell of a lot of difference about whether one's a male or a female, except in the personal relationships. I'm still trying to go back to the time. How did you find, by this time, serving both in Israel and the Foreign Service, being a woman? Did this make any difference, or did you see nuances or anything like that?

COWAL: Well, I think there was a time when there were so few women in the Foreign Service that it was in many ways easier to be a woman than it was to be a man. On the one hand men could get away with – and using a good Israeli word here – could get away with being real schmucks and sort of get lost in the anonymity of the grayness of, certainly, part of the Foreign Service, or anything else, I suspect. Business or anything else, any bell-shaped curve, 60 percent of the people are sort of in the middle and you might notice the outstandingly good 5 percent or the outstandingly bad 5 percent for other reasons, but the rest of the 90 percent are probably just sort of indistinguishable.

Women couldn't get away as easily with being foolish, but on the other hand, if they didn't seem to be foolish, they became noticed much more quickly. There were just so few of us. And the time I spent in Israel, the expanded country team – I obviously wasn't the head of the section, so I wouldn't have been a normal member of a country team. But I think once a week there was a meeting of what they called the expanded country team, which involves about 20 officers in the embassy, and I was the only woman. After all, I was on the expanded country team. So there was not a woman head of section, not the head of the political section, the consular section, the economic section, whatever all the other sections were, not one of them was headed by a woman.

I think in many ways it made you the object of a lot of attention, and if you did that well, if you did whatever you were supposed to do in a way that people saw as noteworthy, it was easier for them to see that. I guess it probably had some downsides. There were speculations many times, I know, about my career and would I stay with it, or "She's just going to go and get married and go off and do something," lots of unfair things. But also, I think, a tremendous advantage, and also I guess that was true in the countries I worked in, too – well, India and Israel, not so much in Colombia, but certainly in India and Israel. Although large categories of women were still second-class citizens in some ways, there were more women professionally, in percentage terms, I think, doing important things such as being members of the parliament, or doctors, or lawyers, than there were in the 1970s of women in the United States doing similar things.

So I guess all of us who were women in the Foreign Service at that time, whatever our role in the embassy was, we also became the sort of women's affairs officers, because there was this thought that, "Well, maybe she can meet Indira Gandhi or Golda Meir and we can say something about women in our society through spotlighting some of the women who we do have who are making some strides, inroads." So I think we were also used a little bit as poster children, and therefore had some experiences that our male counterparts of a similar age and rank probably didn't have quite as often.

Q: Looking back, I think that's very true. All right, let's turn to Lebanon. You got to Israel when?

COWAL: I got to Israel in 1978.

Q: How, as you saw it, because things really kept moving up and up and up, but how were events in Lebanon in '78 when you got there, as reflected in Israel, and how concerned were you?

COWAL: Well, I think as I recall, I was not the political officer, I was the cultural officer, as you know, so I was much more concentrating on Israel proper than on anything else going on around Israel. But certainly, my deep sense of it was that Lebanon was certainly always the leitmotif, that whatever else was going on, there was always Lebanon. Even though we were USIA officers, and in my case cultural officers, therefore not even all that involved in the press, which tends to be more political, we all served as embassy duty officers and so on. I remember being the duty officer for the first time and not knowing what to expect, getting called, and this must have been '78 or maybe early '79, but during one night, getting called into the embassy three or four separate times.

I'd have to get in my car, drive to the embassy, read the message, and those were always Lebanon. Later on, I seem to recall duty officers actually just spending the night in the embassy because the pace of the cable traffic was so rapid. There were certainly other momentous events, many of them on the good side. The bookends for me were arriving there and immediately having Camp David, and leaving at the time of the invasion of Lebanon. Although Camp David seemed to be pointing in a different direction, there was always this undercurrent of the constant attacks on the northern part of Israel coming out of Lebanon. There was Israeli unhappiness with that and with the guerilla groups, which had their bases in Lebanon and then Syria. They felt they would never be secure until they did something about, and constant U.S. pressure that we would regard any Israeli invasion of Lebanon to be a very grave and serious act.

Some of that, of course, is good prelude for trying to work on Cuba and so on, because we have somewhat of the same situation of having very strong domestic interests, which are really trying to drive our foreign policy. Then you have the United States having a foreign policy which it wishes to be something else. We attempted to rein in Israel, because we didn't consider Israeli aggression to be useful to our overall foreign policy in the Middle East and what we were trying to achieve in the Middle East: whether that was secure oil or whatever else, was constantly at tension with people in the United States and the Israelis who could work those people very well in the United States to essentially be putting the bonds on the U.S. diplomatic establishment every bit as we tried to put the reins on the Israelis. I think there was a constant tug of war in that situation.

Q: Was there a feeling when you were there that the Israelis were getting ready to do something? Concerns that the Israelis, their frustration level to reach a certain point where they would go, and we were considering that this would be a bad thing?

COWAL: Right, we did consider that that would be a bad thing, and we did see that tension level rising. I think what made it so difficult is that the State Department, or the Foreign Service, wasn't the only deliverer of messages to Israel. The messages that the Israelis got were clearly mixed, as they saw their friends in Congress and their supporters. I guess that's the context in which I was going to mention the John Glenn visit.

Glenn came out shortly before I left. It was probably the spring of '82. Again, because Sam Lewis was a pioneer and didn't think that all assignments for carrying forward on important embassy projects should always be in the hands of State Department officers, as well as making USIA and other people duty officers, we were also control officers. I was asked if I would be the control officer for John Glenn, or I was assigned to be the control officer for John Glenn, although he was coming not for a cultural visit. He was coming to observe, as a senator ...

Q: He was a senator.

COWAL: He was a senator at the time. The Israelis would do a wonderful job at briefing members of the U.S. Senate. They, of course, had a story to tell and they were good about telling it. You could easily come and understand what remarkable things they had achieved, which indeed they had, whether it was in agriculture or it was in science or it was in cultural things. There were a lot of achievements, and they would keep every visitor busy from day until night

running around and seeing all the marvelous things that they had done, and they had a very good public diplomacy program, and they particularly worked on people who were key political officials in the United States.

We also wanted Glenn, during that visit, to deliver the message that the State Department was trying to deliver, reinforce that a popular and well-known senator who happened to be a Democrat with a Republican administration, nonetheless also carried this message that unbound Israeli expansionism or playing around with Lebanon was not something which we perceived ...

Q: Lebanon and the settlements are sort of tied together at that point, or not?

COWAL: No, I think they're somewhat separate issues.

Q: I mean, we were treating them as separate issues?

COWAL: We were certainly treating them as separate issues. At any rate, we were put into the hands of the Israelis who wanted Glenn, among other things, to understand how difficult it was for Israel to protect its own citizens and its own property, surrounded as they were – and in a way, the issues touched – surrounded as they were by what they regarded as hostile forces. And in the case of the settlements, had they not had the settlements, the 1948 boundaries of Israel meant that in one part of the country, there was exactly nine miles between Jordan and the sea. So, of course, the Israelis saw the settlements and the whole West Bank, Judea and Samaria, as being a way of pushing that enemy back to a position where that enemy couldn't so easily perpetrate terrorist actions or anything else on the Israeli population.

I happen to think that all of that in fact made them less secure, rather than more secure. But at any rate, there was a popular perception, at least in the Likud party, and shared by many Israelis, that after all you just had to look at the map, and what you had to do was push this line back and provide greater security. So the settlements played a huge role in that, because, first of all, you had this influx of population coming out of Lebanon and later out of Ethiopia, and of course later out of Russia and so a real strain on the population base in Israel, and a wanting to expand your territory into these other issues, playing into the political issue of "this will make us safer" also. The expansion of Israel to what they would call greater Israel, biblical Israel, played into a very practical terms as well as political and religious, so it became very important.

The other place from which Israel was extremely vulnerable was being shelled from Lebanon and from the Golan Heights, which was controlled – the top of the heights had been controlled by Syria until the Israelis in the 1967 war took, as well as taking the West Bank, they took the Golan Heights – or the top of the Golan Heights. They pushed the Syrians back. Some of those same Syrian factions then went into Lebanon and shelled the settlements – we'd call them settlements – but kibbutzes and stuff in the north of Israel from their base in Lebanon. So the Israelis wanted John Glenn to understand that not controlling the Golan Heights was extremely dangerous to the Israeli towns and cities and farms beneath the Golan Heights.

The problem was that the United States never accepted Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. They always considered that to be occupied territory which would be part of an eventual

peace agreement. In order to indicate our unwillingness to accept their sovereignty over the Golan Heights, it was forbidden for any member of the diplomatic community to go there. The ambassador wouldn't go. You would never go there in the company of Israelis, because that would be indicating that you respected their sovereignty, and they were always trying to do this creep. They were always trying to make facts on the ground, essentially. The settlements became facts, and people visiting under their auspices became facts.

We were on a helicopter and supposedly going to visit some of the Israeli towns, and the helicopter landed and we realized we were on the Golan Heights, which of course was where I wasn't supposed to be. Of course, as we got out of the helicopter, they had all the press there, and all the TV crews. Essentially, we had been duped. So Glenn said to me, "Just stand behind me, nobody will ever see you," because he was much bigger than I was, of course. And so that's what we did. I stood behind him and the press never caught the fact that there was a U.S. embassy official on the Golan Heights, which they would have exploited.

It was a situation of – it was very interesting because it also showed that even governments that are supposedly the best of friends, when they're trying to achieve a political objective, will not necessarily hesitate to embarrass their friends. Personally I did have many good Israeli friends and certainly our countries had the best of relationships, but there were nonetheless always tensions in that relationship, because they were never very happy with U.S. policy. It was always "what did you do for me today?" sort of thing. Whatever we had done, it wasn't quite enough. We could never quite prove our unconditional love, and I think that was an issue and a problem.

Q: Which brings up a question. I haven't served in Israeli, but I've felt they've done a number on so many Foreign Service officers who are, quote, "Arabists," unquote. "These are just prejudiced people and against us," mainly because they were speaking about Arab concerns, about disinformation coming out of the Israelis. Did you feel that, particularly coming out of the military, but other things, that they spoke with a forked tongue often? Does one take everything with a grain of salt, or did you feel what you were getting was pretty straightforward stuff?

COWAL: Well, about what?

Q: Well, I'm thinking about incidents particularly dealing with what the Palestinians or other people were doing.

COWAL: Oh, I think none of it was casual. They had a particular story and they had a particular line, and that's certainly what you were going to hear.

Q: Well, I mean, would there be – the Israelis would announce something, and you, say, on the country team kind of look at each other and say, "Well, that's just the Israelis." Or say, "Well, gee, I didn't realize that," or something like that.

COWAL: It was a very interesting embassy setup, because we had a consulate in Jerusalem that didn't report to the embassy. Brandon Grove was the consul general in those days, and Sam Lewis was the ambassador. I don't think there was a great deal of love lost between them, to tell you the truth, but I think they tried very hard to make sure that there was one U.S. policy in the

region and not two U.S. policies in the region. I think that the great emotionalism attached to this issue, maybe by the Arabists, or by the people who liked and supported Israel, but people did have horses in this race. I think there had been a tendency, which continued, but which I think they tried in a very professional way to lessen those tensions. Brandon would come to this expanded country team meeting every Friday morning, which I think had not happened in the past. It was like we were on two entirely separate tracks, and at least it was a reality check for us, also, from what we were getting from the Israelis, which was what the Israelis wanted you to hear.

They, I think, had no hesitation, particularly about lying. They had a job to accomplish, and they weren't going to be able to accomplish that unless they had the unconditioned backing of the United States. I want to hear Sam Lewis's interviews someday.

Q: It's there, and Brandon's too.

COWAL: Okay, a much better position to understand it than I was.

Q: But it's interesting. A very strong team, because I know both Brandon Grove and Sam Lewis. These are two very strong people, but very serious professionals.

COWAL: Right, and highly principled. I think it was difficult for them and for all of us, because we lived in separate realities, and we saw things from separate realities. I mean, you don't have that situation probably anywhere else in the world, really, and haven't we seen all of that also since September 11th? I mean, we've seen an awful lot, and a whole of these tensions and so on that I saw then have become very, very blatant now. But we lived in separate realities. None of us was duped. We didn't 100 percent believe what the Israelis told us, and they didn't 100 percent believe what the Palestinians told them, or the Jordanians told them. Nonetheless, your whole vision of something was organized in a different way. Now, the embassy in Tel Aviv did take care of the Gaza consular district, rather than the consulate in Jerusalem.

After the signing of the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1979, after the Camp David agreements leading to the peace treaty, we began to offer cultural programs to Gaza such as International Visitor grants and a very limited – not really a Fulbright program, because we had a Fulbright Commission, but that didn't work outside of Israel, but grants for some university studies. We would occasionally want to bring a speaker who was coming to talk to the Israelis about – it might be about something very cultural or U.S. universities or the U.S. economy, but we would bring speakers on a variety of fields, experts from American universities, typically, to give a series of lectures and talks and speak to the press and so on.

We increasingly began to expand that program to include outreach to Gaza. I guess I got my own window on that other part of the equation by going to Gaza from time to time to accompany speakers or to interview potential grantees. So I got I guess a broader view than somebody whose total job was simply within Israel. Oh my, it was shocking, of course. It was totally shocking. Even compared to Jordan or – I never went to Syria, but to Jordan or Lebanon, the conditions in these refugee camps in Gaza, the conditions in these towns, were simply appalling, simply appalling. You had to question yourself about why was that, and I think it was a real eye opener

for me, it was a real education.

When you lived in Israel, you could almost pretend like you were living in Western Europe or the United States, with a few exceptions, I guess, but there was some poverty. There was certainly no misery, and everybody had an opportunity to go to school, and everybody had good health care, and to a certain extent there was a democratic political system which included everybody. You went to Gaza and the conditions were certainly as bad as anything that I had seen in India 20 years earlier, people living in dilapidated hovels or tents or corrugated cardboard boxes, who had been there at that point for 30 years.

Q: What was the feeling, your feeling, or maybe others, about this? Blame is passed around. One part of the blame is, why don't the Israelis or why don't we do something about this? And the other is that it's been sort of Arab – I'm quoting the broader Arab policy – to keep these people as refugees in order that someday they may return. Were we looking at this to say, "Get out of this and let's get on with ..."

COWAL: Well, Stu, I think you're very accurate and I would say it was some of each, but probably the base of a lot of it was both the leadership in the Arab world and the Arab community was such that they never wanted people to feel that they were settled there. They wanted these to be temporary houses. There would be these examples of trees being pulled up. Nobody wanted you to plant trees. This was never supposed to be more than your temporary place until you would go back to your home in Jaffa or your home in Ramallah or wherever your home was. That was certainly a part of it.

Q: Did you find in running programs in Gaza that you felt that Israelis or were concerned about what we were doing there?

COWAL: Yes. We had permission to go, but I think there was close scrutiny, also, of what we did.

Q: Any sort of veto, or did you ever get somebody who said to you aside and said, "Let's not do that." Did you feel any pressure one way or the other?

COWAL: Well, I think you felt a lot of subtle pressure. I don't remember anyone ever saying anything so directly as "Let's not do that," but they would have ways of making things somewhat difficult. I mean, they had roadblocks all over the place. So unless you were very determined to do things, did you really go ahead and do it? If you only had your speaker out there for three days, and you knew that he could get a terrific audience at Haifa University and a terrific audience at Bir Sheva and a terrific audience here, and you would say, "Well, of these three days we should take him to Gaza for one day." But you would know that that day could well be spent standing at roadblocks or sitting in roadblocks, and then you would get there and maybe somehow the word that you were coming would have never gotten out. So you'd sit four hours in roadblocks and five people would show up. Now, was that because they didn't want to come or they never heard about it? It was occupied territory.

So the next time somebody was going to come and you had a real hotshot and you'd say, "Gee,

where do I put my priorities here? Do I have five lectures with 500 people each and this guy's going to reach 2,500 people who also want to hear what he or she has to say, or am I going to reduce that by half in order to sit in a roadblock for half a day and see five people?" So they made it difficult for you, and the logistics also made it difficult – I mean, the fact that there were no good facilities. The Israelis didn't really want large numbers of people gathered anywhere. But we saw that as an important political objective and we tried to resist.

Q: Was there a Gaza Palestinian organization you could deal with, or was it sort of ad hoc each time?

COWAL: I honestly can't remember. I'm sure we built a little base of people that we could go back to, but they were ultimately not the final arbiters. So the Israelis would just close the borders because there had been an incident across the borders, so there was nothing that these people at the little community center or wherever we planned to carry out a program could do about that. Again, I think I said that earlier, being the cultural attaché put me in Israel within a milieu which was in general not in much agreement with the Likud government, with the Begin government. So most of my Israeli friends, and I would say friends and contacts, I think with the exception of the people that I came to know in government and politics who we sent on International Visitor grants, and a lot of those of course were Likud Party politicians – because they were the party in power, and obviously we wanted and needed to work with them. But I would say my work with the cultural institutions, the Israeli Philharmonic and the dance companies and the seven universities within Israel, the people that I knew in those contexts were overwhelmingly opposed to government policy and shocked by it in many cases, and frustrated by it.

You had an awful lot of people who basically agreed with me, and it would take the form of sort of wry humor and wry jokes, and one of them that I remember was the grandfather was walking along with his little grandson, and he says, "Oh, when I was a young man, I planted those trees." The grandson sort of acknowledges this. "When I was a young man, I put these sidewalks in, and when I was a young man, we built that school." And, finally, the little boy says, "Grandpa, when you were a young man, were you a Palestinian?" Because these days, nobody does that work.

There was this feeling that the effect of this whole two-class society and all this kind of stuff was that the ideals of the state of Israel itself, which after all was this Zionist thought of Jews shouldn't just be bankers and intellectuals, they should be farmers and builders and workers and policemen and criminals, and ordinary things in an ordinary place, particularly after 1967, and the large influx of Arab labor began to undermine that, and that was seen by a lot of people.

Q: What you're saying sort of parallels what happened in Saudi Arabia in the Emirates and all of that, in that with the oil money, the native population didn't work. They sat at the top and brought in – it's a different problem – they brought in Koreans and Indonesians and ...

COWAL: Oh, and Indians.

Q: And all that, but at the same time, it saps the work ethic.

COWAL: And that happened, but the difference was also that – I never served in Saudi Arabia or the Gulf – but they didn't have this, I don't think, this whole philosophy and thought and idealism about what they were as people, and what they should be as people was this honest, humble, working person, who worked with his hands. Which is not traditionally a Jewish thing, but was one of the goals of the founding of the Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionist ideal is that somehow we will be all right with the world if we just have a number of bricklayers. Then, the fact that 30, 40 years later, that was no longer the case, because of the overwhelming nature of cheap labor on your doorstep. So even in the kibbutzim, which were the idealist of all the idealists, less so, but in order to produce enough, a lot of them, their work became not just agricultural but manufacturing. Things would be produced on a kibbutz, but in order to produce at a scale, whether it was an agricultural commodity or a part for an automobile, in order to produce at a scale which was economically viable, most of them got into hiring outside labor, and most of that labor was Arab. It affected lots of things.

Q: I was just curious as you were saying this, what about teenagers and young college students? In the United States, most of us had time going out and being waitresses or waiters, or working in a factory, or doing sort of manual labor, but picking up pretty good money for your college education, and it's part of the American growing up. Did you ...

COWAL: In Israel, it's quite different, I think. It's maybe closer to the United States than Latin America is, where if you're from a wealthy family and you're going to go to college, you're probably not going to work in the summer as a waitress, the way we might. In the Israeli context, all that skewed because of army service and all this stuff, so that makes it very different. And there are some good things about that and some bad things about that.

First of all, it makes the universities much more serious places, because nobody goes to the university, male or female, until they've had two or three years in the army. So a lot of people who would in our system go right from high school to college without really having a purpose or knowing why they wanted to be there, what they wanted to do, or whether or not they wanted a university education at all, they have two or three years to sort of sort that out. Then they almost all take a year after army service to bum around the world. It's a very Israeli thing to do, to go to Australia or India or whatever.

Q: Australians do this, too.

COWAL: Australians do this, too, but Israelis do it in huge numbers. It's kind of a different thing, and Israeli children are very spoiled. In part, I think it's because their parents are so worried about them, in many ways. The fact that they know at age 18 they're going to go off to the army means that they want them to enjoy age 16 on a surfboard and not carrying glasses. Again, then you have here's all this cheap labor, so it probably keeps the cost of labor down, and your university education is probably not a huge cost factor, either. So I would say that by and large, kids work, maybe at home they mow the grass, they do various kinds of things, but I don't think there's the same "we all work in a fast-food restaurant," the way American teenagers tend to do.

Q: What about, getting towards the end of this Israeli time, what about Iran? You were there, I

must say, during very momentous times in that part. I mean, you had Camp David, you had Iran and you had the Israeli problem and the hostages and all that.

COWAL: And we had Iraq, too. That was when the Iraqis were, at least according to Israeli intelligence, and I think this has been corroborated by other sources over time, were building a nuclear weapons capability under the guise of building a nuclear power capacity. But they had fissionable material, and one day, and it must have been in, I suppose, about '81 – I can't remember exactly the date. But the Israelis just went and took it out, using F-16s, of course which they had bought from us, which were never supposed to be used and things like that, and largely getting away with it, I must say. In some ways, if you think about the Gulf War, 10 years after that, if they had been sitting there not simply with SCUD missiles coming in, but with nuclear weapons being directed at them, it would have been a very different place. So it was a preemptive strike, apparently based on very correct intelligence, and I think the world sort of blinked and said, "Fine, you did it."

Q: Absolutely. There are times and places when one just goes ahead.

COWAL: There is an "Axis of Evil," after all.

Q: Well, first place, before we go to Iran, in Lebanon, were the hostages there – this is the time of the Lebanese civil war, or when Americans were being taken hostage. Did that have any reflections on life in your business?

COWAL: I left right before Sabra and Shatila happened. I left in June, and that was in September of 1982. I think the reflection was that between the huge hostage taking in Iran, when the Iranians took over the American embassy, and the fact that journalists and others were getting kidnapped on a more individual basis in Lebanon, made the whole world seem less secure to us.

Q: What was the Israeli reaction to the events in Iran?

COWAL: Well, first of all, the events in Iran generated a new influx of Jewish refugees, many of whom settled permanently in Israel. It was a time when I can remember the luxury hotels in Israel looking like refugee camps, because the Iranian Jews who had stayed until 1979 I think were basically fairly well off. I think the very poor Jews had left in 1948 and so on, but the people who had stayed were those who were bankers and lawyers and people who were well off.

Q: And the shah had solid relations with Israel.

COWAL: The shah had solid relations with Israel, as being the two non-Arab countries in the Middle East, and they had very close relationships, military, economic. So, as I said, those Jews who were living in Iran were in pretty good shape, economically. Then the shah fell and the revolution came and they had to get out very quickly, and, of course, one of the things that Israel offers is it's the home for any Jew who wants to make it his home. So there's no question there of whether there would be – as there would be in the United States about whether you would be accepted as a refugee and so on. You are accepted, if you can prove your mother is a Jew. It's all about your mother, you know. If your mother is a Jew, you're a Jew.

So you would go along the beachfront in Tel Aviv from the Sheraton Hotel to the Dan Hotel to the Hilton to the other fancy hotels, and in every lobby – I can remember this going on for months – it would look like a refugee camp, because people were renting these very expensive hotel rooms, but the place where they had – and this was winter time. You do get a winter in Israel. The Mediterranean whips up and the rain comes. And so the playground for the children and so on was the lobby of the Hilton Hotel, so you would come in and you would realize there was a vast array of people who were essentially camped out there. They were camped out in \$100 a day hotel rooms, but their play space was the downstairs lobby in the Hilton Hotel.

That was a dynamic that was going on, and then I suppose the loss of the relationship of the state to state or government to government made the world even less secure for Israelis and caused their paranoia to go up even higher, I suppose.

Q: Well, did you find that the cultural program, the stuff that you were doing, changed, or were you sort of preaching to the choir as far as our concerns about our hostages and all?

COWAL: Well, I think we were preaching to the choir, basically, the same way I suspect if we're talking about our concerns of terrorism post 9/11. It must be a very different lecture in Israel than it is in Saudi Arabia.

Q: We're going through a very difficult period, certainly, the Israelis and the Palestinians are right now. I mean, there's practically an all-out war, with suicide bombers and all that. But life, I take it, within what we would call present-day Israel, was secure, wasn't it?

COWAL: No, it wasn't secure. It was, I suppose, statistically rather secure, but certainly during the time I was there there were some high-profile incidents which involved very normal people. Not at the scale we see now, but I remember one incident in which an intercity bus was captured by a terrorist, or terrorists, and one of the places it went was on the highway right in front of my apartment. I don't remember actually seeing this, and I think the Israelis were successful at finally halting the bus, storming it, killing the hijackers, but during which time several of the people who were on the bus also got killed. It wasn't before the bomb days. Again, the pace of it, the level of the violence, was much less than what we have today, but I don't think it felt like a secure place.

I'd come from Colombia, and there you either had a feeling that you were targeted or you weren't, as an individual. That might be that you were a foreign oil company executive or whatever and, again, these are conflicts that go on and on when you hear about the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) getting Ingrid Betancourt the other day. But it was that kind of thing. They were after Ingrid Betancourt or Nicolas Escobar, who was the Texaco president when I was there. But they weren't after Sally Grooms. So you lived in a fairly secure world. You got to Israel and it was much more terrorism, as we've now come to define terrorism, and that was to make the whole civilian population feel unsafe. That could take the form of extreme security consciousness on the streets and in the airports and in the supermarkets. You were always being asked to look around for any suspicious packages, and if you saw a suspicious package. We didn't come to that in the United States until maybe this year. I'm talking about

1978.

The first night I was in Israel, I was given a ticket for Joan Baez concert at a Roman amphitheater called Caesarea, outside of Tel Aviv, 30, 40 miles outside of Tel Aviv. Somebody had this ticket, and I guess as the new cultural attaché I guess I was supposed to go hear Joan Baez, so out I went. A driver took me or something, I wasn't with any Israeli or something. I just walked in and was seated in this amphitheater along with everybody else, and they had metal folding chairs arranged around the Roman amphitheater kind of thing, and before Joan Baez came on stage, some guy walked out on the stage and he said something in Hebrew and everybody stood up and they went like this. I thought, well, it's a prayer or something. It's a theocracy.

Q: You were standing – to get this on tape – you were standing up, bowed over, looking down.

COWAL: So we stood up, everybody bowed over and they looked down and I thought, "This is my first day in Israel, I'm not Jewish. I guess this is what they do." I later came to find out that there was a bomb scare and he was asking everybody to look under their seats and see whether there were any packages. So that was my first introduction to the fact that there might be something under your seat that you should worry about, and I think we became, all of us – you didn't know whether you would be in the Carmel Market on Friday morning and pick up the wrong orange and it would be a bomb.

I say, much smaller scale than these terrible things that have happened in the last couple of years, but certainly you were not without that sense that acts of violence, acts of terrorism, would be random and it could just as well be you as anybody else who was caught up in them. I don't think we felt very secure, and I suppose the greater the tensions in the Middle East, the less secure we felt. Now, we didn't feel that our embassy was going to be taken over and we were all going to become hostages the way our neighbors in Tehran were.

Q: As always, it was a difficult time. I mean, the Middle East is always – and you had things going on. I mean, Lebanon and Iran. Was there any ...

COWAL: I also had another interesting experience while I was there, and then we should probably end this. But I was single in those days, and I had divorced from my first husband and was in Israel as a single person. It was the time when the first Egyptian ambassador arrived and he was also single. Much older than I, he had been a diplomat for King Farouk. He had begun his diplomatic career, he was probably 20 or 25 years older than I. We never had what I would call a romantic relationship, but I was sort of a convenient person for him to take along when he wanted or needed somebody to go with him to a dinner party or a concert or whatever to which he had been invited.

It was another sort of whole slice of life, seeing this in a way through the eyes of the first Arab representative in Israel, and that was also fascinating. The way that he was welcomed by Israelis was fascinating. He was like a rock star. People would recognize his car and start waving. There was, on the part of the Israeli public – every place you would go, after Camp David, there were doves up in all these little statues, little banners and stuff. All the signs at roundabouts and stuff

in town, they would say, “Peace, Shalom, Salaam,” and it would be in the three languages, and there was this great feeling. In some ways, Saad Murtada, who was the ambassador, was the recipient of many of these warm feelings, so here you’ve got this Arab nationalist. He’s gone through King Farouk, and then Nasser, and then Sadat, but a very cultured, educated person, nonetheless an Arab nationalist or whatever, and he’s sent to this position – very interesting.

Q: Did you get any feeling from him about how he was looking at Israel at that time?

COWAL: Well, I think skeptically, but he was also I think very moved by this warmth that poured out toward him. I must say, I knew the Israeli ambassador to Egypt, also, because he had been an academic, a guy named Shimon Shamir, and he was at Tel Aviv University. He was the head of, I think, an institute for the study of Arab cultures or something, at Tel Aviv, so the Israelis had named him as their first ambassador to Egypt. Of course, they’re not comparable. Here, he goes to Egypt, which is a country at that time of 40 or 50 million people, most of whom are uneducated and illiterate, so they don’t even have the foggiest clue that some person from a strange planet has come to their midst. Whereas in Israel you have at that time maybe 3 or 4 million people, all of whom are highly political, highly literate, and every single one of them knows there’s a new Egyptian ambassador, and most of them are excited and enthusiastic about it.

But Shimon Shamir, it was a very cold reaction on that side, where it was a very warm reaction on the Israeli side. So he had his official contacts. I think people were correct with him, diplomatic. Sadat received him, and later Mubarak and so on, but there was not in any way the same kind of thing.

Q: Before we finish this, I wonder if we could just do one last thing, and that is to talk – you left, the Israelis had already invaded.

COWAL: Yes.

Q: What was the reaction from the embassy and from your contacts, because it looked like Sharon was running away with it? He was defense minister.

COWAL: I was at the meeting when Glenn went to see Begin. Of course, so was Lewis, and we were constantly briefing, Sam was, high-level visitors like that that they had to deliver the message that there was no green light there, that whatever they might think the American people thought or the American Congress thought, that the American government would take a very negative view of an Israeli invasion of Lebanon. I heard Glenn deliver that message. Anybody who says that, “Gee, they didn’t know, they never heard from the American government that this would be something we would regard very adversely,” doesn’t understand the whole story. They might have gotten winks or nods from their particular friends in Congress, but they got a drumbeat from Sam and from every person who came to visit. I saw that part of it.

I would say that most of my Israeli friends, and I’ve already described them – and the tension began to build. You began to know that it might well happen as Sharon ran amok. I would get calls every day from people, either at the office or at home, and they would say, “You,” meaning

the American government, not me, Sally, “You have to stop these people. You are the only thing they will listen to. You have to stop them, because they are heading for disaster.” I can remember that extremely clearly.

I was originally supposed to leave in August and go to the Senior Seminar, and suddenly I had to take over, and we’ll get onto that next time, but I had to take over this job, the way it always is in the Foreign Service. It simply had to be done and could only be done by me, and must be done tomorrow and not in August or any other time. Therefore, I would leave in two weeks and get on a plane and go to work the next day and have deferred home leave and all that sort of stuff. So suddenly I was on a fast track to doing something else. I think I got my orders the day of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which was in June sometime, and I had 10 days. I was going to leave 10 days later, after I got my orders, and really I had been there four years, and really I had an enormous number of friends and contacts, and despite the fact that all this was going on, everybody wanted to have a farewell party for me.

So I would have, sort of always gone through, the kind of breakfast, lunch and dinner when it’s all sort of a blur and you think you’re never going to get done having these parties, but you do want to see everybody. It was so surreal, because every night I would be at a group of friends, a party sort of for me, and many of the men who would come would have earlier in the day been in Lebanon. In other words, they were soldiers who were sort of mobilized for day trips, and then they would come back at night and go home and sleep in their own beds. It was a very strange situation. Or somebody would have been there the week before or whatever. Because of this whole reserve thing, everybody got called up.

I mean, obviously, the regular troops were doing what the regular troops were doing. The reservists were usually on logistical missions or they were doctors or they were something or another, whereas they weren’t actually mobilized but they were required to do certain things. So it was very surreal, were we in a war? Then, of course, my own emotions, my own at leaving, but I think one thing really sticks out in my mind, and that was going to the largest hospital in Tel Aviv, and it’s called Tel Hashomer Hospital. The director of the hospital was a friend of mine, a medical doctor, who was also the chairman of the Fulbright Commission, and I had obviously worked very closely with them.

I can’t remember his medical degrees, but whatever they were, he was at that point running this 1,000-bed hospital or whatever, with six operating rooms. I went to pay a farewell call on him as the chairman of the Fulbright Commission, and he was maybe 15 or 20 minutes late to the meeting, which was uncharacteristic for him, and he walked in the room and he apologized for keeping me waiting. He said he had just been in a meeting of the whole board of directors of the hospital, because they had been called together to make a decision about whether they would tie up one of the operating theaters for an eight-hour operation on a small Lebanese girl who was a blue baby, and who had been brought back in an Israeli military hospital by Israeli soldiers who had seen her on the street and realized that she needed an operation.

Q: I might add that in present-day terms, a blue baby was a child who was suffering from heart deficiency.

COWAL: Right, and it looked that way. So this was a baby whose heart – apparently, probably one of these medics who was up there saw this child on the street, recognized immediately, without doing a CAT scan or something, what the diagnosis was. They had somehow brought this child and the mother on the helicopter to Tel Hashomer Hospital, along with some wounded Israeli soldiers who had been evacuated. So the hospital board had had a long meeting to decide whether or not the operating theater and doctors should be occupied to do this operation, and they had decided that it should happen. That, to me, said so many things about Israel, and my own sort of conflicted notions of what it was all about. Was it this power country invading a small neighbor, or was it this humanitarian “we have something to offer the world and maybe we can express that in the form of an operation on a child who won’t live another year if she doesn’t have.” I guess we’ll leave it there.

LEON WEINTRAUB
Hebrew Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1979-1980)

Consular Officer
Tel Aviv (1980-1982)

Mr. Weintraub was born and raised in New York City, educated at Hunter College, Brooklyn College and the Universities of Pittsburgh and Wisconsin. After service in Liberia with the Peace Corps he entered government service, first with the Navy Department and then with the State Department Foreign Service. His service in Washington and abroad involved him with a variety of countries and issues including African Affairs, International Organizations, Narcotics and Peace-Keeping operations in Africa. His foreign posts were Bogotá, Tel Aviv, Lagos, Quito and Geneva. Mr. Weintraub was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Hebrew.

WEINTRAUB: Yes.

Q: And had you- I can't remember, had you gone to Hebrew school?

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes, I'd gone to Hebrew school, and like a lot of children of my generation we learned to read the Hebrew in the prayer books, learned to sound out the vowels and the consonants, but we had minimal instruction in Hebrew as a language; a little bit, but very minimal. The main job of going to Hebrew school was the ability to participate in services. This was obviously shortly after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 so Hebrew was just reemerging as a living language again, so it was not considered of major import when I was in Hebrew school to learn Hebrew as a language. It was mainly to be able to participate, to conduct service, to participate in services. So as our Hebrew instructor said when discussing the types of backgrounds people brought to the class, he kind of jokingly -

Q: This is at FSI?

WEINTRAUB: At FSI. He jocularly said, oh, so you know how to ask God for something, but when he answers you you're unable to understand Him. So I had very limited knowledge of conversational Hebrew but I guess I had a little bit of a leg up on other students in that at least I could recognize all the letters, I could recognize the vowels that were placed underneath the letters and at least I could sound out the words. But obviously I didn't have any particular advantage when it came to learning the structure of the language and how the language worked.

Q: Well, you took that for eight months, is that right?

WEINTRAUB: Right, right.

Q: And then off- how did you come out?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I managed to get a 3/3. We had one primary instructor for the full period of instruction, with one other instructor to assist - unlike the Spanish, where each month for the four months you had a different Spanish instructor with different accents from different parts of South America.

We had a student in class, a U.S. military officer who was going to be assigned to the Office of the Defense Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Israel. He had previously been assigned to an Arabic-speaking country, I think it was Oman. He was probably the best student in the class, in that he had such a good understanding of the pattern of Arabic and Hebrew that he really did very well. FSI also had the feature to give you a break during this extended period of eight months of all-day language training. Wednesday afternoons, I think it was, rather than language training we had area studies, so we learned about the politics, the culture, the background of the Middle Eastern area. We had a - one of our Hebrew teachers, in fact, was the spouse of an officer who I would later serve with overseas.

Q: Who was that?

WEINTRAUB: The officer was Michael Einik, who later became ambassador to Macedonia. His wife is Israeli. He had served earlier in the Sinai, in the Sinai mission as part of the disengagement.

Q: How do you spell his name?

WEINTRAUB: E-I-N-I-K. He's now living overseas, I believe. Anyway, he had served in the Sinai field mission, which was established I believe after the '73 war, and he was assigned there. He met and eventually married this Israeli woman, and she was his dependent. While he was in the United States she was employed as a Hebrew language instructor at FSI.

So then in, I guess in the summer of 1980, by then, I think, June or July of 1980, we were off to our second assignment, to Tel Aviv, Israel.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WEINTRAUB: It was a two-year assignment, as our assignment in Colombia was, so we were there from the summer, or June/July of 1980 until around June or July of 1982.

Q: When you arrived in 1980, what would you say was the situation in Israel?

WEINTRAUB: In Israel, there's always a crisis of one kind or another in this country, either with its neighbors -- obviously with the history of warfare and conflict with the neighbors -- or internally. It is such a hothouse atmosphere - of new immigrants, of the older societies. Actually, shortly before we arrived there had just been a tidal wave of change in government. From Israel's independence until the time we arrived, there'd been a monopoly of rule by the Labor party, by the Labor party itself or an alliance with other central left or further leftist governments. This was all the Israelis had ever known. But the other party, the Likud party, led by Menachem Begin, was gradually winning inroads and I think, when I was in language training, in the fall of '79, there was a change in government. So this was something that Israelis had to adjust to, the Labor party being on the outs, being the minority.

Also there was the proverbial debate in Israel, and this was heating up, it heats up in cyclical periods, the, so to speak, "Who is a Jew" debate. And this was, at least in part, an issue of the new society or the old societies of people who claimed Jewish heritage, whether in Ethiopia, in Sudan, or other places. Were these or were these not the lost tribes of Israel? They were groups of people who had obviously some rituals in common with old Jewish practice, but had no familiarity with the Hebrew language - but certain foods, certain prayers, certain rituals seemed to have an affinity, have a common root in ancient Hebrew practices. So are these people Jewish or not? Did they have the right of return to settle in Israel? Were they citizens when they arrived? Did they have to go through a conversion? Who would do it? This was a turmoil, this threw the country into turmoil, it entered into internal politics.

The orthodox branch of Judaism, the orthodox rabbinate had a monopoly, if you will, on things religious in the country for the most part, but particularly in the Labor party and other left wing elements of Israel and also in a lot of moderate Israeli settlements. And this is in a society with a fairly secular attitude toward religion, so there was more than a little bit of resentment against this kind of a monopoly of the orthodox rabbinate. So this was always part of the political situation in Israel, adapting to rule by a right wing party rather than a left wing party and this periodic issue of who has the right to settle in Israel; whether El Al Airlines has to be grounded on Saturday; whether the airport should be open on Saturday for flights that were not El Al. I mean, these things are going on all the time in the country and there are strikes, due to a very strong labor movement; it's just a hothouse atmosphere.

Q: This is, of course, before the Lebanese war, you might say.

WEINTRAUB: This is before the Lebanese war.

Q: Yes, so I imagine that's sort of a turning point or something.

WEINTRAUB: Well, there were always things happening when we were there. When we were there, from 1980 to 1982, we had the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi reactor; we had the assassination of Anwar Sadat in Egypt; and we had the, after constant shelling from southern Lebanon, we had the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, all the way up to Beirut when the Palestine Liberation Organization, the PLO and Yasser Arafat, were exiled all the way to Tunisia. You know, the civil war in Lebanon had gone through the '70s, hostages were taken in Lebanon and of course the whole southern strip of Lebanon was in the hands either of the PLO or other terrorists groups; there was very little effective rule of the Lebanese government in southern Lebanon. There were a lot of refugee camps, other settlements and there were cross border incursions all the time, there were incidents with settlements in Israel; one incident in the settlement of Ma'a lot in 1974, where the school was taken over, a lot of children were killed. And the border between Israel and Lebanon was always a hot spot, and eventually with rockets being shot into Israel, Israel decided they had to take action and then they invaded - that was in the summer of '82, shortly before we left.

Q: What was your job? You had several jobs?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I started in the visa section, continuing, so for the first year I was in the visa section. At this point the embassy was going under a lot of reconstruction, rehabilitation. It was in a situation where the Congress never gave the State Department enough funds to do a good job on fixing up and modernizing the embassy in Tel Aviv. This was because, as it had been expressed in numerous resolutions, the Congress wanted the embassy to be in Jerusalem to respond to a political wish, and it was the position of the administration, although every president in every campaign always said we would do our best -

Q: When they get to New York.

WEINTRAUB: Right. We will do our best to move the embassy to Jerusalem. Of course, when they got into power it was always "The status of Jerusalem remains to be settled, it's an object of dispute, we don't want to upset the issue." So Congress would give a bare minimum of funds to refurbish the embassy in Israel and it looked it; it was a pretty shabby building. Inside it was like a rabbit warren of little offices and stairways, probably a fire hazard, I suspect. And in fact the visa section was physically separate several blocks away for most of the time I did consular work in Israel. Near the end of that year, however, an improved visa-processing section was reopened in the main embassy building. So I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that I was six months in the NIV line, in the non-immigrant visa line, then three months on immigrant visas, followed by three months with American citizens services issuing new passports, issuing birth certificates, doing notarials, a lot of other issues of concern with American citizens living in Israel, or with visiting Americans who may have been arrested and put into prison, had emergencies, people who needed a passport and had to travel. And then the immigrant visa work was with people who had to go through the more elaborate procedure who wanted to emigrate legally to the United States.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

WEINTRAUB: The ambassador was Samuel Lewis, who ended up serving, I think, as ambassador either seven or eight years, I forget how many.

Q: Oh yes, yes.

WEINTRAUB: I think he had been there since maybe '77 or '78 so he was there for several years before and after I was there. Actually I see Ambassador Lewis occasionally in Washington these days.

Q: Well, let's take non-immigrant first. Who was- I mean, was this a standard thing or was there a problem of, you know, people particularly from that time, Soviet Union, would come into Israel, and then were they trying to peel off and go to the United States?

WEINTRAUB: Well, one thing I remember on the NIV line is that I formed kind of model of what your potential illegal immigrant would be and I found it to be quite different in my own mind with what it was in Colombia. I had the impression that in Colombia I was watching out particularly for people in the bottom on the socio-economic scale, people who didn't see a way out, people that didn't see a good future for themselves in Colombia, either through lack of education or maybe they came from a depressed class. These were the people who presumably would be the busboys, the dishwashers, the hairdressers, the manicurists, who would fill these kind of low-skilled entry service jobs in New York and other urban centers in the United States. So these were the people you had to watch out for being illegal immigrants. People who had reasonable jobs, who had high school education, college education, could probably do well in Colombia and with any degree of success they would be able to hire a maid, if not a live-in at least a part-time maid, maybe a cook as well, and they could live fairly well.

It was my impression, in Israel, however, that it was not people on the bottom of the scale you had to watch out for illegal immigration; it was people in the middle. And by this I mean that for people in the bottom of the scale, first of all, geographically you were much further away. It wasn't like a flight and an hour-and-a-half you were in Miami where there was a welcoming community already for you. It was halfway around the world. And Israel, of course, had a much more developed social welfare network than in Colombia. Colombia, like most developing countries didn't have much in the way of a social welfare network; social security, you know, like the school system, didn't serve those of the lower classes very well. Israel was a much more egalitarian society, and it had a pretty good social welfare network, so people at the bottom didn't feel they had to escape. There were minimum wages and there was definitely more of a socio-economically integrated society, one that tended to look after its less fortunate; something of an attitude of "we're in this all together," you know, we are the refugees; the flotsam and jetsam gathered from around the world, we help our people who need help. So people at the bottom didn't feel they had to escape or that there was no future in front of them.

It was my impression that for people starting out in the entrepreneurial sector, people who were businessmen, hustlers who wanted to succeed, and other very ambitious people – for these people, Israel just offered too small a landscape for them. This was a country of four, five million people. If you're an entrepreneur this was just too small and constraining an environment for you.

There was nowhere to go. So these people could have connections in Europe, in the U.S. and it was my impression that these were the people who would be more likely to use a visitor's visa with intentions of becoming a U.S. resident. Now, they wouldn't fill the low level jobs, chances are they would find a way to adjust legally if that was possible; they wouldn't stay submerged in an underground economy because they would be obviously fairly visible as entrepreneurs in the United States. Nevertheless, however, we were not there to encourage people to use the NIV route in order to later become a legal immigrant. There were ways to do that, obviously. So this was kind of the insight I developed into how you interviewed people in the non-immigrant visa line.

Q: Well, as an old consular officer myself, when you're dealing with a hustler in any country, they don't take no for an answer, particularly when you're coming to Israel where I understand controversy and debate is, you know, the pastime of everybody.

WEINTRAUB: It certainly is a very argumentative society, a society where people don't take no for an answer. And it never took place with real animus, debate was never- it was heated occasionally, but never with venom or vindictive. People knew you had the right and they respected you for that, and as long as you were honest and upfront, you know, that's the way things were. But the Israeli society, as I said, is like a hothouse, there's a lot of pressure, people become very argumentative by nature, and people don't like to be thwarted if they have an ambition like that.

Also in the NIV situation, some Soviet Jews had started to come there, the U.S. Jackson-Vanik legislation had helped emigration. Also when I was there, after the revolution in Iran, a lot of Iranian Jews had begun to arrive in Israel. There was a sizeable Jewish community in Iran, a lot of them quite wealthy, they had done very well under the shah, who had apparently encouraged people to be entrepreneurial, and they did quite well. But after the revolution in the fall of '79, large numbers, either before the revolution or shortly after when they were able to get out, did come out. Perhaps they had bank accounts overseas already, maybe they were able to get funds out anyway, but they were now living in Israel, Israel obviously accepted these people no questions asked, on the principle that they were emigrating to Israel. But then these people also, my impression is, felt a little bit in a straightjacket by the size of Israel and the scope it offered for business people and entrepreneurs.

Q: Yes, and it was basically a socialist society.

WEINTRAUB: It is very much. Israel was definitely – it had characteristics of a socialist society, with very high income taxes and other things of that nature. And I guess there was a pretty sizeable Iranian Jewish community in Los Angeles and other parts of Southern California as well, so a lot of these people, they came with - I mean, they had bank accounts that I could never hope to amass and they could buy their way into the United States. If there was just a legal way to do it, they could do it and there were so-called, I don't know if they still have these, but the U.S. had a category of Investors Visas. And a lot of these people could do that at the drop of a hat. You bought into an American company or you were going to start an American company with the provision that you would offer employment to so many Americans, and you could get an Investors Visa that way. So it was quite a challenging environment - whether the former

Soviet refuseniks, the émigré Iranians, or the general mix of Israeli society, visa work was endlessly fascinating.

I remember one fellow - we also had to be aware of the pattern of Israeli society, with young people just getting out of the military service. You know, they might have four years of very tough military service and there's a pattern in Israeli society that after military service they go hitchhiking around the world. It's called a "tramp," and it's quite a tradition. So they go for a "tramp." And these people are usually very well grounded in Israeli society, and there's usually not much anxiety about them not returning, particularly if they had good service in the military, essential for- very helpful for a career in Israeli society. So young, single people, without a great deal of assets in a country like Bogotá - in Colombia, you might be very suspicious about such people for visa purposes. In Israel, probably not as much. But you always had to talk to people.

So I remember one fellow who had just finished his service in the military, and he brings a new passport in for a U.S. visa, and I said well, "Where are you going? And, typically, these people would crash in youth hostels, with friends, or with other Israelis scattered all over the United States. I said, being a bit of a tease, "You know, you've never been to the United States, it's very expensive. Where are you going to go?" He offered me some story, like, "We have ways, there are Israelis all over, I can find out." And I said, "Have you ever had a passport before this one?" He said, "No I haven't." I said, "You've never even been outside of Israel. How do you know, how do I know you're going to be able to get along; you won't have a problem in the United States?" So he looks at me with a conspiratorial look and he says, "I've been outside this country; where I went I didn't need a visa to go to." Obviously he'd been in Lebanon. So, there were always interesting stories.

Even in Colombia, though somewhat of less variety than in Israel, we had a lot of Foreign Service nationals working in the visa section. It was very interesting to me that the local employees we had - what a variety of conditions or countries they'd come from. In Israel, for example, some were second or third generation Israelis - they came from Russia, from Iraq, from Iran, and many other countries. I mean, it was a fantastic experience to see these people working all together. So it was quite an enjoyable experience.

Q: Well, Leon, Israel is an interesting society and it has a relatively small, really orthodox community and you get at the airport you see guys in the typical whatever the outfit is, the hat and the-

WEINTRAUB: The long black coat.

Q: Long black coat and all that. And apparently these are two different societies that don't quite even really almost live in the same- I mean, the same mental thing. How did you find dealing with, or did you deal with the orthodox, I'm talking about the really orthodox community?

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously the really orthodox community doesn't mix very much outside of its own community so there were certain areas, sectors or neighborhoods of Jerusalem or Tel Aviv where they tend to live. They obviously like to be within, or they have to be within walking distance of a synagogue since they don't drive on the Sabbath. And obviously they don't take an

active part in public service, in the government so-

Q: Or military service either, do they?

WEINTRAUB: Some “modern” orthodox do but the “ultra” orthodox typically don’t, they’re exempt from military service, which creates a certain amount of resentment, of course, within Israeli society. But there are other elements within the total orthodox community where, in fact, the youth do serve in the military. So in most embassy work one would not meet typically these ultra orthodox people. They have their businesses, their shops and they like to keep to themselves. There is a religious party in Israel and in my second year as political officer I met with people from the religious party, and those people who were the party officers were somewhat on the secular side of the spectrum. They held secular office and they met with diplomats as well; they did not wear the black hats and that typical outfit, so to speak. But it was a very different society and even the Israelis talked about them as “the black hats.” Often, when there were certain occasions, whether there was a marriage between two families in this society or some other occasion, a funeral, perhaps, the streets would be full of a sea of these people, it looked like a march of the penguins, all you saw was the black and white, the white shirts and the black jackets and black hats. But a significant number of Israelis thought these people received undue deference from the government of the day, whether it was subsidizing of the religious schools - even “secular” schools had to obey certain constraints about which holidays to observe - or whether the airport could be open on Saturday for servicing non-El Al flights. The fact that El Al could not fly on Saturday, that was a given, but whether the airport should be open to receive flights from Air France or anyone else, was, it seemed, always a point of contention. In short, there was a constant state of tension in society.

Q: Well, visa-wise, was there sort of an automatic giving an orthodox a visa or not or how did that work? I’m talking about non-immigrant.

WEINTRAUB: Well, not necessarily. I guess one could be more likely to view them with a more positive outlook as a visa applicant. Generally they were fairly established. One didn’t see these people as engaging in entrepreneurial activity; they seemed to be fairly settled, have large families at a fairly young age. But often if they were involved in import-exports, some of them may have been involved in the diamond trade. Israel had a diamond cutting or diamond polishing sector.

Q: Up in Amsterdam too.

WEINTRAUB: Amsterdam as well, and of course there is the diamond center in New York where you see a lot of the black hat guys working on 5th Avenue. So there was a trade and you had to recognize that. But, you know, you couldn’t give them a pass, they had to meet the requirements.

Q: Well, how did you find being Jewish in the business of handing out something that people wanted, as is true of all visa officers? At one point I know, and I don’t know when they had stopped it, but I go back quite a ways, it was policy not to assign Jewish officers to Israel because the feeling that there would be undue pressure put on them.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I think -

Q: This is true of some other nationalities too.

WEINTRAUB: Right, I think that - I don't know when that policy ended, but it was obviously not in effect when I was there. In fact, there were other Jewish officers at the embassy when I was there.

Q: So it was no longer even an issue, you weren't breaking ground or anything.

WEINTRAUB: No, no, no, not at all, not at all. And some of the visa applicants, you know, would see my name on the plaque next to the window and they would say, "Oh, you're Jewish?" And they might try to use that as an "in" to try to curry favor, perhaps - but for most people it was immaterial, you were just another American; they just saw you as a representative - as a vice consul of the United States. I can't say that many people tried to use that as a point to use favors in the visa process.

Q: I know I was in the consul general in Athens at one time and we had some Greek Americans, you know, officers and all that would try to pull some- but you know, an American is an American is an American.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I think so, I think so. We have to do our job and in the immigrant visa section we still, you know, have to go through things quite completely. I remember, there was a case where one fellow, he was going to be getting a visa as an immigrant to be an auto mechanic and I wasn't aware that there were shortages of auto mechanics. But some potential employer had filled out all the work and gotten approval through the Department of Labor that in fact there was a shortage in this category and yes, it was legal, but of course I didn't have any way of assessing, in fact, the man's skills as an auto mechanic. In other words, the paperwork in the U.S. was done, but we had to be convinced that the applicant could fill the job position. So I got the head of the motor pool to have a chat with this guy and it turned out I ended up refusing the fellow. The head mechanic of the motor pool said, well, maybe I'd trust him to change the oil in my car but not much more than that. So again, with the local employees who might be subject to bribes or pressure, whatever, to help out a fellow compatriot, a fellow Jew, Israel obviously has its problems of corruption like any society. But it's a fairly open society, and it's a fairly honest and hardworking society, I think.

Q: How about, particularly when you moved over to American services, how did you find the American Jewish community? I mean, there were two elements, one were the ones that came over to settle and the other one was the normal tourist.

WEINTRAUB: Well, as far as the tourists, I really had little to do with them. They rarely need to come to the embassy for anything, for any service. But the settlers were a mixed bag. Sometimes you had the very orthodox who had to come in to renew a passport, perhaps, or get a birth certificate for one of their children stating that he or she was an American citizen born overseas. One of them, I remember, came in the morning and said - after he looked at my name - he said,

“Oh are you Jewish?” And I said “Yes.” And he looked at me and said, “Did you say the morning prayers this morning?” I said, “No, as a matter of fact, I skipped it this morning.” He then says, “Well, I have the prayer shawl with me and I have the book, we could do it now if you’d like.” I said I didn’t think this was the time and the place to do it and I would try to take care of it another time. There were other people who just, while they’re waiting for me -- maybe their passport had expired and they’re waiting for me to go through procedures to issue them a new passport, -- they start a conversation and might say, “Oh, you’re Jewish, did you ever think of settling here?” And it was just friendly conversation. There was some concern at the time, a fair amount of concern, actually, from Americans who settled in Israel for whatever indeterminate time that was, and received a notice to serve in the Israel army, in the military. There was a degree of anxiety about whether this would make them lose their American citizenship. And I guess there was a time when service in another military-

Q: It had, I think it was the Schneider Decision came out.

WEINTRAUB: I don’t know when that was.

Q: But that was in the, I think in the ‘70s.

WEINTRAUB: Well, this was in the early ‘80s. But it takes a time for that to filter through. And apparently the way the Israeli legislation was written, these people didn’t volunteer for the military, they were drafted.

Q: Yes, and that made a difference.

WEINTRAUB: That made a difference, and also with receiving Israeli citizenship. This was at the time when I think the U.S. only in certain limited circumstances allowed dual nationalities. It’s not as easy as it is now with dual nationalities. And people were concerned that if they had an Israeli passport they would they lose their American citizenship. You know, there was quite a bit of anxiety about this as well. And also the Israeli citizenship law apparently was written with this at least partly in mind in that if you were a settler, a Jewish settler, you did not have to apply for citizenship, you did not have to take such an affirmative act. Rather, such citizenship was awarded to you based on the fact that you had lived there for a certain time. You had to “opt out” of it if you did not want it, rather than make an application to receive it. So that way people could preserve their dual nationality. So there were a lot of these issues that I came to deal with.

One interesting case was some fellow who came to me from the orthodox community when I was in American services. It was in the spring I guess of 1982. No, no, of ‘81, at the end of my first year, I was in American services. It was probably maybe a few weeks before the Passover holiday. And he saw my name, asked if I was Jewish, and then said, “Oh, are you observing Passover?” And I said, “Yes, of course.” And he asked me was I going to use a certain type of matzo, the unleavened bread required for observance of the holiday. Now, there is the typical unleavened bread kosher for Passover that one can buy in the supermarket. It’s packaged and it’s manufactured and it’s fully kosher, fully accepted for Passover. However, the ultra-orthodox may not really like that so they have a certain type of matzo [“matzah ‘shmurah,” or “Watched Matzah”] that they really like and it’s all handmade and it’s watched over to ensure that the

water and the flour don't mix for over a certain amount of time before it's baked -- so to ensure that the mixture does not rise more than a certain amount, and can still be considered unleavened. So it really meets the code. So he asked me would I like some of this "matzah shmurah" for my Passover celebration. Oh, I said, sure, it would be an honor for me. What am I going to say, no I don't want? Sure, it would be an honor for me. He said okay, I'll come back tomorrow. So he brings me a box and it's, it's somewhat on the tasteless side, actually.

Q: Yes, I think library paste is a pretty good description.

WEINTRAUB: It's a circular matzo versus a square matzo that one buys in the stores and it's not meant to have a taste but it's meant for ritual purity to be out there. So of course next year he came to the embassy again and I got it, and I'll be darned if several assignments afterward he didn't follow me through the mail and "Watched Matzah" would arrive at other posts, unbidden. Somehow he was able to get my address. But he saw this as doing a good deed.

So I had some interesting discussions with people.

Q: Now, did you, particularly when you were doing sort of the consular business, did you get anything from either Gaza or the West Bank?

WEINTRAUB: No, those were all handled through the consulate in Jerusalem. The consulate in Jerusalem tended to be viewed, if you will, kind of as a sub rosa "embassy" for the U.S. to relate to the Palestinians. So it's a consulate in Jerusalem with a unique status. Officially, I think the consulate reports back to Washington directly, rather than through the embassy in Tel Aviv, and the consul general in Jerusalem -- I'm not sure jurisdictionally if the consul general is under the authority of the American ambassador in Israel.

Q: I don't think they think they are.

WEINTRAUB: Now, obviously there's a lot of coordination, and every week when the embassy held the country team meeting the consul general was there. Obviously, they worked together, but unlike, for example in my last post in Colombia, where we had a consul general in Medellin or in Barranquilla. These two officials obviously reported to the ambassador in Bogotá, in that this is one country. But the status of the West Bank obviously was different, since we did not recognize and still don't Israeli jurisdiction over the complete West Bank. Therefore, the consulate was not a constituent sub-post of the American embassy in Tel Aviv. So we in Tel Aviv did not do visa work for Palestinians who wanted to travel; they went to the consulate in Jerusalem. As far as Arab Americans who may have settled in Israel proper, such as in Haifa, we did have a consular agent in Haifa and they probably did go there. We probably got a small number who needed to come to the embassy for services. There were a small number of Arab Americans who came and we serviced them as any other American citizen.

Q: While you were- did you get involved in any prison problems or anything like that?

WEINTRAUB: Interesting, prison issues. There was a syndrome of behavior, I think, probably from some middle- to upper-income Jewish families in the United States, we discovered, where

the kid wasn't turning out right, typically a male, a teenager, 18 or 19. The kid wasn't doing well in school, maybe got a little bit into drugs in the United States, so the thing was, well, we'll ship the kid off to Israel, they'll straighten him out, they're a tough bunch over there. You know, he'll live on a kibbutz; he'll do something, whatever.

Q Dry him out, the whole thing.

WEINTRAUB: Dry him, out, yes; there were a few instances of these kind of situations. And we had a few cases where those kids did not get dried out. Obviously they did not have to serve in the military, of course, they weren't there long enough to become citizens but the idea was somehow they would absorb through osmosis this Israeli kind of straight and tough upbringing. So there were a few of those that were hung out and were arrested for trying to deal in drugs or smuggle in drugs, and we had to visit them and see that they got whatever services the embassy could offer - we had to get in touch with their families; there were a few instances of those.

Q: But police problems weren't much of a problem for you?

WEINTRAUB: No, no, not particularly. I mean, Israel has a respected police force that I think respects the public and typically our security people always had very good relations with the police. Not a particular problem of any kind.

Q: Well then you moved over after a year, you moved to what, a political assignment?

WEINTRAUB: I moved into the political section and, since this was only my second assignment overseas and this was my first real assignment as a political officer, I was kind of the low man on the totem pole in the political section. I had a portfolio which was Israeli external relations and also the beginning of the so-called "normalization process" with Egypt. This was after - I remember it from when I was back in Bogotá - after the Camp David agreement. It was signed with the strong encouragement of President Jimmy Carter.

Q: Yes.

WEINTRAUB: ...the Camp David agreement, and also in '77, I believe it was, the visit of President of Egypt Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem. So this was unheard of, this opened up a whole new era and eventually, of course, led to the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt and the process for the withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai. When we arrived, Israel still had all the Sinai, and Israeli tour groups were operating tour groups to Sharm El Sheik all the way through the Sinai Peninsula just as if it would have been Israel, you know. It was very traumatic for Israel, the withdrawal from the Sinai -- some of the same process they're going through now with withdrawal from Gaza.

Q: Yes, I remember seeing fighting around-

WEINTRAUB: Around the settlement of Yamit. It was the settlement of Yamit, and Ariel Sharon, the current prime minister, was the military commander in charge of that withdrawal from that settlement in the Sinai. (end of side two, tape three)

Q: This is tape four, side one with Leon Weintraub. Yes.

WEINTRAUB: So now this was probably the fall of '81 and Israel was gingerly in steps withdrawing from the Sinai and there were Egyptian diplomats stationed in Israel and this was quite a novelty. Israel had a diplomatic mission in Cairo; this was also a novelty. Also, Israel was making some progress in reestablishing relations with a lot of sub-Saharan African countries. In the '60s and early '70s Israel had very large diplomatic representation in sub-Saharan Africa. They were doing a lot of aid projects, irrigation, agriculture, that was very helpful to a lot of sub-Saharan African countries. Well, after the Six Day War and then after the '73 war, the Yom Kippur War, the Arabs really got their act together. They had the oil embargo, of course, and they really put the screws to a lot of sub-Saharan African countries, saying if you want help from us -- and they were flush with oil money at the time -- they had to sever relations with Israel. So most of sub-Saharan African countries in the early '70s to the mid '70s severed relations with Israel. And this was somewhat of a blow for Israel.

By this time, in the late '70s and early '80s, Israel was saying to these countries, "Look, if Egypt can establish relations with us, Egypt, the fountainhead for much of the Arab world, the leading Arab country, the one we were at war with, if they can establish relations with us, why can't you and this country or that country?" It was an exciting time in that regard. I wouldn't say there were major earthshaking events, but for Israel this was important that some of the sub-Saharan countries were reestablishing relations with Israel again. So this was an interesting part of the portfolio. And of course the normalization with Egypt as well. And while I was not, so to speak, a legislative watcher, a watcher of the Knesset in internal Israeli politics as others were, nevertheless I did get to speak to members of the Knesset, members of the parliament who were watching international affairs. So I got to mix with different levels of Israeli society that I didn't meet during the visa year.

Q: I don't know if it would have applied to someone of Jewish extraction, in fact other people who were not of Jewish extraction said they always had the feeling that someone- that people were keeping book on American embassy officers, are they with us or against us and you know, it was-

WEINTRAUB: You mean the Israelis were keeping book?

Q: Yes, yes. Did you get this feeling?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, no doubt about it. Israel is very, you know -- I think it was Henry Kissinger who said, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean people aren't out to get you. And Israel has had very paranoid kind of tendencies. A beleaguered society can't be sure who's with them or who's not. The French were with them up to a point, and then they let them go. In the '73 war Nixon hung them out for a long time before eventually we supplied Israel with military equipment.

Let me give you an example of one incident. I remember, we were driving, my family and I, from Tel Aviv to Eilat. On the way down, we kind of took the main route, from Tel Aviv through

Jerusalem down to the Red Sea and then straight down in a beeline from the Red Sea down to Eilat, a very nice area on the Red Sea and it's kind of a big resort area. Well, on the way back we decided to be a bit more adventurous and take more of a direct route, kind of the hypotenuse of the triangle, and we went through the Negev Desert, through the city of Be'er Sheva. It's a paved road but it's not a busy road at all, and we wanted to see a different part of the country.

Well apparently, at one point, you know, it's pretty hot driving through the desert, I have two young kids in there and one of the kids was a bit carsick and we needed to stop. So we stopped on some undistinguishable hill, a piece of ground, and let the kids walk around a little bit. Not within three minutes later an Israeli military jeep comes out from nowhere, I don't know where they come from, and a soldier gets out and he says, "Are you okay? What's your problem?" So I explained the situation, we're traveling with the kids, who I am, I have diplomatic license plates on my car. And he says "Oh, okay, I just wanted to check." And he gets back in the jeep and goes somewhere, he disappears behind some hills somewhere. So there's no doubt they are watching. And even though by this time Israel and the U.S. were very strong, had very strong alliances and very strong links, that by no means did not- no one received a pass.

Q: Yes.

WEINTRAUB: And obviously just by a diplomatic license plate they didn't know if you were Jewish or not, that made no difference. But even if you were American or not, that made no difference. And certainly if Europeans -- you know, they had their suspicions of French and others. So, and also if you were an American Jew you were, as far as they were concerned you were an American, you were an American and you represented the United States. And it really didn't make that much of a difference to them.

Q: Had the Jonathan Pollard case come up while you were there?

WEINTRAUB: No, that was later.

Q: Later.

WEINTRAUB: That was later. As a matter of fact, when - we'll get to it later when I was the INR analyst for Israel at the time, some time later.

Q: I do want to talk, that's a fascinating case.

WEINTRAUB: But you know, I occasionally went to religious services, we had our third child in Israel, a daughter in Israel. Probably though, interesting from a perspective of an American Jew in the Foreign Service, I didn't get as close to the Jewish society of Israel as I did in Colombia to the Jewish community in Colombia. Of course, the Jewish community in Colombia, they were a minority, a distinct minority. They had their own social events, they had a country club - I'm sure started like a lot of Jewish country clubs in the United States because they couldn't get into American-

Q: They were excluded.

WEINTRAUB: Right, they were excluded from American country clubs. So I fit in in that circle in Colombia very well as a welcome member. But in Israel everybody's Jewish so it's no big deal. We lived in a residential area, in a neighborhood. I mean, we were welcome as any young family with young children would be, but I didn't get the feeling that people went out of their way to invite us to holidays or anything else because we were Jewish because everybody was Jewish in the area.

Q: While you were there, was there any angst or whatever you want to call it, concern, expressed by the embassy officers and all about the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it's something you're always aware of. The really large scale bombings, suicide bombings hadn't occurred yet. Mainly the acts were acts of terrorism coming over the Jordan River, coming from Lebanon, incursions from Gaza into Israel; it hadn't reached the level where there was great angst - you could travel, for the most part, even through the West Bank. I'm trying to remember - I mean, we went to the Dead Sea, we went to Nazareth, we went to other places; but I guess I don't recall specifically traveling to the West Bank. I think maybe you had to advise people at the embassy you were going to do it, the embassy wanted to know who was on the West Bank.

Q: Actually what I'm thinking about was there concern on the part of embassy officers about, I don't know if you want to call it the plight of the, I mean it was an occupation and the hand of the Israelis was pretty heavy on the Palestinians at the time. And later it became, you know, a matter and remains one of great world concern. But at that time was there much thought about this?

WEINTRAUB: Well, there was, I think it was there as part of - on everyone's mind, it was the backdrop for almost everything we did. Obviously the conflict in Jerusalem occupied much of the time of everyone at the embassy. Probably at senior levels I expect there was regular discussion between the ambassador and the prime minister, leading members of parliament, the defense ministry; I think at this period the occupation forces in the West Bank were still somewhat light. I think, you know, you didn't have the first Intifada, which took place in '86, '87.

Q: That really kicked, I mean, that was the first time-

WEINTRAUB: So at this point, I think, there was a kind of a coexistence of sorts, people were getting along together, Palestinians could work fairly easily in Israel, Israelis were setting up businesses in the West Bank, people were working together, there were some joint businesses, joint ventures. One knew it couldn't go on forever like this, but the border between the West Bank and Israel proper was nothing like it is now.

Q: Well, as a political officer, were there any issues that you particular engaged or crises or problems?

WEINTRAUB: Well as I said, my focus was African countries for the most part. I remember one

amusing issue: Zaire was going to reopen an embassy in Israel. And I think the Israelis at the time had convinced Zaire diplomats to open their embassy in Jerusalem rather than Tel Aviv because, after all. "Jerusalem is our capital." I don't recall at the time if the government of Zaire was even aware that most embassies in Israel were in Tel Aviv because of the "indeterminate" status of Jerusalem. So this was seen as quite a coup, that another embassy would be opening in Jerusalem rather than in Tel Aviv, where most of the Western Europeans were. I think the ones in Jerusalem were mainly Central American and South American embassies that never bothered to move. I remember talking to someone in the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs, the director of African affairs, and he was so concerned that during a press conference that some of the Israeli press shouldn't raise embassy location as an issue with the ambassador from Zaire - hoping they would not ask "Why are you going into Jerusalem and not in Tel Aviv?" I'm not sure whatever happened, but I remember the official was kind of nervous about the press conference and hoped the ambassador from Zaire wasn't aware that there was an alternative to opening the embassy in Jerusalem.

Q: Well this is probably a good place to stop. And if anything occurs to you before we meet again on this Israel time we'll pick it, otherwise-

WEINTRAUB: I'd like to do that, say a few more things about Israel.

Q: Alright. Do you want to mention here what you'd like?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, there was a trip I made to Taba that was kind of interesting at the time of the turnover. And also something interesting I found out about the advisories, the kind of notes about the local population, which I thought interesting, about how American embassy officials should behave on certain holidays, for example. I found that kind of amusing.

Q: Okay. Good. Did you get involved in the human rights report or anything like that?

WEINTRAUB: No, I didn't.

Q: Okay, today is the 2nd of August, 2005. Leon, we're still in Israel. You were in Israel from when to when now?

WEINTRAUB: Summer of '80 until the summer of '82.

Q: Alright. You mentioned a trip to Taba.

WEINTRAUB: Well, this was after the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. And of course there was much angst in Israel and much reporting by the embassy on the withdrawal from the settlements in the Sinai, just as there is right now in August 2005 about the withdrawal from the Gaza, a very similar situation. Anyway, the withdrawal was taking place from the Sinai, it happened in stages, and now this was about the final withdrawal. As the political officer covering "normalization" with Egypt, I made a trip, obviously under official embassy auspices, down to Taba in the Sinai, which is not too far from the Israeli port city of Eilat on the Red Sea. As a matter of fact, as I recall I was able to use a car from the embassy motor pool and drive it

down there myself. And Taba has since become the site of several meetings, international meetings between Egypt and Israel. Anyway, there was a lot of attention focused on the area, and there were a lot of observers of one kind or another, monitoring the turnover.

Somehow - I'm not quite sure how it happened - word had not gotten through to all the appropriate channels that in fact I was making this trip - although as I mentioned I had an embassy vehicle, and my supervisor had obviously approved it. But somehow word got back to the American embassy and then eventually it got back to me that there was some concern, I don't know if it was by the United Nations or the Egyptian authorities, that someone there claiming to represent the American embassy was out snooping around and holding a series of conversations. This person was meeting with people, with Egyptians and Israelis, finding out what was happening about the withdrawal, and there was a certain amount of concern about who this person might be and what he might represent. And my supervisor, in a telephone chat as I recall, raised this issue with me and I said. "Gee, that sure sounds like me, doesn't it?"

So I thought it was interesting in that no matter how carefully one makes preparations to do something - anything - sometime something happens that is unexpected. There might be unusual circumstances or tense circumstances, but one can never overdo the job of preparing the groundwork just to make that everyone is onboard. And this never became a diplomatic incident of any kind, it certainly didn't reach that level, but nevertheless, it involved me personally - because of the fact that some people who perhaps should have known about my being there did not know. I don't know where there was a gap in someone informing someone else, but I thought that was kind of interesting. I thought, as I had the conversation with my boss, "Gee, that sure sounds like what I was doing, doesn't it?"

Q: And then you mentioned the-

WEINTRAUB: About the behavior of the locals and how to make sure you don't ruffle any feathers in the host country. As you're aware, embassies typically send out notes, you know, like in a weekly embassy newsletter, whenever there could be anticipated demonstrations. In some of the countries where we lived, demonstrations could and often did turn violent, especially whenever there was a particular national holiday. So anytime there was anything of significant import that could affect movement in public areas, such as any public demonstration, the embassy typically puts this information out in the weekly embassy newsletter. Well, of course in Israel on Yom Kippur, on the Day of Atonement, which is the holiest day of the year in the Jewish calendar, there is no - I mean the only thing people are supposed to do is get up and go to synagogue, maybe visit with your neighbors, strolling, but of course, there is no work of any kind, and that includes no use of motor vehicles. Obviously it is a national holiday, all work is supposed to cease - and does in Israel - and this is how the day is observed. Of course, Jewish people also observe the holiday that way in the United States, do their best to do it as they wish and of course, the world continues on around them. But of course in Israel this is a national holiday, a national event.

So the embassy sent out in their weekly newsletter before Yom Kippur a note describing the holiday and advising people, in fact, probably warning would not be too strong a word, not to use your car, do not go in your car on the street. The only vehicles allowed on the street are

ambulances and if you're in certain religious areas your vehicle might get stoned. And this happened all the time in certain sections of Jerusalem even on regular Saturdays, on the Sabbath day, when you were warned to avoid certain ultra Orthodox neighborhoods. Driving through them from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday you risk getting a rock through your windshield, whereas on Yom Kippur this could happen anywhere all over the country and one had to be aware of this.

So there was this kind of note explaining the importance of the holiday and why people had to be aware of this. And I just thought, you know, when we see something like this describing a culture different from our own, you know, one sees it kind of as an anthropological note. For example, in certain African societies there might be certain rituals or functions, so you have to behave in a certain way - this is what the natives do and you have to beware, don't go into this section of the neighborhood. And you kind of accept that. But this was describing things I did, you know, this was describing me. So I kind of got a kick out of that. And you know it shows how what you sometimes think of as exotic when describing the rituals or customs of another society in almost anthropological-type terms, like "this is what the natives do" and they believe this and you have to observe it, in that type of a tone. I'm sure it wasn't meant to be in a patronizing tone, but the way it was describing it came across as almost like a clinical and anthropological study or description and I just -- it kind of affected me because, I thought, "Hey, that's me they're talking about." I thought that was kind of interesting.

Q: Well, did you have any anthropologists come and talk to you about your customs, speaking slowly in English?

WEINTRAUB: No, it was fine, and certainly it was written in a way, I'm sure, to be respectful of the local society and make sure that people didn't get in trouble and perhaps put the embassy in a bad light for failing to observe -

Q: Did you- what, into anything that I've noticed over the years that there often- maybe this happened more later than when you were later, incidents between particularly the military and the police where they seemed to have used undue force or something and the immediate response is, well, we were attacked or, in other words, they get very defensive and usually in later accounts you find out well, that's not the real story. And I've learned to sort of treat things that came out of Israel the same way I treat things that came out of almost any Middle Eastern country—don't believe what the official announcement is, wait until, you know, it was pretty defensive reaction.

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously the Israelis were very suspicious of most diplomats. There were incidents on record where certain diplomatic vehicles were used to smuggle weapons and dangerous supplies into the Palestinians. Some cases may in fact may have been real diplomatic vehicles and in other cases maybe the Palestinians had forged diplomatic license plates. The Israelis were quite wary and I wouldn't be surprised if occasionally the soldiers were more brusque than diplomats would have liked. I think I mentioned earlier when we were driving through a certain section of the Negev and we had stopped because one of my kids wasn't feeling well. Within five minutes there were two jeeps - one jeep or two jeeps around us - asking us if everything was alright. Obviously, it seemed to me, there was a listening post somewhere around

there. And of course there are a lot of stories about Palestinians having to wait hours and hours at a checkpoint, being subject to harassment or humiliation, but, you know, as you've said, there's often another side of the story that has to be heard.

You know, when you're in a society that is subject to suicide bombings of innocent civilians, whether on the bus or in restaurants or in hotels, a society has to take measures necessary to defend itself. In the meanwhile, if the debate is political, Israel is a very contentious society, it is not a particularly gracious society, even amongst the Israelis. It's the language, as a matter of fact this was- it even goes back to the Hebrew language training of a few years ago. I mentioned that one of our best students in the language class was a U.S. military officer who had previously served, I think, in Yemen and he knew Arabic. And he contrasted the two languages where Arabic is a language that is not in a hurry to do anything. I don't know Arabic myself but it's flowery, it tends to be poetic, there are a lot of introductions and phrases of courtesy involved in the language. Hebrew is not like that. It's sharp, direct, straight to the point. And that kind of describes the society as well. There's a good fit between the language, the way people speak and the way they behave. So I think some of that, what you describe may be over-sensitivity, and certain segments of the society, perhaps in the military in Israel, do walk around with a chip on their shoulder. I think they feel they have to just make sure no one gets a message either first-hand, second-hand, directly or indirectly that this is a country that's going to be a pushover.

Q: Okay. You left Israel when?

WEINTRAUB: As I said it would be in the summer of '82, shortly after the Israelis went into Lebanon in response to rockets being fired from southern Lebanon into settlements in northern Israel.

Q: I thought it was in response to the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London.

WEINTRAUB: That happened as well. My chronology on all these events is not too clear. That maybe was the last straw.

Q: They got tied together.

WEINTRAUB: Right. I think most of it was increasing numbers of rocket attacks from southern Lebanon.

Q: Was there, while you were there, was there, I'm not sure, again, the timing, but you know, this was supposedly in response to rockets being fired into settlements and yet- and they kept- the Israeli army kept going, I mean, it turned out that Sharon was maybe, basically running a rogue operation all the way to Beirut. Were you there when they got close to Beirut?

WEINTRAUB: I think I had already left, but I remember there was - but I remember I was still there when the troops were continuing to move up north. I remember there was considerable debate and discussion within the embassy and also in the media, in the popular press in Israel, a very active and free press in Israel, there was considerable discussion whether the government

knew this all along, whether this was an approved plan or whether General Sharon, who had pretty much a well-deserved reputation for doing things his way, whether in fact this was something he took advantage of and he exploited without getting full cabinet approval. I mean, he was a commander on the ground and was given a certain amount of leeway. So I remember this was a subject for endless debate.

WILLIAM JEFFRAS DIETRICH
Press Attaché, USIS
Tel Aviv (1979-1982)

William Jeffras Dietrich was born in Boston in 1936. He received his bachelor's degree from Connecticut Wesleyan University in 1958 and then served in the US Navy. His career included positions in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Israel, Italy, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Mexico. Mr. Dieterich was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Today is the 14th of December, 1999. You had never served in the Middle East, had you? What baggage did you take with you when you went to Israel?

DIETERICH: Sure, I took with me the baggage that most middle class Americans, and especially those with a Protestant upbringing, all took to the question of Israel. You go back to the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, I can remember it, and I think I mentioned once before how peculiar I thought it was when one of my close friends at that time was telling me how he wanted to go fight for Israel. That had made an impression on me. Although it is popular now to talk now about how Evangelical Protestants feel a certain attraction to Israel, the fact is probably all American Protestants feel that attraction or carry some basically positive psychological imprints in their mind toward Israel. Especially those who went to church. Protestant pastors, including my father, tend to preach as much or more out of the Old Testament as they do out of the New. I think the stories are better. I probably went to Israel with a positive balance toward the State of Israel but not much of a tendency to question the legitimacy of the State of Israel, nor much of a tendency to dwell much on the plight of the Palestinians. I think that was where I stood when I got there.

Q: In 1979, when you arrived there, what were your impressions of Israel?

DIETERICH: Pretty positive. I saw Tel Aviv as a nice, Mediterranean-style city and saw right away it was a place where I was going to enjoy living. I was certainly looking forward to the job. It was a great job for a someone who had spent quite a bit of time involved with day-to-day press operations. That is an important distinction within a USIA context, because a lot of what USIA does is long-term stuff.

Q: Will you explain the difference?

DIETERICH: USIA did a lot of stuff that had to do with the future of U.S. foreign policy, and I

hope that continues under the present circumstances. USIA was very interested in long-term information about the United States, explaining U.S. culture, explaining the U.S. political system. All that goes back to educational exchange programs and other things. I consider it as almost the preventive maintenance of foreign policy. You've got to do that well to keep the machinery that runs day-to-day diplomacy working. I feel that as strongly now as I did then. But that did mean that a lot of USIA officers did not have experience in dealing with day-to-day press operations - answering those questions that come up from journalists every day. I was fortunate enough to have had a big dose of that in my State Department assignment and because of that assignment, I was suggested for the job in Tel Aviv. I know that Sam Lewis had done some investigation and looked around for somebody that was serving in one of the press positions in State. He was probably wise to do so. That was good, because the Ambassador was positively disposed towards me before I got there, because he had made the choice.

Q: How did the press officer fit in the embassy?

DIETERICH: Well, that's a good question. In some big embassies press or information officers sometimes had a problematic relationship in that if a PAO, the senior officer, the person in charge of all of USIS, wanted to maintain an exclusive personal relationship with the ambassador, if he wanted you to go through him to the ambassador, it probably wasn't going to work very well. I was fortunate when I got there because David Hitchcock, the PAO, was wise enough to see right away that the advisability of a direct, day-to-day relationship between the press attach_ and the Ambassador. Although he kept his hand in, in terms of giving advice and long-term goals, he was quite content to see direct relationship between the ambassador and me. One of the first meetings we had, where David Hitchcock and I went to see Sam Lewis, he asked me what I needed to make it work well. He indicated he hadn't been entirely happy with past press relations. I said I needed a daily meeting. We discussed it and finally agreed on the middle of the morning. This gave me time to get into the office and figure out what questions we ought to deal with. That became institutionalized, and the PAO usually joined me in those meetings, but if he couldn't, I went by myself.

Q: Why the daily meeting?

DIETERICH: Because in Israel there were questions that would involve the press every day. It was really hard there because I didn't have any Hebrew, although the original plan was for me to leave State and take Hebrew for a year, then go to Israel. My predecessor's wife got very ill and he had to be pulled, so I got called and told I had to be ready to go in a few weeks rather than a year.

To know what was going on in the Israeli press, we had to wait for a national employee to prepare the media reaction cable for Washington. We had a person who was very good and could get it done by midmorning before the meeting. Hitchcock and I could then go through that cable and figure out what the likely questions were. And decide what we wanted to say, both in terms of any press encounter Sam Lewis might have during the day, and to offer whatever advice we could to Washington as they were preparing guidance for the spokesmen. We did both those things.

Whenever the ambassador would have a meeting any place on a senior level in Jerusalem (and that was often) he would be seen by the press, and the press would try to ask him questions. The easy way would have been to suggest that he say, "I don't answer questions." But that is also the dumb answer. If you are good, you can do yourself some good by how you answer those questions. Sam Lewis often did, he was good with the press, had good memory, and kept things in line. He also was very open to the press. We usually accepted requests for appointments from journalists. I would usually sit in, and he made good use of those, both in terms of getting the U.S. government's point of view across to the journalist and getting the journalist to share information and opinions with him. About three quarters of the way through the interview he would say "All right, you've had your turn, now I get my turn" and talking to them for their perceptions as to what was going on. There was a lesson to be learned from that. Done properly, our relationship with the press in diplomacy is a two-way street. In many ways they share some aspects of our business. They are often good at it. While they have their professional imperatives that can impede objectivity, so do we.

Q: We will go through the major events during this time, but first let's talk about overall impressions. What was your impression of the Israeli media?

DIETERICH: They are real good. Before I do that, I have to lay out more of what the situation was, because in a way it is a very peculiar place, and especially in traditional USIS terms. I hadn't been there two days before somebody said "We all have to get in the car and go up to Jerusalem because Bob Strauss is coming in for the first of a series of talks." These were of course part of the follow-up to the Camp David agreements. You asked before about the baggage I took with me to Israel. Part of it was my impression of the Camp David agreements. While I was still at State but knew I was going to Israel, I watched the White House signing ceremony on television. I remember thinking "Wow, this is big, big stuff."

I had also been interested in Anwar Sadat and his impact on the relationship between Israel and the U.S. He was the first Arab who was intelligible to us and seemed like a major player. King Hussein had been intelligible, but never seemed a major player. To most Americans, all other Arabs had seemed exotic beings on the fringe of our ethnocentric view of world history. Israel had produced a series of leaders who were perfectly intelligible to us - Ben Gurion, Meier, Abarbanell, Rabin, Perez and so on. Even Menachem Begin, while different in style from those Labor party stalwarts, was a recognizable figure to most Americans. They spoke English well and looked like big-timers. So, except for a few lonely voices among academic and State Department Arabists, the Israelis had a virtual monopoly on interpreting the Israel Arab dispute to Americans. Then along came Sadat and the all-important interview he did with, I think, Barbara Walters. His English was good and he was charming. He had the wise habit of slowing down when he had to search for English words which often made him sound more profound than foreign. From that time on the Israeli monopoly was broken. They still had a substantial lead, but they were going to have to share U.S. fora with Arab voices.

So there I was checking into the King David Hotel. I went to the embassy control room to find out what the hell is going on and looked out the window. There was the city of Jerusalem laid out in a panorama with lights on the walls. It is a stunning sight. It sort of bangs you right between the eyes in terms of what kind of history you are looking at. I didn't learn as much as I should

have, because there was an emergency message that my mother had gone in for emergency surgery and wasn't expected to survive. So before that visit was over, I was on a plane back to the United States.

My mother did not survive. It was a sad time in Florida where my parents had moved after my father's retirement. I was there through the memorial service and few more days to spend time with my Dad. I then went through Washington for a couple more days of consultation. So it was ten days or so before I got back. I remember being very impressed at how solicitous David Hitchcock and the rest of the post were in helping my wife. After all, we had just arrived and Keiko was pregnant with our second child, our son as it turned out. We had moved into a modest, but pleasant furnished U.S. government-owned house. Due to a large amount of counterpart funds, and true to Israel's socialist tradition, the State Department had built lots of identical houses throughout Tel Aviv's pleasant northern suburbs. There were two types of houses, larger ones for embassy department heads and smaller ones for the rest of us. The larger ones were what the department calls "representational housing" - large enough to accommodate a reception for a couple hundred tightly-packed people and fancy enough so we are not out shown by the Europeans. If there were extra bigger houses they went to lower-ranking officers with big families.

When I got back and began to settle into the job, I realized was different from any other information officer job I had ever seen. I began to figure out that a great deal of my time was going to be taken up with VIP visits. I think probably the American in Israel developed the best VIP team in the foreign service. We got very good at it because we did it all the time. Since almost every VIP visit generated questions from the press - before, during and after - and because almost all visits brought along a press contingent, the press section was an important part of the team. It sometimes seemed I spent half my tour living in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. That's an exaggeration, but during a couple round of the talks on Palestinian autonomy the talks were extended and we ended up sending cars down to our homes in Tel Aviv to pick up clean clothes.

We also had a large resident U.S. press corps in Israel, mostly in Tel Aviv, which meant almost daily questions from them and from Israeli and European journalists which had to be taken very seriously. USIS officers by trade, training and temperament are inclined toward serving the local press first, but in countries like Israel, and a few other big players, you quickly learn that what the U.S. press says plays first in Washington and can get you in hot water very quickly. You also learn that the big American dailies, the networks and the international wire services have a great influence over the local press in the country where you serve. Getting it right with AP, or Reuters, or the New York Times may also be the best way to get to local dailies and broadcasters.

Anyway, the U.S. and international press was there in impressive numbers and for the most part they were very good. Has great influence over the press in your country. It seemed to me we had as many as any embassy in the world. Maybe there are more U.S. journalists in London or Paris, but they don't have as many questions to ask the American embassy.

Q: Well, there, they are concerned with American policy. And in London they go all over the

place.

DIETERICH: In a way, our policy toward Israel is absolutely a given. It has been remarkably consistent. But the Israelis don't think so, therefore many Americans didn't think so either. The Israelis are constantly taking the temperature of the relationship. The major Israeli papers had good reporters who were almost as active in asking us questions as the American press was. And pretty much the same questions. If you are serving in Ecuador, you will get journalists asking questions about what we think about the Peru-Ecuador border. Or if you are in Bolivia, they would ask about access to the sea, or GSA (General Services Administration) sales of tin. Those are questions that no American reporter would ask. That doesn't happen in Israel. The questions you get asked in Israel are the questions that any American journalist would ask, and almost all of them have to do with the constant probing for the current state of the relationship.

That, plus the frequent VIP visits left little time for the traditional, long-range information activities that would be done at other posts. I didn't have time to try to hunt up a copyrighted article and take it out to get some newspaper to publish it because I thought it was a good enlightening article. And I suppose there was less need for that in Israel. The Israeli press also maintained correspondents in the United State. Wolf Blitzer at that time represented the Jerusalem Post in Washington. *Maariv*, *Ha'aretz* and *Yediot Aharanoth* also had full-time correspondents in the United States. One of the sure signs that we were not like other USIS posts was that we never dealt in Hebrew. When we had a press release to put out, it was in English. Later in my tour, I thought I would put out a press release in Hebrew just to prove we could do it. The first thing I found out was my best people weren't all that good in Hebrew. They were Israelis who really spoke English and other European languages or Arabic somewhat better than they did Hebrew. I probably only had two people who could write Hebrew well. Next, I found we didn't have a Hebrew typewriter until somebody went down to the basement and found one.

We dusted it off and gave it to a brave volunteer typist. It must have taken her three hours to prepare the press release. She kept almost falling out of her chair every time the carriage would zoom off in the wrong direction.

Anyway, the Israeli press was very good, and free, although subject to influence like all newspapers are, even when they don't admit it.

Q: What about the political orientation? One hears about all these different parties - was this a concern. Would the correspondent from such and such a paper ask you some question that had very strong religious overtones?

DIETERICH: We didn't get a lot of those kinds of questions. This goes back to history too. Begin had come to office when Sam Lewis was on the plane on his way to Israel, about a year before I got there. Begin won the election, and that was a big surprise to a lot of people; Washington did not anticipate that it was going to happen. Sam Lewis got there, and to USIS' credit, the one person that knew Begin and could arrange a meeting was the PAO who had had some contact with Begin. Begin represented a different kind of political power in Israel, and a different kind of person. It is a dynamic that still works in Israel. The Likud Party proceeded from East European political origins, but had as political campaigners a natural affinity for the

Middle Eastern Jews who felt they were on the downside of Israeli society and were not getting a fair deal. I think a lot of the Likud leadership was especially sensitive to that, because they had come out of societies where they felt that way. The Labor Party had had its origins among the Zionists of Western Europe. It was one thing to be a Jew in Vienna, no bed of roses, but it was better than being a Jew in Poland. So the Western European founding fathers of Israel were people who knew what anti-Semitism was about and knew less violent levels of persecution, but didn't know pogroms first hand. Those in Eastern Europe did. Begin often liked to tell people how he had imprisoned by both the Nazis and the Russians. He came to power with a coalition of conservative, European Jews, and a lot of support from the Sephardic, or to be more accurate, Jews of Middle East origin, as their major supporters. That was a new political game for Israel. At the same time, the Jews of Middle Eastern origin were beginning to wield real political power in Israel and beginning to become the majority of the citizens of the State of Israel.

But to go back to your question, we did not get a lot of questions with a strong political slant to them. In Latin America, for example, you often get questions trying to ferret out whether the U.S. government is favoring one political party or another. Israelis do not ask exactly those questions. I think there was a general assumption that the U.S. had grown fairly comfortable with the Labor Party over the years, but was now doing its best to get used to Begin and a new style of leadership. Israel is too confident a country to waste time worrying about whether the U.S. is going to land the marines or throw the next elections.

Actually, I think we did have to learn a new style. I remember once sitting in on a meeting of embassy officials with senior Israeli government officials and noticing the Americans were all wearing Ben Gurion-style open-collared sport shirts under their suit jackets, while the Israeli government people were all wearing ties. Those were power-ties worn by people who felt little need to identify with trade unionists or kibbutzniks. We learned to put our ties back on.

I also don't remember questions coming to us at the embassy with a particular religious slant to them. Israel is always concerned - one might even say obsessed - with such questions. This was the period of the "Who is a Jew" debate. I guess most people probably did not consider the American Embassy particular relevant to such issues. The National Religious Party was in the hands of Yosef Burg, who was a very sophisticated orthodox Jew, certainly not a fundamentalist zealot in any way. He was very well educated, very sophisticated, and a very wise gentleman. There was nobody trying to trip the embassy up on some theological issue. On political issues relating to the peace process maybe, but not on religion.

Unlike some other countries I know, there were no journalists in Israel relying on the U.S. Embassy or USIS for the answers to generalized questions about the U.S., its culture, etc. They came to us with questions about the U.S. government and its policies. It was a very day to day operation in the press section. Of course there were scholars and others using the USIS library for research on broader issues, but that stuff was not coming to the press section.

Q: How did you find the press as far as its ability to deal with you in a legitimate way? If you would say something was off the record, would it stay off the record? Would quotes be checked out? In other words, they wouldn't abuse relationships.

DIETERICH: In the first place, I never used the term “off the record” because off the record is a bad deal for everybody. You are saying to the journalist “You can’t say this.” What if he gets it from another source? Then you are putting him in an unfair position. Also, it implies a level of protection that you should never count on because you are not going to have it. “Deep background” would be as far as I would go. “Deep background” means you can say this, just don’t attribute it. “Background” means you can say it, but attribute it to a formula that we will agree upon. I don’t ever remember being screwed in any way, but I always tried to deal as much on the record as I could. A press attach_ is in a difficult position at times. Remember, he is always the first person that is suspected when there is a leak. In reality he is probably the last person to leak, because he knows he is the first person to be suspected. I did not do that with very many journalists, and when I did do it, it was with journalists, mainly Americans, who I trusted. Frankly, we trusted certain members of the American press more than we did certain members of the Israeli press.

Q: Who were some of the American correspondents who you particularly liked?

DIETERICH: Oh, gosh, it’s hard to remember names now. Jay Bushinsky, but I can’t remember who he worked for now. Bob Simon was there with CBS.

Q: Did you draw a difference between the television and print journalists? Was there a difference in dealing with them?

DIETERICH: Oh yes, there is a lot of difference. You have a whole different level when dealing with television, which is often on a very technical level. Where can I get my cameras, and what can I film? My memory of it is that we tended to do more background type stuff with print journalists. Television copy is pretty truncated. There is not much room for a lot of speculation, and I think one of the things you have to remember with all press is they are not scholars trying to gain a global understanding of the issues. They are persons who have a story in their mind and they have places in the story that need to be filled with something. They have questions that need to be answered. There is another reason to be careful of the ground rules - if this person has a real good story going, and he really needs that piece, he probably won’t totally screw you, he will just open the F-stop a little bit. He’ll change “deep background” to “background” or do something like that. I don’t remember getting stung with anything too badly, nor do I remember Sam Lewis getting stung too badly. U.S. policy in Israel is complicated. As many people have observed, it is not exactly what the State Department says it is. It is a very complicated, shifting baseline that has to do with what the Department thinks and what the White House thinks and what congress thinks and what some lobby groups of people think.

Q: With all these visitors, did you find yourself dealing with people who were running for office in the United States, and came to Israel in order to have their picture taken there to show support for Israel in order to gain Jewish votes or money? Did you find yourself running a campaign facilitation program?

DIETERICH: No. I wasn’t dealing with congressional delegations as much as I was dealing with official negotiating groups. This was the period of the autonomy talks. So you had personalities like Bob Strauss who was there as a negotiator. Walt Stoessel came out, and most notably, Phil

Habib. And of course Kissinger had been there before my time, So a lot of those things were the kinds of visits I was talking about. And Secretary Haig came.

I do not share, nor do I like, the foreign services' prejudices against congressional delegations. Maybe I've not served in the right places, but I haven't seen much of the electioneering and tourism that some people talk about. I've seen some delegations where some people don't work but other people do, and I guess I was always in the position of not getting stuck with taking care of the people that didn't want to work. I felt that in Israel, and also in El Salvador. If I were a congressman on a committee with foreign affairs responsibilities I would travel, and I would do it holidays and weekends. I doubt that I would care much about some FSO whining about the extra work.

Q: I would think that in Israel, there would be a constant flow of congressmen who wanted to get his or her picture taken.

DIETERICH: But that's okay if they are willing to do some work in the meantime. What I mean by work is: showing up, paying attention, being patient with briefings, being courteous.

Q: We have a long account of Sam Lewis, and I just finished a long interview with his DCM, Bill Brown, a part of that time, and it sounds like the ambassador and the DCM spent most of their time driving back and forth to Jerusalem. Or being called in the middle of the night, sitting in on cabinet meetings or the immediate aftermath. It sounds very hectic, very personalized, and the sort of thing you don't want the press to know every move because it interferes with the process.

DIETERICH: It does, but it doesn't. In the first place, you have to assume the press knew of every move. Usually when Sam Lewis would go up for a meeting with the prime minister, or the foreign minister, I would usually go with him because the press stakes out the prime minister's office in Jerusalem so you can't get in and out without them seeing you, especially when you go in with the kind of security package that American ambassadors have. Secondly, because we never knew when the Israelis were going to have their spokesman in the meeting, it was my job was to go up there, and as we stood around waiting for the prime minister to be ready, I would see if the spokesman was going to the meeting. If he went in, I went in.

Q: Was this understood or were you sort of using your elbows?

DIETERICH: No, it was understood. Certainly those were the ambassador's instructions. We got friendly enough so I could go ask him if he was going in or not. Even then, you didn't know whether he was going to brief anybody. Usually, if I asked a question he would say, "Oh no, I'm not going to talk about this." But then maybe he would or maybe he wouldn't. Then it would be important that I had also been there to do any repair work that might be necessary. It didn't happen often that we got caught by surprise, but more often than not I would end up in some important meetings that press attachés in most countries never got to see. The first meeting I went to, I didn't go in, so I was hanging around all by myself out in the foyer of the prime minister's offices. Some nice lady came and offered me a cup of tea and some cookies, and it was Mrs. Begin. This was heady stuff for a younger officer. I met the prime minister within a week of coming to the country.

Q: How would you describe the relationship between Sam Lewis and Menachem Begin?

DIETERICH: Most of these meetings were big with around 20 people in the room, and that doesn't give you a very good feel for what the relationship was really like. I never saw any indication of any kind of rancor or annoyance. There seemed to be a relationship of mutual respect. Begin was not a person who trusted people easily, but I think he trusted Sam Lewis. He trusted his honesty and truthfulness, and he trusted him as a pretty accurate representative of what U.S. policy was. Ambassador Lewis certainly had unimpeded access to the prime minister.

Q: What were your impressions of some of the other players? Let's see, Moshe Arens.

DIETERICH: Moshe Arens was in the cabinet at that time. I think he had agriculture. I had this impression of a person who spoke English like an American. I remember when he became foreign minister, we had to figure out a way to say discreetly, "Pick up the passports" for his children. He had to quietly give up his American citizenship in order to serve in that post. That was toward the end of my tour. I'm trying to think of the other impressions I had. Sharon - volatile, extremely funny, a lot of fun to talk to at a cocktail party. Once there were three or four of us around, and at that time we were in the first blush of people from Israel being able to visit Egypt. So a lot of people were taking trips right away. The means of transportation were not very well established, and there were a lot of stories about how to find the best way to get there. Sharon had recently visited Cairo, so I asked him how he got there. He said, "Do you mean the first time or this time."

Q: Of course, the first time he had gone there he was the commander of the army that crossed over the Suez Canal and reached the outskirts of Cairo.

DIETERICH: But he was volatile, and certainly seen by us as dangerous. He was a hawkish right-winger, who was convinced in his mind that he was going to have to fight everybody. Most likely he thought he would have to fight the Egyptians again. Most certainly he was convinced he was going to have to fight the Syrians. His was the policy line that says that Israel should never give up an ounce of territory for anything, that settlements ought to be built, that Israel's security is bound up in the idea of yielding nothing and taking every opportunity possible to expand Israel's security perimeter. He was not a man of compromise when it came to the defense of Israel. Shamir - Shamir had been named shortly before I got there. My memory is that he was not Begin's first foreign minister, but now I can't remember who preceded him. I remember going to one of the first meetings, probably with Strauss, and it was pretty painful because he couldn't speak English very well. It was difficult for him to communicate. Eventually he got better at it, which was a remarkable accomplishment. With Shamir, you had the feeling that Begin was running the foreign policy that he wasn't a great creative, independent voice.

Q: Did you get involved when you sat in on these meetings, particularly American delegations; did you notice the first 45 minutes would be a lecture on Judaism and the claims to Sumaria?

DIETERICH: It depended on what the meeting was about. If there were visiting VIPs that Begin felt needed the lecture, you better believe they got it. The one I remember most vividly is

Habib's first meeting. Begin did what he often did with American newcomers to the game and that was to lay a mild guilt-trip on them. He talked about his own personal history, the holocaust museum, and all the things he had suffered and the things the Jews had gone through. Habib was a tougher, smarter customer than most, so he countered with stories about when he was a little kid growing up as a Lebanese immigrant kid in New York and being the gentile who lit candles in the synagogue.

Most of the time, Begin was an extraordinary performer. He was masterful at using his own emotions and his emotions were genuine. He did feel genuine rage at the holocaust. He did feel genuinely that it is very hard to trust a non-Jew when it comes to Jewish issues. He was very good at being convincing because he rode on his own emotions, he let them go, and he showed them. He could also turn them off when it was time.

Q: Did you have the feeling that you were being tested to find out whether you were friendly to Israel or not?

DIETERICH: Yes, from time to time in conversation that would happen. A lot of Jews, especially European Jews, do think that most non-Jews are anti-Semitic. Sometimes it is hard for Americans, because even when their minds are tinged by anti-Semitism, they certainly don't think they are anti-Semitic. And they certainly don't think they are anti-Israel. If you look at it, the people I think are anti-Semites in this country, many of them are very pro-Israel, but I think they are often pro-Israel about the way some racists in the 19th Century were pro-Liberia too. They thought if those folks had a place to go they would be more likely to leave. A lot of far-right evangelical types in the U.S. are very pro-Israel because they think some kind of goofy Book of Revelations prophecies are being worked out, but many of their other attitudes are shot through with anti-Semitism.

Q: Did you have the feeling that you were on the cusp of a generational change? This is a new group that would not have the same ancestral memories.

DIETERICH: Absolutely, and in the first place we had already seen a certain generational change, not so much in absolute chronological terms, but rather in terms of the role played in the foundation of the state of Israel. That was the change from the leaders of the Labor Party, the founders of Israel, to the leaders of the Likud who represented people who fought the British mandate tooth and nail as well as many of those who had been rescued by Israel. The people of the Likud may have owed a debt to the founding Zionists, but that did not mean they shared their political values. I'm dealing in very broad generalizations here, but I like broad generalizations. A privilege of retirement.

The Likud victory also brought oriental Jews more solidly into Israeli politics. Begin won partly because he got lots of votes from oriental Jews. I am using the term oriental instead of Sephardic, because I think Sephardic more properly refers to Jews whose diaspora took them first to the Iberian peninsula and other Mediterranean locales. To me, the term oriental Jews refers to those who in a sense were not part of the Diaspora, those who had remained in the Middle East and who immigrated to Israel after 1948, often because they were the victims of heightened anti-Semitism. They were certainly not attracted to Begin on purely ethnic grounds; culturally

and politically he was very much a product of his East European upbringing and political fortunes. He often pointed out that he had been imprisoned by both the Germans and the Soviets. I think the Israelis of Middle Eastern origin, who were close to a majority in Israel, were attracted by his outsider status. Since they had never felt really accepted by the westernized leadership of the Labor Party, or by the rank and file trade unionists and kibbutzniks for that matter, they somehow identified with Begin. Perhaps they saw him as a fighter who had contributed to the foundation of Israel, but who, like them, had always been rejected by the establishment.

The election of Begin and the rise of the Likud to power had two effects on Israeli policy: It toughened attitudes regarding Israel's security and the Palestinians and it created new difficulties for their lobbying efforts in the United States.

The new Israeli government didn't have that English-accented (either American or British) parliamentary patina that we were accustomed to. The generation who had learned their politics in the reasonably polite Zionist circles of London, Paris, Vienna or New York and had successfully lobbied international opinion for the partition of Palestine were replaced by a government of people who had learned their politics in the ghettos and death camps of Eastern Europe, or in Cairo or Damascus or Amman or even Teheran. The common experience that brought them together was their service in the Israeli army, where as lower ranking people they had done at least their share of the bloody work of war. Begin and a lot of his inner circle had even got a head start as anti-British terrorists during the mandate - the bombing of the King David Hotel and all that.

We Americans sometimes like to think that somehow those who have suffered repression or prejudice will know better than to ever inflict it on others. I wish that were true, but I think it rather goes the other way. Victims become desensitized and find it distressingly easy to mistreat others, especially if they perceive them as enemies. It's like the victims of child abuse becoming abusers. It happens all the time. What this meant for Begin is that his core supporters were even tougher than he was on issues relating to the Palestinians and Israeli security. Especially after Camp David, he found himself in the anomalous position of having to prove that he hadn't given away the store.

The second effect was on the American public. All of a sudden here, is Menachem Begin who doesn't really fit the American image of an Israeli leader. You have to remember how attractive people like Rabin, Dana, Ever Weizmann, Golda Meir, or Aba Eban were on the American circuit. They fit our image of distinguished foreigners and were easy to relate to. I'm getting into some unpleasant areas of our own prejudices now, but the fact is to many Americans those leaders seemed much more Israeli than they did Jewish. Then here comes Begin. He is small and unprepossessing looking and his accent is central European. He doesn't seem like this European sophisticate so much as he seems like the person who ran a candy store on the corner of an American city. He seems more American than say Weizmann or Eban; he doesn't quite have that distinguished foreigner gloss. And, given the latent anti-Semitism of many Americans, he seems more Jewish than Israeli.

It's an important image-shift. On the one hand you have the Ben Gurion, Meir, Dayan image of

the heroic little democracy, that just happens to be Jewish, defending itself against evil Arab armies. On the other hand, you have the Begin, Shamir, Arens image of a militantly Jewish ghetto plunked down in the Middle East and refusing to yield anything to the at least somewhat reasonable concerns of its neighbors.

Then you factor in the Camp David agreements and Anwar Sadat. He becomes the distinguished foreigner. Sadat's English was not all that good, but he had mastered the trick of speaking very slowly, which made him sound like he was wise and pondering every word. He came across as the good Middle Easterner we could all relate to. The unreasonable and mysterious Arabs had been replaced by Anwar Sadat. The Arab side of the equation now had an effective spokesman.

At that point opinion in the United States began to evolve in the direction of the Palestinians. It could have gone much worse for the Israelis had it not been for Arafat. He was not handsome or suave and came across worse than he deserved to in the American media. Every time Begin would say something outrageous to appease his most militant supporters, Arafat would counter with something equally outrageous to his Palestinian public. The couldn't have been more coordinated and mutually supportive had they been on the phone every morning.

So, Israel's support in the U.S., while still strong, was showing signs of erosion. That was also happening in the embassy. There was increasing sympathy for the Palestinian cause, or at least increasing sympathy for the Palestinian people. And eroding sympathy for the government of Israel. Begin knew that and it really annoyed him.

Q: In a way it was bound to happen, having the characters who were portrayed. These people are appealing to a broad audience, particularly in the United States. Many of the actions could no longer be portrayed the way it used to be. It was Golda Meir who would say "There is no such thing as a Palestinian, they are desert Arabs." That didn't play anymore.

DIETERICH: That's right, and somehow the Begin people made themselves look much more intransigent than the early generation of leaders had looked. Part of it was Camp David. There was a perception on the American side that Begin was not living up to the Camp David agreement. The issue of West Bank settlements came to the fore very quickly.

Q: What was the feeling there in the early stage of Camp David?

DIETERICH: The feeling was that Camp David was U.S. policy and it had to be implemented. I don't remember people in the American embassy spending a lot of time in breast-beating over whether it was a good idea or whether we were paying too much for it.

Q: Was there an active watching to see how Camp David was being implemented?

DIETERICH: Oh, absolutely, sure. Remember we had these negotiating missions coming in all the time. It started with the autonomy talks. One of our big issues was keeping autonomy talks going.

Q: Autonomy being what?

DIETERICH: Autonomy for the regions of Israel where Palestinians lived, the West Bank and Gaza. Some kind of self-government for those places. The other issue was the staged withdrawal from the Sinai. Those were things we were concentrating on all the time.

Q: Various groups, like Phil Habib and others like Strauss, would come in - what was your role? Would they come in with their own spokesperson or did Sam Lewis or you have to sell yourself each time? Would you explain what I'm talking about?

DIETERICH: Well, Bob Strauss, Sol Linowitz, Phil Habib and Walt Stoessel came in. I may not have the order exactly right. They would not come with their own press apparatus. It is not like a big VIP or Secretarial visit. Sam Lewis would introduce me to whoever came and tell them I would be going around with them, and sometimes going into meetings, and, at other times, not going into meetings, depending on what the Israelis did. That was pretty much it. I would either go into a meeting or I wouldn't, and if I didn't go into the meeting I'd stand by with the press and shoot the breeze with them. It often was time well-spent in terms of getting to know what was on their minds without having to cope with a lot of office and deadline pressures, and a lot cheaper than paying for lunches.

When it was time for the principal to come out, I would try to intercept him while he was still inside the building to find out if he wanted to talk to the press or not. If he did want to talk to them, I'd rush out and say let's go to the press. The visitor would usually do the pretty standard "yes, we had a good meeting with the prime minister, the foreign minister, and I am confident we can achieve progress." The extraordinary thing about the American press in Israel, was that they never gave up trying.

Now, with Phil Habib the mission was different. Remember there were a lot of problems with the security zone the Israelis were maintaining in southern Lebanon. If we are going to get into the Lebanon issues, I have to tell you an anecdote beforehand.

Because Habib was in and out for a number of missions, and because his negotiations concerning Lebanon were even more delicate, he made it clear to me that he was happy to have me around, but there could be no leaking to the press. He said to us one time, "This job is hard enough to do without being able to control my own agenda. I have to be able to go to the Syrians and Lebanese and say 'Here is what the Israelis said, and here is the message I am bringing to you, and here is what I need your reactions to.' I need to be able to stick with my agenda and raise issues in the order I want them. It really hurts if I have to deal with leaked versions that got there before I did." I absolutely sympathized with that and we ran a very tight ship up until the point when he wanted to talk to the press.

Q: We talked a bit about Camp David. What about in November 1979, the taking over of our embassy in Teheran? Did that have much of an impact in Israel?

DIETERICH: It certainly was a major story, but it didn't have much of an impact on the embassy or my office because the story was elsewhere. Had I been in Brazil, for example, when that happened, somebody might have come to me to get a reaction. The Israeli press was

sophisticated enough and had enough correspondents to rely on Washington for U.S. Government reaction to events happening elsewhere. It was not a major concern during office hours, although it was a hot topic of conversation at cocktail parties.

Q: When you were there, the Iran-Iraq war erupted. Did that change anything?

DIETERICH: Yes, it did, because we were pretty concerned early about Israeli support of the Iranians. But it was nothing we talked about. And it was nothing the press came and asked us a lot of questions about. They probably figured out that we weren't going to talk about it. I don't remember ever taking any questions on that subject.

Q: Was there a subliminal problem of the military relationship between the United States and the Israelis? I'm particularly thinking that the Israelis were a drain on our professional fighting force. Did this come up?

DIETERICH: I don't remember that as a matter of much concern, or as a sentiment expressed by U.S. military reps in Israel. What I do remember is going to a ceremony when the first F-16s were delivered to the Israelis. They flew all the way across, nonstop, with aerial refueling, because none of the countries en route wanted them to land.

Q: Can you imagine sitting in the cockpit of an F-16?

DIETERICH: Sitting in the cockpit of an F-16 for that long, yes. It was one of these big occasions in Israel when everybody was invited. They sent up an Israeli Air Force F-4 Phantom to escort them in to the field. The announcer pointed out how long after you had seen the Phantom it would be before you could see the F-16s. They were that much smaller.

Q: Lets talk about the invasion of Lebanon.

DIETERICH: Now I have to tell you what led up to it.

Q: Before we actually get to that, you have the Carter administration who brought about the Camp David agreement. How was Carter perceived after Camp David?

DIETERICH: Since Sadat was much more beloved in the United States than Begin was, I think Carter was much more beloved in Egypt than he was in Israel. The Likud government was a conservative government and I think that, despite the fact that they had signed at Camp David, there was a feeling that he wasn't really sympathetic to Israeli security interests. There was a slight feeling of mistrust; his instincts couldn't be counted on to protect Israel the way the instincts of some other presidents had protected Israel. There is something to be said for that, too.

Q: What about the advent of Ronald Reagan?

DIETERICH: They liked him, a friend of Israel. He was not going to ask them to make sacrifices of their own security. One of the things about peace making is that it is based on compromise, and compromise is made by giving something up. There are lots of people who say they are

peacemakers but basically they just want to win. Jimmy Carter's message to Israel was they had to give things up and had to take risks for peace.

Now that is a tough message. It may be tougher for Jews than other folks, especially for the very orthodox. The origins of kosher cooking, for example, come out of a biblical injunction to not cook a kid in the milk of its mother. The need to avoid this fairly simple scenario evolved into a complex set of rules and customs designed to eliminate even the slightest risk of a violation. So, you have a people whose whole cultural background is not big on risk-taking to start with, and then you put that together with a horrifying history of people who took the risk of staying in Nazi Europe and died in the process. Or of people in other places taking risks to get along with gentile society, and then finding their windows broken or worse. In many ways, many Israelis are liberal in their politics, but not liberal when it comes to taking risks. Carter was asking them to take risks, to take a chance on peace.

Q: Did the Soviet Union play any role at this time?

DIETERICH: Not much on the issues I was dealing with. Begin was uninterested in relations with the Soviet Union, beyond badgering them over treatment of Russian Jews, and the release of Russian Jews, and increased immigration of Russian Jews.

Q: From your perspective, were there problems with our consulate general in Jerusalem? Did they have a different press to deal with, and how did that work?

DIETERICH: Sure, they had a whole different press to deal with and a whole different job. From an embassy point of view, I suppose it kind of annoying to have a consulate general in the country that does not report to you but reports directly back to Washington. But is that a daily annoyance? No, it is a fact of life. We knew the East Jerusalem Consulate has as its primary job getting along with Arabs.

Q: Did press relations come up with that?

DIETERICH: I can't remember any of the Arabic language Palestinian papers or stations ever directing a question of any kind to the embassy in Tel Aviv, or to me during my long stays in Jerusalem. It was simply understood that their diplomatic contact was the U.S. Consulate in East Jerusalem. But I think beyond that their journalists hadn't really developed the knack of running down stories by buttonholing people. They just waited for press releases. For instance, if they had been asking questions about Linowitz' or Habib's activities, I think the Consulate would have relayed those questions to me. I don't remember that ever happening.

Q: How about the Egyptian press?

DIETERICH: . I actually can't remember any Arab journalist ever asking me a question, not even the Egyptian journalists who covered some of the autonomy talks. But that may have simply meant that I wasn't doing my job very well. Actually what I have said is not quite true. I did have some conversations with Israeli Arab and Druse journalists. As you know there are Arabs who remained in Israel and have Israeli citizenship - about half a million of them when I

was there.

I do remember well the Egyptian Ambassador, who cut quite a figure when he first arrived. We all knew him on the diplomatic circuit. I may have forgotten, but I cannot recall a single instance of any substantive conversations with Egyptian journalists in Israel.

Q: Well, now let's go to Lebanon. You wanted to say something.

DIETERICH: Before we go to Lebanon, I have one more story to tell. About half way through my time in Israel, my old friend from Argentina, Jacobo Timerman, showed up. During most of my time in Brazil and as the ARA press officer he had been either in actual prison or under house arrest. His book, *Cell without a Number, Prisoner without a Name*, of course came out of that horrible experience. During my time in Washington I had written a number of press guidances for Hodding Carter urging the Argentine government to release him.

The Argentine government was having none of it. They couldn't stand the Carter government, and had particular dislike for Hodding Carter's wife-to-be, Pat Derian, who was of course the Assistant Secretary for human rights. One of the dumber stories on the streets of Buenos Aires, a city that has more than its share of urban legends, had it that Pat Derian was interested in Timerman because she was his cousin or niece or something like that. I think they simply could not fathom the idea that a government - any government - actually cared about human rights.

Timerman's decision to come to Israel after his release from house arrest attracted a lot of attention. We had lunch shortly after his arrival and his reaction to Israel was fascinating. There were too many military uniforms around for his taste and too many military people with influence in the government. Eventually he ended up at odds with the Israeli right and returned to Argentina, despite having told a lot of people he never would. His son attracted some notoriety by refusing Israeli military service. I guess even very bright people see what they are conditioned to see. We learn from our nightmares. For Timerman the greatest internal danger to Israel was a military coup; for me it was too many years of Likud government.

Now for Lebanon. I was thinking of my early days in Israel and my introduction to the delicacy of Lebanon issues. Somebody on my staff suggested I needed to get out and see some of the country. We had a visiting group of journalists coming in on a program for publishers and editors of small newspapers. My staff thought I should travel with them. I agreed. The visiting journalists were being hosted by the Israeli government, so I went up to Jerusalem to pick them up, and joined the party and their Israeli military guard. We were going to northern Israel, the town of Metula on the Lebanese border. I noticed our guide, an Israeli army officer, was insistent on rushing us through some things we were looking at, because he wanted to get to lunch at a restaurant in Metula. I wasn't particularly suspicious, it just seemed to me he was worried about his schedule.

We got to Metula and were having lunch when all of a sudden our guide said "Well, aren't we lucky. Look who has just arrived. What a coincidence. There is Major Haddad." Some coincidence.

Major Saad Haddad was the head of the Israeli-sponsored Southern Lebanon Christian Militia, and a person with whom the U.S. government would have no dealings. All I knew at that point was that I was not supposed to have any contact with him. So, Haddad came over and the Israeli introduced everybody to him. I hung back so I wouldn't be caught near him. Then they got to talking and the Israeli said "Gee, Major, couldn't you take these people over to visit area? Major Haddad said he would be delighted and most of the journalists said they would like to go. I thought, "Oh, Lord, these people are going to leave Israel and go into Lebanon. Now what do I do."

I got the journalists off to one side and said, "Look, you are not supposed to do this and I certainly cannot go with you, and if you go there you are outside any protection the American Embassy can offer you. What you are doing is contrary to U.S. policy." That had no effect whatsoever on anyone but one very nice older lady who was the publisher of the Baltimore Afro American. I would like to think that my pompous little speech convinced her that it was unpatriotic to cross into Lebanon, but I suspect she just needed a little rest.

So they all took off with Major Haddad, and the lady from Baltimore and I sat and had a very pleasant visit, drinking Coke in the Metula restaurant. Finally, they all came back and we finished the rest of the tour. I reported the whole thing to the Embassy the next morning and was told I had done the right thing. The point of the story was that we had an understanding from the Israelis they would not do that, before this group toured. They broke that agreement.

Q: One of the things I get from people talking is that the Israelis are pushing things to the ultimate, did you get that feeling when you were there?

DIETERICH: Yes, it's history and culture again. I think there is a mindset that says you are being irresponsible if you don't do the most you can to benefit your own people. It's a hard thing to explain, but it is the real thing and it is not confined to Israelis either.

Q: Listen, I served in Korea and this is the Koreans, too.

DIETERICH: It's the reaction of people who have been pushed around. If you had the luxury of being raised a nice secure, mainstream American WASP, you are kind of embarrassed to push too hard for your own advantage and the advantage of your family. But I think people who grow up in disadvantaged circumstances, and their children, develop a different kind of morality. People who have had to fight to survive learn to take care of those closest to them first. We feel bad when we have engaged in some act of nepotism, which we do anyway every now and then, but a lot of Latin Americans and Israelis may feel bad when they don't take care of their own first.

Q: I mentioned the Koreans. The Japanese tried to wipe out the Korean language and the Korean culture. When you deal with the Koreans, they are plain pushy. Did the subject of the Arabs in Israel or on the West Bank come up much in the embassy?

DIETERICH: Yes, and it came up very early. You find when you go to Israel, Israelis keep telling you how many Arabs live in Israel - the Israeli Arabs, the good Arabs and the Druse, who

enlist in the army and live here with full rights like everybody else. There are about a half a million Arabs and Druse who live in Israel. It is all true, but it doesn't mean what some Israelis think it means. What it means to most Likud-supporting Israelis is roughly this: those people on the West Bank, those people in the camps, those people who left when they didn't have to, should have stayed because it is perfectly feasible for an Arab to be a loyal citizen of Israel and to receive all the benefits of being in this country. And the people who didn't take that offer from the State of Israel should stop complaining, get out of the camps and go live in some Arab country.

Q: Was it pointed out that Captain Sharon was blowing up Jewish homes at that time?

DIETERICH: That doesn't usually doesn't come up in the same conversation, unless you bring it up. It depends on who you talk to. Sure, there are Israelis that will tell you, "Yes, we have five hundred thousand Arabs, but they don't have the same rights, it doesn't mean anything, and we have behaved badly with this problem."

There are a bunch of Israelis that we sort of think of as the left, but really aren't, who believe Israel should trade some territory for security. They also believe that Israel has not treated Arabs well, that injustice was done. There are many Israelis, maybe even a majority, who believe that Arabs live comfortably in Israel with full rights of citizenship, and that means to them that the problem isn't exactly as most of the world sees it. It is true they live there in peace, but if you talk to a lot of them they don't think they have the same rights in practice.

Q: I thought we might leave the Lebanese thing for another session. What about the nuclear business, was that something that we pussyfooted around?

DIETERICH: I don't remember ever dealing with that subject as press attach_. There were just some things you didn't talk about because there was nothing of certainty that my world, or the press, could deal with in any effective way. Everybody knows what the truth is, it's like dealing with the old incident of the USS Liberty. There wasn't anything left to say about it that could be said. There are certain topics in the U.S.-Israeli relationship that you just don't want to talk about, and we've not talked about them for so long, nobody bothers to push very hard either.

Q: At that particular time, did you get involved in the briefing on the care and feeding of the American Jews who came to Israel in groups? You must have had them once a week.

DIETERICH: I didn't do much of that, those were not considered to be press issues. The ambassador and some others in the embassy would meet with prominent groups that came in. I just didn't have time for anything but the press stuff. It often depended on what kind of group it was, and if they came with academic credentials or academic interests, the cultural attach_ would brief them. Sally Grooms was a very distinguished counterpart in the cultural section (and someone you folks should interview - Sally Grooms Cowal).

Q: Grooms?

DIETERICH: Yes, the last name is Cowal. You really ought to get her.

Q: Is she retired?

DIETERICH: Yes, she is here in town. She was head of Youth for Understanding, and she was in Geneva on a United Nations assignment. Before that, she had been a DAS and was also the ambassador to Barbados. She will soon be the president of the Cuba Policy Foundation.

Q: Oh, good, we'll go after her.

DIETERICH: She is really something.

Q: I'm keeping the Lebanese off to one side, but can you think of any issues that came up where the embassy was portrayed as being off-base or unfriendly? In other words, you had to do some damage control. Were there any problems you can think of?

DIETERICH: I don't remember any major situations where we were accused of being out of sync with policy. They probably occurred, but never to the extent that they engaged my office in a big way. But that raises another interesting technical issue.

We had no way of reading the U.S. press. I got up early and listened to the Voice of America, which was quite helpful. Since most embassy people listened to BBC which is available in Israel on medium wave, I often I knew more about what was happening in the U.S. than others did. There was no way for us to get advance copies of U.S. newspapers. There was no way for me to find out what the hell the State Department spokesman had said, except to sort of sense that something had gone wrong and to call George Sherman, who was the press person in the Mideast bureau, and find out what the hell the spokesman had said. That was not something you could do every day.

Q: When you serve there, you certainly feel the intensity of life. The work was hard but the Israelis were a lot of fun. It was not like being at an Arab post.

DIETERICH: It was great fun. I had a wonderful time. I worked like hell, and sort of neglected my family. When my son Robby was born in the Assuta Hospital in Tel Aviv, my wife's obstetrician said, "The Assuta Hospital is a great hospital but it is a bad hotel."

Q: What was that?

DIETERICH: It had very primitive rooms and services. I remember being surprised when the nurse, who was examining my wife during labor, was wearing flip flops and smoking a cigarette. That was kind of cute. I was supposed to stay and be there at his birth but, as usual, I went out to make a phone call. We had just realized we had left the house without leaving a note for our daughter. I had to stand in line to get to the pay phone. By the time I made the call and contacted our daughter, our son had already been born.

Q: Well, Jeff, why don't we stop at this point. We will pick this up - what did you call it there, the invasion of Lebanon?

DIETERICH: It finally became an invasion of Lebanon. This was mainly in '81.

Q: We will pick that up. You mentioned that, when you were avoiding Major Haddad with a group. Anyway, we will pick that up next time.

DIETERICH: Great.

Q: This is the 6th of January 2000. Jeff - Lebanon.

DIETERICH: Right. The roots of the Lebanon issue go back well into '81, when the Israelis did some strikes beyond what was known at that time as the "red line", which was the line that defined the zone that Israel was controlling through Major Haddad and his Christian militia. Then that led to the Syrians putting in some anti-aircraft missiles in the same area. In the meantime, the PLO saw its chance to get both sides to escalate. The United States began to see a great danger in this and brought Philip Habib in on a series of missions to deal with that particular issue. His technique was to shuttle back and forth, in sort of on a tripod type shuttle - Jerusalem, Beirut, and Damascus.

Q: Did you get involved in this?

DIETERICH: Yes, I did. Again, it was one of these things where we never knew for sure what the Israelis were going to do in terms of publicizing the events at meetings. They were very situational on this. If they felt there was something to be gained by making public the contents of the meeting, and making public their position, they would do so. Ambassador Lewis and Phil Habib felt it was important that I be along to counter, if they should do that. We would be unlikely to be the first to go public with something, but we had to be there to defend ourselves if they did. Again, it was sort of the rules we had established between Ambassador Lewis and Prime Minister Begin. I would show up with the delegation, and if the Israelis ran in one of their press people into the meeting, I would go in, too.

Habib made it very clear to me at the beginning that he would have nothing to say to the press. He said, "It is difficult enough to do this mission when I have to shuttle between here and Damascus, or here and Beirut, and to take Israeli positions to the other parties. In order to do that effectively, I have to be able to control the agenda. What really drives me crazy is, if I go, and before I can say what I want to say, I have to contend with versions that have been leaked to the press." I think that was absolutely correct; I think it was absolutely sound technique. I did my best to ensure there were never any leaks. He would occasionally ask me what the press was thinking, what their concerns were, and eventually use the press. It was mainly a lot of standing around. There would be a meeting and Habib would come out and the press, in a good humored way, would try to get him to say something. At one point he came out and said, "You know me - old silent Phil." The press misheard what he said and thought he had said "silent film," which shows how they were thinking, since they were mainly television journalists. The phrase "silent film and silent movies" had a lot of currency among the press at that time. Of course, I never told

them anything. I would stand around outside meetings and talk about other things and do pretty good contact work with people and made a lot of good friends. That's the way it had to be - always with Habib, but never talking to the press.

The meetings at times were a lot of fun. Often we would gather at the Jerusalem Consulate, which Brandon Grove was in charge of at that time, as Consul General, and had some wonderful evenings. Brandon was an excellent host, and Habib held forth at the dinner table, more often than not about what was wrong with the foreign service. "This modern age of sissy diplomats who are overpaid and under worked." That was happening during 1981.

Q: Was this when the Israelis went into Lebanon?

DIETERICH: No, this was before. The Israelis didn't go into Lebanon until June of '82.

Q: Did you have a feeling that Sharon and company were cocking the rifle, ready to do something?

DIETERICH: Eventually, yes. But we are not quite there yet. As I remember, it was in the fall of '82 that Habib finally achieved a minor miracle diplomatically, in that he got a *de facto* cease-fire between the Israelis and the PLO, as far as southern Lebanon was concerned. This was done by Habib making a statement which neither side denied, which is the way you dealt with the fact there wasn't going to be any kind of a joint document between the PLO and the Israelis, nor any kind of joint statement. When that was finally achieved, Charley Hill and I were hanging around the consulate, and Habib was off some place, but I don't remember where. Not with the prime minister, probably at the foreign ministry, and for some reason I hadn't gone along. I got a call from Habib's party saying he wanted to talk to the press right away. I'm sitting there at the consulate thinking, "How in the hell am I going to get in touch with the press and put them with Habib?" Charley and I talked for about 15 seconds, and it finally occurred to us that we had to figure out a way to get to the prime minister's office because that is where the press was. We decided to call up Begin and say Phil Habib wants to come by and say good-bye to him, because he was leaving. That is exactly what happened. Otherwise, I think I would have been screwed. So we all went to the prime minister's office. I'm proud of the fact that I was standing there with Phil Habib as he announced the cease-fire and took some questions.

Q: What did the statement say?

DIETERICH: The statement basically said both sides had agreed to stop shooting. There were some questions about what geographic area this actually entailed. It was a good moment for U.S. diplomacy. The cease-fire lasted for awhile, it bought some time, and it established an important principle that *de facto* arrangements between the PLO and Israel were in fact possible.

Q: How was Habib dealing with the PLO?

DIETERICH: I don't know. He was dealing with them through the Lebanese government and the Syrian government. The trick was to read a statement and let it stand with no denials. It worked, it worked.

Q: How was the Israeli press coming around? Were most of them hoping for a peaceful solution or was the press so politicized that you could almost write the news or editorials of each paper?

DIETERICH: Your question sort of contains the answer. It is a pretty politicized press. I don't mean it is a dumb politicized press. It is a smart politicized press. Most journalists are probably more inclined towards the peace side than the war side in Israeli politics. We often misunderstand the Israeli attitude toward war. Let me explain that. I remember once I talked about going on that trip where I almost met Major Haddad. One of the standard stops on that tour was to go up to the Golan Heights. We were among a huge number of tourist groups and others who had been taken to the Golan Heights to look down on Tiberias and see how vulnerable Israel is, and how narrow Israel is, at that point. While I was up there one of the Americans said to me, "But why are the Israelis so worried all the time? They always win." The more I thought about that question, the dumber I realized it really is. After all, at the end of a war when you win, the people that died aren't resurrected. Besides, it was a pretty near thing in '73. Israel could have lost that one, had it not been for massive shipments of arms from the United States.

Going back to your question, Israeli journalists are pretty professional. They don't wear their ideology on their sleeve. You have to worm it out of a lot of them. That is especially true of those journalists that were covering the American Embassy, covering foreign affairs. They were sophisticated types who spoke English well, were educated, and really understood both the questions and the answers. I found them a pleasure to deal with, and equally the U.S. and European press. They were all pretty good. It's kind of like what Sam Lewis said to me about being press attach_ in Israel, "It's center court Wimbledon." Israel is a hell of a good assignment for an American journalist who wants to make his career as a foreign correspondent. Israel has been a surefire front-page story for the last half-century.

Q: A number of the press representatives (I'm talking about media, not just press), had Jewish backgrounds. Did that make much of a difference?

DIETERICH: That is a hard thing to assess, because it depends on the individual. There are American Jews in Israel - I'm not talking about only the press corps, but sometimes among American diplomats too, who buy into the Israeli story excessively, in my opinion. There are American non-Jews that do the same thing. In a sense, they lose some of the objectivity they should have. There are also American Jews who go the other way. They almost overcompensate and sort of become remarkably suspicious of what the Israeli government says. At times they gloomily pessimistic about the future of Israel and the nature of its society. You also have to remember there are a lot of Israelis who are pretty pessimistic about the nature of Israeli society, and are absolutely opposed to the government. Elections in Israel are close-run affairs. If you were on the side of peace, you didn't feel you were isolated in Israel, there were a whole lot of Israelis who were with you.

Q: During this period, while Habib was working on a cease-fire and up through the time the Israelis went into Lebanon, were we monitoring the Begin Cabinet to see where they were going?

DIETERICH: In early 1981 there were elections, and Likud barely squeaked through. Out of that they lost some support in the coalition they had prior to the elections, that is they lost some moderate support. The second Begin cabinet was a lot tougher than the first, mainly because Moshe Dyan had resigned before the end of the first cabinet. He felt he was getting nowhere with Begin and did not have enough influence over Israeli policy. He was eventually replaced by General Ariel Sharon, who was a hard-liner, very tough, and absolutely convinced that Israel was going to have to fight another war at some point. Personally, I think he relished the prospect.

In the meantime, relationships with the United States weren't going very well. There were a number of irritants, among those were the sale of American Naval AWACS Aircraft to the Saudis. That drove the Israelis crazy. They envisioned these planes up there capable of monitoring everything that happens on Israeli air bases. They felt that maybe the Saudis weren't very anxious to be in another war with Israel but, if there ever was another war, the Saudi resources would be used somehow or other. The other factor was the end of the Carter administration. The Israelis were never really fond of Jimmy Carter. I think there was a feeling that they had been pressured at Camp David. There were some genuine misunderstandings about what had been agreed to at Camp David, especially on the issue of settlements.

I think Carter believed that Begin had undertaken not to build any more settlements during the time that negotiations were ongoing. Begin's contention, I think, was "that was during the Camp David negotiations, and I didn't do that." Carter's interpretation was that it meant during the period of the negotiations of all the things that were implicit and written into the Camp David agreement, such as Palestinian autonomy, and the final withdrawal of Israel from Sinai.

At any rate, Israel immediately began building settlements again on the West Bank. Carter felt betrayed by Begin, and Begin felt he was being held to something by Carter that he had never agreed to. With the beginning of the Reagan government, the Israelis felt they had a person who was basically sympathetic to them, and an administration in the United States that was not going to push them on things like the autonomy talks. They believed that Reagan was not going to expect Israel to make sacrifices, because this would be an administration that would recognize the great contribution Israel had made to the U.S. Crusade against communism. The Israeli contention was that they had been a real asset to the United States and it was about time the United States recognized they were a strategic ally. The hope of the Begin government was to get some kind of recognition of the Israeli contribution out of the Reagan administration.

Initially, the Reagan administration was not very interested in the autonomy talks, but after awhile they began to come around. Haig began to realize this was a good idea so he began to lean on the Israelis to get going. The Israelis didn't like that very much. Then there were other irritants, little scandals would come up. Somebody would say the wrong thing in a meeting someplace, and the Israelis would pick it up.

Bring me back to where I'm supposed to be - how did I get on this?

Q: We were talking about the Reagan administration coming in. It is not just foreign diplomats who are trying to figure out what the Americans are up to, the American diplomats were probably wondering where they stood.

DIETERICH: The most immediate concern in the embassy was - will the ambassador be re-appointed? Fortunately, he was re-appointed, as were the other ambassadors in the region, which was a very sound decision considering what was in play. I tend to remember in terms of specifics - what was going to happen with the autonomy talks.

As I said before, being a press attach_ in Israel was very peculiar, we were very event-driven, so I might try to meditate on the broader implications of policy, but what really was in play was who was going to replace Saul Linowitz, and how was he going to be to deal with. The sooner we would get some information on these people, the sooner we could get it out to the press and start preparing the way, because everything gets harder when you have to do it cold. What are new traveling delegations going to be like out of this administration? What is the new secretary of state going to be like? What is the administration of USIA going to do in terms of our resources? Will we get better communications than we had before, or are we going to sit and fight with antiquated systems as usual?

The autonomy talks were interesting and frustrating. You would end up with these big meetings with big delegations from Israel, Egypt and the U.S. Although I might accompany the principal U.S. Negotiator to preliminary courtesy meeting with senior government officials, I don't believe I ever sat in on an actual negotiating session. There was a sound understanding that press people were not to be included. It worked.

There was a fair amount of backgrounding of the press after the sessions. People would come out of the meetings and say, "Well, it's 80% done." That got to sound pretty hollow after a while because that 80% depended on how you counted things. The 20% that was left was the stuff that wasn't going to get done. It was like you have a building all built but no roof, and you have no idea how to build a roof.

We went to a meeting at the defense ministry and I guess the defense spokesman was in because I ended up in the meeting. This was the meeting where Sharon came on with maps and outlined what he characterized as his plan for the invasion of Lebanon.

Q: You are looking like "shock".

DIETERICH: A kind of "What on earth are you talking about?" reaction. Well, it caused a lot of excitement. There were a lot of cables that went flashing out after that, and Habib and everybody were stunned. Our military attachés were with us, it was a fairly large group of people that was there. It was an amazing briefing. I don't remember that the ambassador was there, I guess he was off someplace.

Q: I think Bill Brown mentioned this. These things aren't done in a vacuum. What was the reading of why he was doing this? Was he setting up his own policy, or trying to force an issue? What was the feeling?

DIETERICH: I think the evidence was that this plan had not been vetted through many other places in the Israeli government. I'm not even sure he had gone through the prime minister. If he

had gone over this with the prime minister it probably had been in the most theoretical terms. I'm pretty sure a lot of folks in the government didn't know about it. If the foreign minister knew, he probably had no idea of the extent of Sharon's planning. I think Sharon was trying to do two things. I think he was trying to get us used to the idea and gauge our reaction. And maybe he used this as leverage to get it through his own government. He could say, "I've already told the Americans about this." Sharon had this alarming capacity of not listening to arguments that went against what he wanted to believe. The trouble with dealing with people like that is it is very hard to warn them, because if you tell them they have a terrible idea and we are not going to support you, and his reaction will be, "Oh, yes, I hear you, but that is just rhetoric, what are you really going to do?" Unless what you said was accompanied by some kind of catastrophic threat, he would kind of toss it aside.

Q: Like what led up to Saddam Hussein, he didn't realize we really meant what we were going to do.

DIETERICH: I think that is right. I don't think he really believed we wouldn't stop them, and he was probably right too. But on the other hand, you don't make catastrophic threats when dealing with Israel because the press will pick it up and you will face all kind of hell in both the U.S. And Israel.

Q: After this did you say, "Boy, if this person is defense minister we really have problems?"

DIETERICH: After that briefing, even before, we knew this person was going to be hard for us to deal with.

Q: When Sharon went and talked to Haig and came back and claimed he was given a wink, or a green light to do this - was this before that?

DIETERICH: No, I believe it was after. Sharon went to Washington, and has some sort of conversation with the Secretary. Maybe Haig was overly diplomatic because lots of people believe Sharon took it as a wink and a nod.

Anyway, that is the problem with Sharon. We were caught in a terrible dilemma because whatever happened was going to become public. If Sharon didn't make things public, Begin did. They both really believed in using the press and using foreign opinion to their advantage. Sometimes that tactic would backfire and work to their disadvantage but they had a hard time recognizing when that happened. Here is your dilemma - if you make a statement mean enough and tough enough to get Sharon's attention, it would be absolutely offensive to friends of Israel all over the place. To put it bluntly, a statement tough enough to move Sharon is going to offend the hell out of the Jewish community in the United States. That's the problem. The tone with Israel always has to be, "We are trying to be helpful to you, and we can help you better if you don't go ahead and do this." The language of diplomacy doesn't deal much in ultimatums and nasty language, but anything short of an ultimatum would not have been understood by Sharon.

Q: It must have been difficult for you all, particularly on the press side, if the Begin government was using aimed press releases all the time which always involved the United States one way or

another, this meant you were having to react all the time. You couldn't be giving out press statements to preempt this.

DIETERICH: It was not so much a matter of formal press releases as it was backgrounding to individual journalists and thinly disguised leaks. We were not helpless. We could and would and respond at least in terms of backgrounding. There were a number of techniques we would use. Occasionally we would make a statement through Washington, and occasionally we would get part of what we wanted to say out through the department spokesman.

Sam Lewis did a lot of backgrounders with the press, both one-on-one meetings with the press, plus in meetings open to almost all the U.S. Press, or meetings with selected members of the Israeli press. We rarely mixed the Israeli and U.S. press in one meeting, because we felt there was a different understanding of the traditional guidelines regarding attribution. I would arrange meetings in the USIS Library, where Sam Lewis would take questions and do very well.

But you are partly right, we never could respond with the kind of punchy quality that the Israelis used. Part of it because it is not in our nature and partly because it wouldn't be accepted in terms of our own domestic politics. Also because the whole time I was there we were in a kind of mediator role which meant you shouldn't be punching back at the person or you would destroy your effectiveness. Sometimes we had to swallow it and couldn't respond very well. I once described my tour in Israel as like a permanent Roadrunner cartoon where you get to be the coyote.

Q: Did you notice any difference between what was coming out of The New York Times, which was owned by a Jewish family, and The Washington Post, which did not have the same constituency?

DIETERICH: No. I really didn't. It was an interesting time to serve in Israel, in the sense that it was a period of increasing skepticism. The bloom was off the Israeli rose, it was no longer a matter of "poor little Israel." Golda Meir, Aba Eban, Moshe Dyan, and the almost larger-than-life figures were very good in communicating with Americans. It was a different kind of Israel, a period of increasing sympathy for the Palestinians and a certain amount of impatience with Israel. The old answers wouldn't work anymore. That old dialog the Israelis had going, when you would say, "Well, don't you think you're being kind of mean to the Palestinians?" And they would say, "Look what happened to us in the Holocaust" didn't work anymore. You had a new generation of Americans who would say "so what, the Arabs didn't do that." You were getting toward an era of more pragmatic politics dominated by the horror of the Second World War. Israel, from the outside, was beginning to look more and more like a bully. I must say when you live in Israel you become more conscious of the vulnerability of Israel in military terms, and at times the fragility of the Israeli political system. It's a very difficult, very personality-driven system, run by a small group of people who know each other altogether too well.

Q: What about the orthodox parties? I would think it would be very hard for an American to have any understanding or feeling about them. They have the word of God; they don't participate in the military side of things. A real problem for the development of modern Israel.

How did you all feel about that?

DIETERICH: There are sort of two ways of looking at it. There are the ultra, ultra orthodox, the *Mea Shearim* crowd, folks who think history stopped someplace in the 18th Century, and dress accordingly. Some may occasionally throw stones at passing cars on the Sabbath, but most of them are very withdrawn from every day political life. They in themselves are not terribly important in Israeli politics. I remember one very secular Israeli friend of mine who said, "You have Indian reservations and we have Mea Shearim, and neither society is willing to do anything about them, because we sentimentalize them - they are part of our past."

The national religious party, however, is a party of very sophisticated orthodox Jews. These are people who do not shun politics. They are very good at politics, and they have been the swing party in most elections, the coalition maker. They have exacted their price almost every time in terms of making sure reformed Judaism is not really recognized in Israel; making sure that Israel shuts down for the Sabbath on Friday nights; doing things like trying to get all flights grounded out of the airports during the Sabbath. No buses running on the Sabbath. All sorts of things which are the result of coalition politics which drive most Israelis absolutely crazy. Probably a majority of Israelis are really quite secular people who see their roots in Judaism as cultural and terribly important, but are not very observant Jews. On the other hand, you can't form a government without taking into account the sentiments, feelings, and political goals of orthodox Jews.

Q: Let's move up to when things were heating up along the border. The Lebanese invasion was when?

DIETERICH: In May of '82. By that time I was nearing the end of my tour.

Q: You were out before it happened?

DIETERICH: No, I was out at about the middle of it.

Q: Well, what was the feeling at the embassy? Were we at all concerned about what Sharon had done when he went to the United States and got the so called green light?

DIETERICH: I don't think we ever believed that he really had. He just thought he had. The question is one, I'm afraid, that divided counsels within the U.S. administration, too. I think there were certain people who thought we couldn't blame the Israelis because they were subject to constant artillery attacks. They retaliate, but who wouldn't? After all, those people they are protecting in Lebanon are Christians and we ought to be sympathetic with them. I suppose it is true that the Reagan administration came to power owing something to evangelical groups in the United States. Haddad and his people knew how to appeal to right-wing evangelicals and had contact with them. So did Begin and his people.

We in the embassy knew, in fact, that an invasion of Lebanon was terribly destabilizing in terms of long-term U.S. policy in the region. But there were a lot of people in the Reagan administration who weren't really willing to come out absolutely against the Israelis in this thing.

There were also Reagan insiders who shared the Israeli notion that Israel deserved U.S. support because of its contribution to our cold war concerns.

Q: During this time when rockets would land in Israel, then there would be air strikes, was anybody toting up how many Israeli civilians were killed as opposed to how many Palestinian civilians were killed?

DIETERICH: Very few Israelis were killed in those raids. Anybody in a war is pretty much trying to make sure that he doesn't take many casualties. The Israelis got very good at building shelters, the Katusha rocket was just a piece of artillery. It had no real guidance system. They could figure it might hit a particular town, but that was the best they could do. The Israelis got used to spending nights in shelters. I'm sure Israeli retaliation took many more lives than they lost, but I can't imagine anybody's national policy being based on "as long as they don't kill more of our people than we kill of theirs, that will be okay."

Q: No, no, but I was wondering if this was of concern.

DIETERICH: It was a concern, but the Israeli answer was always, "Look, we are trying to limit civilian casualties. We are doing the best we can" I don't think the Israelis ever deliberately targeted some civilian area that didn't have some sort of strategic interest. The Israelis were, after all, interested in killing PLO, not in killing Lebanese.

Q: It seemed like the event that precipitated this whole thing was the sad attack on the Israeli ambassador in London.

DIETERICH: There was the attack on the Israeli ambassador in London, followed by an Israeli air strike on the PLO headquarters in Lebanon, followed immediately by a major barrage of artillery of Katushas from PLO sites into northern Israel. That is what did it. There really was an outbreak of real shooting going on. It was funny how I found out about the actual move into Lebanon. At the end of May, our daughter had a date with an Israeli student at her school to go to her senior prom. On the day of the prom, late in the afternoon, she got a call from the kid saying, "I'm calling from Lebanon and I'm sorry I can't make it back for the prom." I got on the phone right away. It was one of the first confirmations we had that they were really that far up into Lebanon. I think young man was calling from Tyre or Sidon. Mari, now a foreign service officer herself, has been lurching on that senior prom story ever since. It's the kind of foreign service childhood story that makes it all worth while.

Q: Sometime ago I interviewed Bob Dillon, who was still livid years later about how he and the attachés would be reporting what was happening, and they would get something back saying they were off because the embassy in Tel Aviv told them they really weren't doing this. Were you active during the early part of this?

DIETERICH: I'm trying to remember when I left. The invasion happened in late May and I left very shortly after that. As press attach_, I might not have been seeing some of that stuff, although I saw a fair amount of the outgoing traffic.

Q: I was just wondering whether you were trapped into using Israeli reports of what was happening.

DIETERICH: My reporting responsibilities had to do with the media. In some ways that means it would have been our job to report what the Israelis were saying about what was happening. You are doing your job as long as you identify the source.

Q: Early on, were you skeptical about what the Begin government claimed was happening?

DIETERICH: In terms of the progress of the war? I just can't comment on that. I was almost gone, probably by mid-June. There were a couple of other things I wanted to cover.

Q: Let's talk about Sinai.

DIETERICH: As you know, the Camp David agreement called for further negotiations to bring about a staged withdrawal from the Sinai. In terms of background, we already had the Sinai field mission out there, which had come in after '73 as an early-warning peacekeeping operation. This basically put seismic sensors and television cameras into the Giddi and Mitla passes to make sure that neither Israel or Egypt would be subject to a surprise armored attack by the other. I visited that operation once. It is a really bleak and strange operation, run by foreign service officers and some military people, plus a contractor, E-Systems, who provides most of the logistics. E-Systems was also eventually involved in the Sinai Multinational Force also.

I have a story I love to tell out of that visit. I went out with one of the people from the mission to a remote site in one of the passes where there was a remotely controlled television camera. He was showing me how this television camera could move, could be directed from their central operation. He said, "There is this Bedouin that comes by every now and then and we've got him believing that he controls the camera, because when he stares at the camera and moves his hand to the right, we move the camera that way. Then when he moves his hand the other way, we move the camera accordingly. He loves it and thinks he controls the camera." I think there is a lesson in Middle East politics in the story, because in a sense he really was controlling the camera.

The Israelis and the Egyptians both, as we came down to the deadline for withdrawal from the Sinai began to get cold feet. Sadat was having second thoughts because he was getting beaten up by the Arabs all over the place and he was tired of it, and because he feared the limitations he had accepted on Egyptian military activities in the Sinai would only buy him more grief. The Israelis were deathly afraid, in retrospect, of establishing a precedent which would then be applied by somebody to the Golan and the West Bank. After the death of Sadat, and Sharon coming to power, it came down to "I know we have to give up most of it, but we can't give up everything, we have to keep something. We have to renegotiate this somehow. We just can't give up the whole Sinai."

This led to a whole bunch of really dumb disputes. The most egregious being Taaba, which was down on the Red Sea, just around the corner from Eilat. And there were other kinds of trial balloons - "Can't we hold onto the air bases? Why should we give up all this oil?" The

department sent Walt Stoessel out, who was the undersecretary for political affairs, I think, to negotiate and to work with the Egyptians and Israelis on this. He did a fine job, and again it was one of those missions where I spent a lot of time cooling my heels in offices, waiting to see if anybody needed the press. It was finally worked out. An agreement was signed under somewhat strange circumstances due to considerations of who was to sign and where. On the Egyptian side I think it was signed by the Egyptian ambassador in Tel Aviv, which is where he lived at least.

The withdrawal came to pass with a number of results. I think, in some ways, what Israel gave up has not been fully appreciated in the rest of the world. The Sharon tactic of trying to hold on to little enclaves was just silly. All it did was take away from Israel some of the international credit it should have gotten for a remarkable sacrifice. Who has ever given up a lot of territory without being beaten?

Q: I talked to some of the people who had been on the early peace missions who said there was a lot of Israeli testing, trying to take more in than they were supposed to. When you look at it, it was almost kid stuff - just testing - and it got everybody mad.

DIETERICH: So much of this was Sharon-driven, in my estimation. A little bit Begin-driven too. What history should remember is that Israel gave up oil resources and air bases. Now they have a couple of new air bases in the Negev built for them by us. Those aren't as good as having the whole Sinai. The Sinai was a great training area for the Israeli air force, and they don't have the space they had. There aren't very many examples in history of people giving up that kind of territory.

Q: Did you have any experience with the Egyptian press?

DIETERICH: A little bit, yes. I made one trip to Egypt after Camp David when travel to Egypt became possible. I worked out a deal with the PAO in Cairo to send a car down to meet me at the border. I rode in the car all the way through the Sinai seeing the hulks of burned out tanks along that road into Cairo. It was a marvelous trip and I did talk to some Egyptians while I was there, sort of the guest of USIS in Cairo. I don't remember running into Egyptian journalists on a regular basis. They would come when you would have the autonomy talks delegation, when an Egyptian delegation would show up. One of the jobs to be done during the period of negotiating withdrawals from the Sinai was setting up the Multinational Force and Observers, which is a fascinating story in itself. Again, these were negotiations the press was interested in, and I had to follow and got to know the people that were involved in that operation too. I don't know whether this is the time to tell how it works or not.

Q: Oh sure.

DIETERICH: Part of the deal from the very beginning was that the United States would try to get the UN to put a peacekeeping mission into the Sinai. To get the agreement signed, we basically had to say "and if the United Nations won't do it, we will do it." Well, guess what! Of course the United Nations wouldn't do it. There was no way we were going to get the Security Council to approve a United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Sinai. Remember, the Russians had been cut out of the Mideast peacekeeping, peacemaking process - the Camp David

process - early on, and they were always unhappy about that. Not nearly as unhappy as the Israelis would have been had they been brought in.

Anyway, as it turned out, we had to do it by ourselves. Basically, we had to go out and find countries willing to contribute. Early on we got the Colombians and the Fijians in because they are perennial peace keepers. They had been doing this for quite a while. Then we had a flurry with the Israelis when we wanted to get some Europeans in. The Israelis were doubtful about having the Europeans in. Doubtful about the British, because of the Mandate history. Doubtful about the French, because they felt the French were too close to the Saudis, and the French history in Lebanon had complicated things a lot and for the region also. They were also somewhat suspicious of the Italians and I could never quite figure out why, since everybody likes the Italians. But maybe one of the clues is that those Israeli oil fields that were given up in the Sinai were run by ENI, the Italian governmental hydrocarbons conglomerate. Finally, the Israelis consented, and the French, Italians, and the British agreed to come in, as well as Australia and New Zealand. We got a Norwegian General, Frederick Bull-Hansen, who agreed to be the commander of the outfit. The director general was an American, a retired State Department Senior Administrative officer named Leamon R. Hunt, known as Ray Hunt, who was later killed in Rome. Ray Hunt and Vic Dikeos, who was his deputy, asked me if I would consider going to Rome as the public affairs officer for the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO.) Rome was a big temptation, since I had studied in Italy as a graduate student and I liked Rome a lot - loved Italy. I talked to some people about it, including Sam Lewis, and we all came to the conclusion that it would be a great press job, because this thing would never work. It was going to be hell - they were going to be screwed up all over the place, and the Israelis and Egyptians were going to be all over each other. It was going to be a very exciting time. So I thought maybe I would go.

In the meantime, I wasn't getting much I was interested in from Washington anyway. I was a little bit out of touch with Latin America by then, and not well enough known in the Middle East, nor was I an Arabic speaker, so of nothing was coming up that really turned me on. Nor did I relish the idea of studying Arabic or trying to be a PAO in a country where I didn't speak the language.

So I decided Rome might be fun, plus it was a great deal financially because it was an international organization and you didn't have to pay any U.S. taxes, while you still collected your full foreign service salary. So I agreed to go to Rome, and that is when I left Israel and came back to the United States for about two months, since the MFO had not yet made its official move to Rome. I worked out of the MFO headquarters in the Washington suburb of Landmark, Virginia. It was really quite interesting helping to invent a brand new organization.

In the first place - why Rome? The agreement itself stipulated there had to be a headquarters and it had to be outside the treaty area, so we had to find a place to go. Washington seemed unsuitable because it was too far away. It came down to western Europe, and hopefully a place with good communications and good air connections. We talked to the British, French, and the Italians and the best deal came from the Italians. It was particularly attractive to us because the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN was already in Rome, and that provided a model for us to use with the Italians in order to establish what our status would be as a foreign organization. We basically said to the Italians, "Just give us the same deal and perks you gave to

the FAO and we will be fine.” They agreed.

WILLIAM ANDREAS BROWN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tel Aviv, Israel (1979-1982)

Ambassador William Andreas Brown was born in Winchester, Massachusetts in 1930. He joined the “Holloway Program” which was part of the Naval Reserve Officers Training Program and went to Harvard University, graduating with a Magna cum Laude degree. In 1950 he went to Marine Corps basic training in Virginia and later served in Korea. His Foreign Service career took him to a multitude of places including Honk Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, USSR, India, the UK, and Israel. His career includes an ambassadorship to Israel as well as several positions in the State Department, Environmental Protection Agency. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November of 1998.

Q: Today is May 5, 1999. Bill, we're going to discuss your time in Israel, and we discussed this off microphone. You're going to be referring to a very complete, oral history which was done by Sam Lewis, who was our Ambassador to Israel when you served there. So, for someone who is looking at this account, for this particular period of time, they should also take into account Ambassador Sam Lewis' oral history.

BROWN: Yes. That is an outstanding interview, in its entirety. In my view he made an brilliant presentation. I subscribe to his description of events in Israel and the background to them. I will attempt to fill in some niches, give some personal recollections on certain incidents in which I was involved or on which I had special observations, and make some comments on management and other matters. Stu, please feel free to ask me what you want.

Q: I would like to put in here that you were the Deputy Chief of Mission [DCM] of the American embassy in Tel Aviv from 1979 to 1982.

BROWN: I believe that my time there ran from the end of September or early October, 1979, till the end of August, 1982. That covers the following main developments: the follow-up to the conclusion of the Camp David agreements and the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, the end of the Carter administration, the effect of the mujahideen takeover of our Embassy in Tehran, the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, the Israeli elections of 1981, the worsening situation between Israel and Syria in Lebanon, the massive Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June, 1982, and its sequel.

Q: By any chance, while you're going through that laundry list, did the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan [in December, 1979] have any effect?

BROWN: I would say, “Yes,” in overall terms. Remember that not long before this I had previously been serving as Political Counselor in the American embassy in Moscow. I was in

that situation during the period of 1977-1978. I was very concerned about Soviet behavior, attitude, and so forth at that stage of the Cold War.

Q: I hope that you will discuss it during your description of this period.

BROWN: Yes. I would like to make some basic observations here. By the way, I commend the reader of this account to the views of other contributors to the Foreign Affairs Oral History regarding the Israeli-Palestinian or the Israeli-Arab relationship, going all the way back to how it appeared in Jerusalem in 1945. Those contributions should be considered as well.

In this connection one of the features to be considered is "What was this all about," particularly in terms of the attitudes of succeeding American administrations, and particularly as we come into the period of the Reagan administration, which began in 1981. As Ambassador Sam Lewis and others have pointed out, there is a school of analysis that the Cold War heavily dominated our approach to the Middle East. That is, the view that the Soviets were out to do us in every way and that there was a number of bad Arab players in this equation. In this view, the Soviets were not willing to help us. In fact, they sought to do us in as best they could. One of the bad Arab characters was President Assad of Syria, who was willing to play the Soviet game. That interpretation of events has a sub-set that the Arab-Israeli conflict at the time was essentially, if not a side-show, a smaller, sub-set of the larger picture of the Cold War. That is the point at which Secretary of State Al Haig and the early Reagan administration came into the picture.

Q: When you arrived in Israel in 1979, the Carter administration was still in office.

BROWN: It was still high Carter administration in a way, although this period was the beginning of the weakening of the Carter administration domestically. This was a reflection of domestic politics, the economy, the attitude toward President Carter, and the rapid wearing away of the great achievement of the Camp David Agreement in domestic political terms. There also was a growing stable of Republican opponents of President Carter, one of whom was Ronald Reagan. There was a feeling that such events as developments in Afghanistan and the Mujahideen takeover of our embassy in Iran [in December, 1979] were wearing away the influence of the Carter administration and President Carter himself.

Now, you must remember that as we speak it is now May, 1999. It is nearly 20 years since I first came into the Middle East. As I think I pointed out before, you could say that I really came into it cold. I had never served in the Middle East, had never lived there, didn't speak any of the languages in use there, and never had any academic background on it. I was recruited into the Middle East, if you will, cold and over the telephone and then in a personal meeting with Ambassador Sam Lewis. I then became totally immersed in the Middle East, and that's how I learned this particular part of the diplomatic trade.

Q: A question while you're on that subject. Did you find yourself having to work out of trying to equate your experience, particularly in the Soviet Union and in Far Eastern countries? I've seen people come to posts with a pre-set idea of how things are done. It sometimes takes a while almost to unlearn those instincts and develop new ones.

BROWN: The situation in the Middle East, as various of your contributors have pointed out, has always been very intense. During this time it was at a peak of that intensity and was to remain so during my period of service in Israel. You really didn't have time to consider the baggage that you might be carrying. You just worked at the situation, day and night.

Let's go back to my Soviet experience. You could argue that my Soviet experience had some relevance to my service in the Middle East. However, I was fascinated by Ambassador Sam Lewis' account of the argument over the issue of the Geneva Peace Conference proposal, which was a Carter initiative which surfaced in 1977. This led to a U.S.-Soviet bilateral declaration in September, 1977. As Ambassador Sam Lewis points out, Secretary of State Vance had negotiated with the Soviets very secretly to produce that bilateral declaration. I must add that this was done so secretly that, despite my being Political Counselor in Moscow, I had no idea that this effort was going on, until it was announced. I don't recall any role of mine whatsoever in any aspect of those negotiations.

The Israelis, of course, were outraged because, they felt that this negotiation was conducted behind their backs. Ambassador Sam Lewis notes that, to this day, I guess, there remains a real disagreement as to what Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's true feelings were on this issue. Ambassador Lewis says that Hermann Eilts, at that time our Ambassador to Egypt, thought that, initially, Sadat liked the idea of the U.S.-Soviet joint statement, with its clear implication that an international conference on the Middle East would be held. However, the Egyptians reportedly then became upset when they became aware of the U.S.-Israeli working paper, which put a gloss on it and which aroused Egyptian fears that Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin would somehow be able to manipulate President Carter at the expense of Egyptian President Sadat.

In any event, by the end of September, 1977, the very month when that bilateral declaration was made, the chances of a Middle East conference had just about evaporated, although President Carter continued to push the idea until President Sadat suddenly went off to Jerusalem in November, 1977. This trip by President Sadat came as a bombshell for the Carter administration. You may recall my previous account of the trip by Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Phil Habib to Moscow to try to persuade Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and other Soviet leaders that this was a surprise for us. Gromyko, in his usual biting, sarcastic manner, said to Phil Habib: "Mr. Habib, I can barely restrain myself from laughing in your face."

I mention this to make the point that, although I had some exposure to the Middle East from my Moscow experience, I was basically coming into the Middle Eastern area really cold. And in the wake of an intensive, unprecedented experience in Taiwan. That is, the break in relations with the Republic of China in Taiwan, the closure of the embassy in Taipei, the establishment of the American Institute on Taiwan, and all that went with it.

Another point that I should make is that Ambassador Sam Lewis and I were the same age. He was, I would say, then at the peak of his form, he and his wife, Sally. I would stress here the role of Sally Lewis as well. The two of them did an outstanding job. They were physically up to the stress involved. Ambassador Lewis' position was then, and it was to remain so, a very demanding one.

You may recall that the Israeli Government, over the years, had progressively been moving up to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. It takes about an hour and a quarter or an hour and a half, depending on the traffic, to drive to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. It's a hard drive up from Tel Aviv. And I mean "up" as Jerusalem is about 3,000 feet above sea level. If you're not in good shape, you feel the change in altitude. Sam Lewis was a dedicated, highly and intensely involved outreach kind of Ambassador. There was a lot going on in Tel Aviv. The Ministry of Defense was in Tel Aviv. Many Israeli politicians had homes in Tel Aviv. Some of the ministries still operated out of Tel Aviv on alternate days or a couple of days each week. However, the main action was up in Jerusalem. So Ambassador Lewis had to tear up and down between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. I think that, on more than one occasion, he made two round trips a day. This was really a wearing experience for him.

At the Ambassador's lovely residence in Herzeliya Petuach the Lewis' entertained constantly. They backed all kinds of noble causes, including charities. They hosted countless functions for visiting Americans, for Israelis, and for all kinds of visitors, including many congressional delegations who poured in and through Tel Aviv. He would meet Congressional delegations at Ben Gurion Airport [formerly Lydda Airport] and accompany them up to Jerusalem. Often the only chance that you had to brief them was during the trip between the airport and Jerusalem. It was a hectic and sustained pace. There was just no letup. That's the way it was during my three years, working under Sam Lewis. That's the way it had been for two years before that, as well as at least three years after I left Israel, during all of which he was Ambassador.

Ambassador and Mrs. Lewis were, and remained, a tremendous team, taken together and individually. They rapidly became role models for my wife Helen and myself, although I had no idea that I would ever come back to Israel. They impressed us as an outstanding Ambassador and his wife.

We have had and still have a Consulate General in Jerusalem, which had historically been in place for 100 years, first as a tiny office and then as a larger post. One must remember that even before Tel Aviv was established, leaving aside the ensuing growth of the city and the location of an American embassy there, Jerusalem was THE post for the official American representative in Palestine.

Q: We even had a false American presence. Some nut came out of Philadelphia around 1848 or so and set himself up as the American Consul. It took the Ottoman Turks, for Palestine was then part of the Turkish Empire, a couple of years to find out who this guy was. [Laughter]

BROWN: Anyway, there was a well established distance between the American Consulate General in Jerusalem and the American embassy in Tel Aviv. There was understandable resentment on the part of some Israelis at the very existence of an independent American Consulate General in Jerusalem. It was not accredited to Israel because, as part of the overall picture, the United States Government had a host of legal positions which had been articulated and adopted at the United Nations. In this connection one key position was that the fate of Jerusalem remained to be determined. We did not recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Therefore, the American Consulate General in Jerusalem was not accredited to the Government of Israel. The Government of Israel resented the presence of an independent American Consulate

General in Jerusalem and looked on its staff, for many years, as, in essence, pro-Palestinian, and pro-Arab. In the worst case, some Israelis regarded the Consulate General as anti-Israeli.

So the work of interfacing with the Israeli Government was almost entirely handled by the American embassy, from a distance down in Tel Aviv. We had some fine people successively assigned to Jerusalem as Consuls General. The Consulate General had a smaller staff than the embassy in Tel Aviv. The Consulate General's offices were split, with one office on the Jewish side of Jerusalem and the other office, which was the Consular Section of the Consulate General, across the line on the Arab side. The consular district of the Consulate General was all of Jerusalem and the West Bank of the Jordan, as well as reporting thereon. However, as a matter of policy, personnel of the Consulate General in Jerusalem didn't go into Israeli Government offices or ministries. They reported Palestinian and Arab Jerusalem views. This didn't gain any popularity for the Consulate General, let us say, among our Israeli interlocutors.

So there was a built-in, if you will, tension between Embassy Tel Aviv and the Consulate General in Jerusalem, which both the Ambassador and his DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in Tel Aviv and the Consul General in Jerusalem and his deputy had to deal with. They had to deal with occasional eruptions, let us say.

Another factor here, of course, is that Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin was in power. Begin's Israeli background had been conspiratorial, if you will, during the struggle with the British which preceded Israeli independence. For years Begin and his immediate following had been politically in the wilderness. He had been a member of the Knesset [Israeli Parliament]. However, the embassy's reach into the Begin camp was pretty limited until about 1976 or 1977. True, Ambassador Toon had met with Menachem Begin when Begin was still in the Opposition. (I remember Ambassador Toon saying in Moscow, at the time of the signature of the Camp David Agreements and the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, that, "Begin will never, ever, give up the West Bank of the Jordan River.") However, we didn't know Menachem Begin that well at the time.

Now, as I arrived in Israel, some momentous developments had taken place, including the famous Camp David Agreements, and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt was on the front pages of the world press with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and President Carter. Still, Ambassador Sam Lewis was THE man as far as getting into contact with Prime Minister Begin was concerned. We had some very good officers in the embassy in Tel Aviv, some of whom spoke pretty fluent Hebrew, who would work the scenes elsewhere including the Knesset. We also had extensive contact with Labour.

Q: By "Labour," you mean members of the Labour Party, the opposition to Prime Minister Begin.

BROWN: The Labour Party. In a calmer atmosphere it was a challenge to keep in contact with all of these various political parties in the Knesset and in the ruling, coalition government of Israel. As I said, the distance problem and the communications problem, as well as the time difference between Israel and Washington, were very challenging. By the time I got to Tel Aviv, the embassy staff was really stretched out.

I don't know if I ever told Ambassador Sam Lewis this, but as I transited Washington en route to Tel Aviv, the Country Director of Israeli Affairs, David Korn, pulled me aside one day and said to me, in essence: "Look, Sam Lewis has recruited you for his own needs, on his own principles. We've gone along with this, but we have a special agenda with you. That is, the embassy in Tel Aviv has been working full blast for years now. It is heavily stretched. The people assigned there are fatigued. There is a morale problem to work on. You have to be careful because Sam is so determined to get the most outstanding people that there is a bit of aggravation back here in Washington as to all of this."

Well, that's the kind of thing that I brought quietly with me to Tel Aviv. As I said, Sam was at the top of his form, but the embassy, which was not a large embassy, was stretched out. So I had that problem to be concerned with, in managerial terms.

Now, if I may jump around a bit, Ambassador Sam Lewis emphasized the role of communications, and particularly the secure telephone. He found this indispensable. I swore by it as well. In those days we had an apparatus called a "K-Something," which was a pretty cranky and complicated piece of machinery, by modern standards. A communicator had to crank it up with a special tape. You had to call a communicator into the embassy or have them set it up the night before. It had to be set up in the right time sequence or it wouldn't work with the State Department in Washington. Very often it sounded as if you were talking with somebody on the other side of the Moon. The apparatus would break down. It took a great deal of manipulation. Pretty soon you had to learn how to run this thing yourself.

The secure telephone had a great advantage, but I was later to see that it had a down side as well. First, we tended to become dependent on the secure phone, particularly in the Israeli context, where the atmosphere was often so clouded as to what our real policy was on a given point. We also had problems due to divisions within the Washington agencies, particularly in rapidly developing situations. We often relied on the secure telephone for the most sensitive matters, and our discussions on it therefore didn't get into the record. So historians should be particularly careful about communications via secure telephone. If I were an historian, I would already be very distraught at this time. As I look past your shoulder, Stu, I can see volumes of the "Foreign Relations of the United States," neatly set out on your shelves. By the time the Department of State reaches this period in the Middle East, there will be a large amount of material that is not properly recorded and will never be so recorded, because it was done orally, on the most interesting and delicate matters.

The use of the secure telephone occasionally led to conflicting interpretations. Sam or I would take notes at our end of the conversation. We assumed that someone at the other end was taking his or her own notes. However, then, as you reported up the line and laterally, as to what had been said on the secure telephone and so forth, we often found that there were conflicting interpretations of what was discussed. That, or people tended to read into a conversation or add to it material that the other party to the conversation didn't remember. This also led to compartmentalization, which I used to run into later on, particularly when I was an Ambassador, in view of the way Secretary of State Baker handled Ambassadors and issues. This way of doing business on the secure telephone allowed others outside of the Department of State, as the use of

the secure phone improved in quality and frequency of use, to butt in. That is, people outside of the Department of State began to operate their own, secure communications system with Ambassadors or other elements of an embassy. This was often unbeknownst to the Department of State and sometimes in rivalry or competition with it. Like so many other technological developments, the secure telephone is a many-edged instrument.

I'd like now to go into some specific incidents. However, before I do, I'd like to say how much I appreciated the fact, at the time and since then, that Ambassador Sam Lewis took me so deeply into his confidence. At times he was now getting to be a pretty tired man who tried to pace himself. He was in tremendous, physical shape, but the wear and tear on his system was enormous. Every so often he would go off on a well-deserved period of local leave. He liked to dive. He'd go down to the waters off the Sinai Peninsula and dive, leaving me in charge of the embassy. Or he'd go on consultations in the Department of State or on home leave. The intensity of developments affecting Israel was such that, even as a newly arrived DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], I often got involved at the highest level, with the Israeli Prime Minister or the Defense Minister on very sensitive matters. It was a real immersion and quite a baptism of fire for someone like myself who had come to the area essentially cold.

I mentioned the continuing flow of visitors. One also has to remember that there were, on any given day or night, important visitors in Israel whose presence we might not even be aware of. Within the American Jewish community there were many different strands and strains. Politically, they were often in contention. That is, they were Democrats or Republicans, along with sub-sets thereof. They had their own connections in Israel and their own pathways. Often these pathways led into very high places in Israel. Those who were particularly well-heeled and could contribute or could demonstrate that they had political influence. They had appropriate access to Israeli political figures. It was quite a challenge for us to try and keep track of these people as well, many of whom didn't even notify us that they were in Tel Aviv or were up in Jerusalem and operating on their own. This was really a remarkable phenomenon, and it remains so. As we entered a period of American elections, all of that activity intensified enormously. The Israelis would "play it" for their own benefit.

Q: This raises a question in my mind. After you had been in Israel for a while, this was the world in which you lived. However, I think that one of the things that people who have not served in Israel or even have not served in the Arab world may resent is that Israel is a little country which seems, no matter what the American interest is or what the American embassy would do, Israelis can always bypass you and go to the American Congress and get whatever they want. Was that something you had to deal with, particularly early in your tour of duty in Israel?

BROWN: Well, you rapidly became aware of the fact that the Israelis had a tremendous embassy in Washington and, I would add, good, high quality Consulates around the United States and a very good Mission to the United Nations. The Israeli Consulate General in New York was often headed by a former Israeli Ambassador. Israel had a purchasing mission in New York. They were working this structure for all that it was worth. They were in touch with both Houses of Congress and the Executive Branch of the American Government, the various elements of the Jewish communities, the arms industries, and various aspects of American intellectual and cultural life.

For instance, it didn't take me long to figure out that Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his associates were working with the American Christian right wing. This was appalling to some Israelis, particularly those associated with or sympathetic to the Israeli Labor Party, who had been used to, and thought it entirely appropriate to work with the American liberal community, as well as with certain elements of industry. There were some people on both sides of the ocean who were appalled to see this. Well, the answer was quite obvious. Here were assets which could be developed and which had very significant amounts of influence. One could name Senators and Congressmen to this day of that background or nearly of that background who developed very strong opinions on our relationship with Israel and who backed the Israelis on many issues.

I have been in situations in far off places in this little country of Israel where one would come upon a school, cultural center, or hospital, only to find that Senator or Congressman So-and-so had obtained very significant sums of money to support them. Or, if these institutions were known to us, we hadn't really had much of a role in the process of their financing. For instance, one might receive a communication from AID [Agency for International Development] Washington informing us that such and such a project has been proposed by "So-and-so." AID Washington would ask us to take a look at it and let them know what we thought about it.

Well, we would look into it. We wanted to assure ourselves and Washington that this project was not fraudulent but was on the up and up, that it was a bona fide hospital or educational institution and so forth. However, very often we rapidly came to the conclusion that back in Washington the fix was in, and our views were of no particular significance. One had to keep all of that in mind.

Another phenomenon was noteworthy. Among all of the places where I had served, both before and after serving in Israel, and I had been in some pretty active situations, never did I see such a flood of Congressional Delegations, both official and unofficial. Remember that Members of Congress can go to Israel either officially or unofficially. If they are determined to go to Israel, they're going to go. Those who come as part of official Congressional Delegations are assigned an official airplane, either from the Department of Defense or from another source. They fly over to Israel and are billed as an official delegation.

However, that's just the tip of the iceberg. You get many Congressmen who come to Israel as members of an unofficial delegation. Ambassador Lewis' rule of the thumb, as well as mine thereafter, was that, by golly, whoever was paying for the tab, all congressional delegations, unofficial as well as official, were important and had to be tended, cared for, briefed, and provided the best perspective that we could give them. We certainly didn't favor the prospect of Congressmen slipping in and out of the country without meeting the Ambassador and/or the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission].

Our procedure was to meet members of these unofficial Congressional delegations at Ben Gurion Airport, take them up to Jerusalem, and brief them. We appreciated that, in many cases, they were on their way up to meet with the Prime Minister or Defense Minister to get Israel's version of some event or development. We wanted to make sure that these Congressmen had the right perspective to the extent that we could provide it, bearing in mind that they were often exhausted as they got off the plane from the United States. However, we did what we could. By handling

them in this way we could get some idea of what was being said to them and by them. If necessary, we would try to, shall we say, upgrade and enhance either the conversation itself or their understanding of what it all meant.

Among them I remember, during my first tour in Israel, several cases of Members of Congress coming in and saying to us: "This Menachem Begin needs to be informed about how strongly I or we feel about whatever the issue was, whether Israeli settlements or another matter. One would say to oneself: "That's nice to hear. Perhaps they'll give this version straight to the Prime Minister." Then you would find out very often, and even most often, that they would lead off by saying: "You know, Mr. Prime Minister, my record speaks for itself. You look into my voting record and the statements I have made regarding the State of Israel, and you will find that I am one of the most stalwart supporters of the State of Israel and what you stand for in the whole Congress of the United States. Now, we have some minor problems. One of my constituents has told me that he doesn't quite understand this or that issue." Whereupon Prime Minister Menachem Begin would say, "You're right. What we should do is to increase our 'Hazbarah.'" In Hebrew this means, "Israel's official information or propaganda program." And often these Members of Congress would come out of the meeting, "Shorn like lambs," after having assured us that they were going to go into the meeting with Begin and "lay it all down on the line."

Menachem Begin was a real personality. Here was a man whom Ambassador Sam Lewis has eloquently described as someone who could speak several languages fluently. Begin prided himself on his command of English, Latin, and so forth. Lewis described him as a man who could get under your skin, a man who could put his finger on a raw or sensitive nerve, really put you on the defensive, and make his point.

I'll give you an example. The situation between the Syrians and the Israelis regarding Lebanon was heating up. In 1981 in Zakleh, in northern Lebanon, the pro-Syrian side started to build a road. The Israelis regarded this as a violation of the oral, Kissinger-negotiated red lines agreement, which Ambassador Sam Lewis has alluded to in his interview in this Oral History series. The net result was that the Israelis shot down two Syrian helicopters around Zakleh. The Syrians responded to this by deploying Soviet surface to air missile units into Zakleh.

Thereupon, Prime Minister Begin called in Ambassador Sam Lewis. I went along with Sam, as notetaker, because we knew that this was a really serious matter. As we waited outside the Prime Minister's office, his secretary notified the Prime Minister that we had arrived and we were ushered into Begin's office, which was filled with rabbis with long beards. We started to back out, saying that we were sorry to have interrupted. Begin said, "No, no. I want you to meet these gentlemen." We were introduced all around. The rabbis finished what they had to say in Hebrew and left through a side door.

Then Begin sat us down and pointed to a large book on his coffee table. He said, "I want you to look at this book with me." He opened it up, and it turned out to be an extensive collection of photographs, of men and women, young and old, children, students, and so forth. They were mostly small photographs, some with writing on the margins. He said, "These rabbis who have just left have finally, after years of effort, obtained this through their channels from Poland. These are photos of the inhabitants of a Jewish town in Poland. The people were completely

exterminated by the Nazis. Look at these photos. Look at this girl, 13 years old. Look at this rabbi. Look at this man, just an ordinary man,” and so forth. He said, “Read the inscriptions. Well, I’ll read them for you,” because Begin was a Polish Jew by background.

As Prime Minister Begin read the inscriptions, you could see him visibly building up anger. He went on to say, “Assad [President Assad of Syria] is the Hitler of this region. I swear to you, as to everybody, that we will never, ever allow this sort of thing to happen to us, either abroad or here, in any way.” From that point Begin then launched into his version of what had happened over Zakleh, in northern Lebanon. By this time he had reached his crescendo. It was a great, dramatic performance, if you will. He didn’t have to rehearse this. This man was a real, dramatic orator who could get his political message across in his own particular way.

Ambassador Sam Lewis and I left Begin’s office and dashed down on the one hour ride to Tel Aviv. We said to each other: “He’s going to attack Syria, unless we do something drastic.” So we sent off one of those FLASH precedence messages. We first summarized it orally via secure phone and then sent a telegram, to dramatize what we had heard and to urge the Department to do something. The result was that Phil Habib, [then Deputy Undersecretary for Political Affairs] was sent to Israel as a special envoy. There began his outstanding role in shuttle diplomacy between Prime Minister Begin of Israel and President Assad of Syria. This often meant going from Tel Aviv to Lebanon, up to Damascus, and back.

Later on, we learned that Prime Minister Begin had actually given the command to the Israeli Air Force to attack these Syrian surface to air missiles in Lebanon. However, the weather intervened and prevented the airstrike, temporarily, and now we had Phil Habib in Tel Aviv to strengthen our point. We managed, if you will, to stabilize that situation for the time being. That required a whole, separate set of backup facilities. Phil Habib was a tremendous diplomat for shuttle diplomacy. He had been raised in Brooklyn and so had been exposed to the Yiddish/Jewish experience.

Q: He’d been a “Shabas Goy” [Sabbath Gentile].

BROWN: He’d been a “Shabas Goy” and knew how to play it with the Israelis. He was a very dramatic guy. Phil Habib had his Lebanese Christian background. He had gravitas, he had experience, and he was an excellent man for the job. He had also suffered several heart attacks and was not in good health. Just the trip up and down from Jerusalem, then a flight to Lebanon and/or Damascus was physically very taxing for him. However, he was a driven man. I mean, Phil Habib was just “go, go, go” all the time. This required real attention from those of us who worked with and for him. Fortunately, he had Ambassador Morris Draper with him as his mentor. Morrie had the guts to say, “Phil, calm down,” or to tell him when he thought that Phil was wrong. He would draft cables for Phil and make administrative arrangements. They often would come tearing down to Ben Gurion Airport from Jerusalem, jump into their special aircraft, fly nominally to Cyprus, but actually to Beirut, because you weren’t supposed to fly directly from Tel Aviv to Beirut. Or they might go just barely into Cypriot airspace and then into Beirut. There was always the danger of getting unwittingly into conflict in the air. From Beirut they would go to Damascus, and then back. They went through this day and night.

It was a remarkable performance, but what it meant was that from our Ambassador, right on down to our dispatcher, Benny Banin, Habib required full-time, 24 hour a day support, and rightly so. I was very heavily involved in this, and it was a great education for me on how things could be done.

Once, when Ambassador Sam Lewis was away, a crisis broke and Habib and Draper came into the area on one of these day and night loops. I got word, belatedly, out of Cairo that he was already on his way to Ben Gurion. This was during the traffic rush in the morning. In fact, he was in the air and due to land in about half an hour at Ben Gurion International Airport. In the middle of the traffic rush, my driver turned on the siren, the emergency, flashing lights and drove off the road onto the shoulder. We just made it. I ran them up to see Menachem Begin with whom Habib had an intensive conversation. Meanwhile, I notified Beirut that Phil Habib was in the area and was coming to Lebanon.

Remember, communications then weren't as good as they are now. All of these arrangements had to be handled very personally and very carefully. Otherwise, we could have had a disaster. I ran Phil down the hill to Ben Gurion airport, onto his plane, and saw him off to Lebanon. I made a patched through phone call via the State Department Ops Center to the embassy in Beirut to make sure that they got the cable and that Washington was aware of what was going on. Phil flew to Beirut, met the Lebanese, flew to Damascus, and met with President Assad. Then he flew to Saudi Arabia. He and Morrie Draper met the King of Saudi Arabia at 2:00 AM in the middle of the desert. All of this with no sleep. They went to the wrong palace in the desert and then had to find the right one. On the one hand, they were trying to extract from President Assad [of Syria] what they could and play the Saudi card. For their part the Saudis were funding Assad and the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] out of fear. Phil was trying to get the Saudis to play our game behind the scenes. Then Phil Habib flew to Cairo to refuel and was back in Tel Aviv the next morning at the same time, having had no sleep. Phil was totally gray in his appearance. He went up to Prime Minister Begin's office in Jerusalem. Begin treated Phil Habib with respect but said that Phil was asking Israel to make a tremendous decision on a cease-fire. He said that he had to consult his cabinet.

We went over to the Consulate General in Jerusalem to wait. Habib was like a tiger. He was pacing back and forth in the Consul General's residence. A phone call came from Prime Minister Begin. Begin wanted something else from Habib, who by now was almost beside himself. They negotiated over the phone. Then Phil got into his limousine and we went over to Prime Minister Begin's office. There were further intense negotiations. Then we went out to meet the press Phil announced to the world a cease-fire. That's the way Habib worked.

Now, implementing that cease-fire and getting the word out to all of these parties all over the place, and then trying to shore it up and back it up required a tremendous, follow-on effort. Ambassador Morris Draper was superb in all of this. It was very taxing for Morrie Draper. I don't think that he ever got the kind of recognition that he should have had for this effort. However, that's another story.

Now let me go to a couple of other issues and incidents. The first one almost caused my abrupt departure from the Foreign Service. It happened in late February of 1980. Remember that I

arrived in Israel late in 1979. A situation emerged, which Ambassador Sam Lewis has dealt with in his oral interview. A resolution was proposed in the UN Security Council blasting the Israelis, among other things, for the establishment of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. The PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] and the Arabs were putting up this resolution in an effort to put Begin in an embarrassing situation, as well as to move the American administration. At that time we were in a key period just before the Presidential primaries. Jimmy Carter was seeking to be re-elected President of the United States. Another Democrat, Senator Ted Kennedy, was out to capture the primaries from President Carter. New York was a critical state at this period.

Into the middle of this situation came this bombshell. Ambassador Sam Lewis was on consultations in Paris, meeting with Sol Linowitz. At that time Sol Linowitz had succeeded Bob Strauss as the special negotiator for the follow-on negotiations on Palestinian autonomy. Prime Minister Begin and President Carter had a fundamental misunderstanding to begin with, and we were now trying to persuade the Begin government to ensure a favorable outcome in the negotiations on Palestinian autonomy. They were polite but stiff arming us by various means. Bob Strauss saw that this was a losing game and got out of it. Sol Linowitz picked up that job. At that time Linowitz was in Paris. Sam Lewis went to Paris. At 6:00 AM I got a phone call from Hal Saunders.

Q: He was Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

BROWN: Yes. This discussion with Saunders was conducted over an "pen telephone line. Hal said to me: "Bill, I've been on the phone trying to reach Sam." I said, "Sam got on the plane half an hour ago. He's on his way to Paris. What's the issue?" Hal said, "It's this UN resolution." I said, "Well, I can tell you right away, from the point of view of Embassy Tel Aviv, that we should vote against this resolution. At a minimum, abstain." There was a bit of a pause, and Hal Saunders said, "Well, actually, Bill, I wanted to ask what the embassy's view would be on voting for it." I said, "Hal, this is too sensitive. Let me rush into the embassy and send you a cable, which I'll send off right away."

I raced down to the embassy. I forget who drafted the cable, but I think that, at the time, my Political Counselor was Charley Hill. Probably, the gent who drafted it was an outstanding Political Officer, Gil Kulic, who has already contributed to your Oral History. Anyway, as I recollect it, and remember that I have no notes to refer to, I fired off a cable which went out via FLASH precedence because of the urgency of the situation. You know, you use FLASH precedence only for real emergencies. My telegram said, in effect: "Don't vote for this resolution. It would be really counterproductive. It would enrage the Begin administration, particularly the reference to 'Jewish settlements in Jerusalem,' because the attitude of the Begin administration is that this is Israeli territory and that Israel doesn't have any settlements on its own territory." Israel had captured Jerusalem in the 1967 War and had unilaterally and contrary to various UN resolutions proceeded to enlarge the municipality of Jerusalem, integrate it into Israel and to declare it Israel's own eternally indivisible capital. Israelis then moved into sectors which had hitherto been outside the old municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, and these sectors were called 'Jewish settlements' by the Arabs. The Israel Government certainly didn't see it that way, and still does not. Moreover on the overall issue of settlements, be they in Jerusalem or elsewhere, we

had made statements to the Israelis that we were not asking for the dismantling of existing settlements.

So that telegram went off. Since the issue was dynamite, I said to Hal Saunders: "Try to get in touch with Sam Lewis, if you can, in Paris." Well, on that weekend Yigal Allon, a great Israeli figure, a former general and former Foreign Minister and the author of the Allon Plan for yielding some of the territory on the West Bank to Jordan, died of a heart attack. The weather was terrible. A windstorm something like a hurricane hit the area. Ambassador Sam Lewis flew back from Paris, by which time our UN Representative had already voted, not against this resolution, not in abstention, but for the resolution! At this point all hell began to break loose, as I predicted.

Seeing domestic political advantage, Senator Ted Kennedy seized upon this to attack President Carter's stance. Cy Vance, as a good, loyal Secretary of State, took the rap for a communications gap. We didn't know it at the time, but Ambassador Sam Lewis has since brought out the view that President Carter had already authorized the vote for this resolution, provided that the reference to "Jewish settlements" in the Jerusalem area was deleted. If not, we would vote against the resolution. Somehow, through a mixup in communications between the State Department and our Permanent Representative in New York, Ambassador Don McHenry, we voted for the resolution! The Israeli Government was furious, and I was beside myself.

When Sam Lewis, his wife Sally, and I went to Allon's funeral, I was still deeply upset. I think that this was on a Sunday. On the following day, Monday morning, I drafted a letter of resignation from the Foreign Service by cable. This said something like: "Whereas I was Chargé d'Affaires at the time, and whereas I had sent FLASH Cable No. Such-and-Such recommending that we vote against this resolution, with its call for the 'dismantling of existing settlements' or at least abstain, and whereas we voted for it, I therefore request immediate transfer and early retirement for the Foreign Service." I prepared this cable in final form and sent it in to Ambassador Lewis. After a little while, Sam called me in and said, "You can't do this." However, I felt so strongly at the time that I said, "No, I want to send this cable of resignation." He really had to work on me, saying: "Look, you don't want to do this. You don't want to end your career. You did your best. Moreover, I'd be on the spot myself as Ambassador if you sent this cable in to the Department." So I withdrew the cable.

However, it shows you how deeply involved you can get in fast breaking situations like that and the twists and turns in Washington policy pronouncements. There are those who felt that this vote for the UN resolution materially contributed to Carter's defeat in the elections of 1980, because the Reagan supporters seized on this issue, and there was quite an after effect. Or was it that issue, plus the seizure of the American embassy in Iran? There were so many things to consider.

Q: But during this particular period it seems that every four years, when the New York State Presidential Primary comes up, you have presidential candidates promising that they will move the American embassy to Jerusalem. This has been going on for 30 or 40 years. But nothing happens. Did this come up during your time in Israel?

BROWN: It came up during my time as Ambassador to Israel.

Q: Let's not go into it now.

BROWN: Right. I'd like now to jump to...

Q: Would it be possible to stay in the same time period? We've been talking about the situation in 1979.

BROWN: Well, that particular incident happened in about March, 1980.

Q: Yes, but I'm just wondering whether we could keep this interview somewhat in chronological order. What about our efforts to get support from the Israelis and others regarding the takeover of our embassy in Iran?

BROWN: Remember that the Israelis had had a very unique relationship with the Shah of Iran. They had the equivalent of an embassy in Iran. It was not called an embassy, but they had outstanding diplomats and military people there. For years, Iran had been shipping oil from the Persian Gulf around to the Gulf of Aqaba and into Eilat, the Israeli port on the Gulf of Aqaba. A pipeline had been constructed from Eilat, across the Negev desert, and up to the Israeli coast along the Mediterranean. The Israelis had been involved in all sorts of arms deals with the Shah. They had a very close, military, defense, and commercial relationship with Iran during the days of the Shah. However, they had to be very careful.

I'll give you an example of the cultural gulf, or however it should be called, between the Israelis and the Shiite Iranians. At this time, when the American embassy in Tehran had been seized, Galen Stone, who had been DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] when I was in New Delhi, came to Tel Aviv for a quick, private visit. He wanted to talk with someone about the Iranian situation. So I invited over an outstanding individual, Uri Lubrani, who is "Mr. Arab, Mr. Muslim, Mr. Oriental Affairs" in the Israeli establishment and still is very, very active, although he's older than I am.

Lubrani had been the Israeli representative in Iran. Someone told me that he often had to sit outside the Shah's office while some major Israeli figure went inside for a one on one visit with the Shah. I invited Lubrani over for a reception so that he could talk with Galen Stone and give him, and myself as well, a little of the atmosphere. If I recall correctly, Lubrani recalled how, when they bought food or Coca Cola in bottles, anything that could be returnable, the Israelis could buy it, but no Iranian would take the bottles back. The fact that a Jew had handled a bottle or a plate or an eating utensil meant the end of the possibility of reusing or recycling it. I don't want to exaggerate that, but I'll never forget that account from a man who knew Iranian culture, spoke the Farsi language, and Arabic in later incarnations. He was a real, top notch expert on the area.

The Israelis were intensely interested in helping us at the time of the embassy takeover in Iran. Of course, they could point to the fact that they had had this unique relationship with the Shah and a wide variety of Iranian military and middle class figures. At this time there were an

estimated 50,000 Jews still living in Iran. They were potential sources of information. The Israelis were also in contact with the new, Reagan administration, and there was hope that we could use the Israelis, because they had contacts with moderates in the Iranian military. All of this occurred in the midst of this frenzied situation in Iran, the Iranian attack on Iraq, and the Iran-Iraq War that had gone on for years.

Q: It was actually Iraq that attacked Iran. At least that is my impression. I am not quite sure about it.

BROWN: Well, you can argue about who initiated the Iran-Iraq War. Anyway, this came at a time of the frenzied mujahideen takeover of Iran. Iran's outlook and propaganda was shrill. So much of their operation was called "Operation Al-Quz" or "Operation Jerusalem." The Iranian attack, or counter-attack, against Saddam Hussein of Iraq was described as only the beginning. The implication was that after Saddam Hussein was knocked off, Iran would proceed to implement "Operation Al-Quz," or the "liberation" of Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding that, the Israelis were telling us: "Work with us, and we can put you in touch with agents of influence in the Iranian establishment. It's a very delicate matter, but they're not all raving mujahideen. There are professional soldiers and they can be approached. To do this, what we'll need is the ability discreetly to supply them with certain items of military hardware which they need."

Now, the new Israeli Minister of Defense, as of 1981, was none other than Ariel Sharon. He was, as you know, a driving, and, indeed, driven personality. We had an agreement with the Israelis that they would not supply Iran anything of a military nature, unless and until we got our embassy hostages out of Iran. Even then, they would only supply material items to Iran after consultation with the United States.

Well, as you remember, the embassy hostages came out just as President Carter handed over to President Reagan in January, 1981. It wasn't long before the Israelis were pressing us to let them ship military equipment to the Iranian military. We were saying "No," but Al Haig, the newly installed Secretary of State, was saying to the Israelis: "What did you have in mind?" I was present when Secretary Haig said to Ariel Sharon: "Could you be more specific?" It therefore fell upon me to go to Israeli Minister of Defense Sharon to get lists of what the Israelis had in mind. Well, Sharon gave me a long, long list of military items which the Israelis would like quietly to ship to Iran.

Of course, this appalled some people on the U.S. side. We kept a hold on this, but you could feel the Israelis straining at the bit. Indeed, the Chief of Station [senior CIA officer] in Tel Aviv informed us one day that an Israeli aircraft had taken off with a load of spare military aircraft tires for Iran. Consultations with the U.S. took place, if you will, after the aircraft had already taken off from Israel and was in the air, bound for Iran. We were very upset by this. As I say, the Israelis were straining to do something like that.

Meanwhile, on our side we were looking this from the point of view of the Cold War. That was one big overlay, the Cold War. The second overlay was getting at the Iranians and dealing with

our relationship with Saddam Hussein. So I was present when there was non-definitive, shall we say, discussion of the possibility that to get certain military items, better intelligence, and a better grip on the situation, maybe the United States could allow, by one means or another, certain military items to go to Saddam Hussein. That would be in exchange for the right kind of Soviet tank, or other newly-built Soviet equipment items.

Q: We could pick up items that we could use for research purposes.

BROWN: For research and various other purposes, bearing in mind the tremendous Cold War overlay on all of this and the fact that the Israelis had a proven and very commendable track record with us on getting Soviet hardware, which they captured in the wars with Egypt or other Arab countries. They would run this through us for joint examination, strengthening our ability to gauge the effectiveness of this material, and so forth. We need not go into details here, but there was a long-established relationship between Israel and the U.S. on that account, in terms of Soviet tanks, aircraft, anti-aircraft weapons, and various other, sensitive pieces of equipment.

So that kind of thing was going on. It was fascinating to see Israeli Minister of Defense Sharon and Secretary of State Al Haig, if you will, dance around these issues, bearing in mind the sensitivities on both sides. This was in 1981.

Q: This was prior to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. However, this gives us a little feel for that relationship, which became critical later on.

BROWN: I think that this happened in April, 1981. Already Secretary of State Al Haig was in the thick of such discussions. Nothing yet had been decided, but both Israelis and Americans were feeling each other out on this relationship with Iran, on the one hand, and Iraq, on the other.

Q: Had the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear facility taken place as yet?

BROWN: Not yet, Stu. That's what I'm leading up to.

Q: Okay.

BROWN: There was the Reagan administration's overview of the whole area in Cold War terms. They had negative impressions of certain Arab bad actors, including President Assad of Syria. This view was very early in the show. Israel was considered something of a side show, now that we had the Camp David Agreements and a Peace Treaty with Egypt. Israel's survival was no longer in question and was not threatened, in strategic terms.

Things began to heat up, as the prospect of an Israeli election approached. There was trouble in Lebanon. I mentioned the Zakleh incident and the violation of those old, "Red Line" agreements which Secretary of State Kissinger had negotiated. The Israelis and the Syrians were jockeying with each other in Lebanon. There were occasional, PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] Katusha (Soviet made surface to surface rocket) attacks on northern Israel. The Israelis already had a presence in what they termed their security zone in southern Lebanon. There were periodic tensions in connection with the relevant UN resolutions to get the Israelis to withdraw from their

security enclave in southern Lebanon. There was a heating up of Israeli probes and attacks against the PLO facilities in the wake of these Katusha attacks against Israel. Now, Ariel Sharon had come into office as Israeli Minister of Defense.

Q: So Ariel Sharon became Minister of Defense while you were in the embassy in Tel Aviv. What impression did you have of him when he came into office? What did the embassy people think of him?

BROWN: Well, he already had quite a record and quite a history. He was an Israeli hero who cracked through across the Suez Canal and encircled what was left of the Egyptian Army [in 1973]. He had retired from the Army and had been brought back to active duty for that operation. He was now very politically motivated. Politically, he wandered through quite a bit of terrain. There was a time, if you will, when he was associated with elements of the Labour Party of Israel. He was a man who already held distinct and very strong views on how to proceed.

I had first met him when he was Minister of Agriculture in the Menachem Begin Government. This was during the period of the Carter administration. I met him in the office of the Minister of Defense, Eizer Weizman, who was later President of Israel. Sharon had been hawkish and had led, if you will, the earlier Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1978, in the wake of a horrible, bus terrorist incident along the highway North of Tel Aviv. When I met him, Sharon, then Minister of Agriculture, was concurrently Chairman of the Settlements Committee. He was passing through Weizman's office, carrying an enormous roll of maps under his arm. These were the maps of the Jewish settlements which were going to be built, and which have been built during the following years.

Phil Habib had initially come over to Israel in his capacity as a troubleshooter dealing with water. He was following up on the old Eric Johnston plan of the 1950s. He was asking whether we couldn't have a coordinated, regional plan for the damming of the Yarkon River, which flows down into the Jordan River. The Yarkon River divides Syria and Jordan. It flows into the Jordan River. It had been the subject of armed conflict. In that capacity I took Phil Habib to meet Israeli Minister of Agriculture Sharon because water questions in Israel come under the Minister of Agriculture. I got a good dose, as did Habib, of Sharon.

First, Habib met the then outgoing Minister of Foreign Affairs, Moshe Dayan, who, as always, was flexible and creative, bearing in mind all of the difficulties facing him. Then we went over to see Minister of Agriculture Sharon and his hard line Commissioner of Water, who had been Sharon's Platoon Commander when Sharon had been a young member of the fledgling Israeli Army many years before. And boy, were they tough! So I had already had an introduction to Ariel Sharon as a tough Minister of Agriculture, a tough figure on the question of water, and a tough and very dynamic figure in the grandiose schemes of the Begin administration to build and expand Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories.

There was an interval before Sharon became Defense Minister. Weizman, in a fit of annoyance, had resigned from the cabinet as Minister of Defense and had gone out into the wilderness. For a while, Menachem Begin was Minister of Defense, in addition to being Prime Minister. Begin enjoyed being Minister of Defense, but the man who handled the job of Minister of Defense on a

daily basis was the Deputy Defense Minister, Mordechai Zippori, a former Army general of the tough, Likud persuasion. I had to deal with Zippori, essentially on a day to day basis, as we went through the escalation of troubles in Lebanon.

Just to give you a flavor of what it was like to deal with a character like this, I'll give you one or two examples. As things heated up [in 1978], the Israelis would respond to perceived or real PLO provocations by strafing and bombing PLO facilities. Our Ambassador to Lebanon at the time, John Gunther Dean, would understandably get very upset at these news broadcasts over Radio Beirut that the Israelis had killed a number of Lebanese. (End of tape)

Q: You were saying that Ambassador John Gunther Dean was...

BROWN: John Gunther Dean would fire off a cable, often in very colorful language, saying, in essence: "When are we going to face down the Israelis? When are we going to stop this carnage? Why doesn't Embassy Tel Aviv do something about it?" This kind of reporting didn't endear him to Ambassador Sam Lewis. After all, we were trying to do what we could. Remember that Sam had had extensive exposure to all of this, in addition to everything else. So it often fell upon me to go to Minister of Defense Eizer Weizman and then, when Weizman resigned, to Zippori to cope with this kind of situation.

I'll never forget one, particularly egregious episode where the Israelis bombed a target. One bomb went astray, hit a cafe, and killed lots of civilians. Ambassador Dean fired off the usual, anguished cable. I went in to see Zippori one on one. He sat me down, gave me a cup of Turkish coffee, and said, "What can I do for you?" I made a vigorous presentation. I said that I didn't have all of the facts, but it would appear, on the basis of press reports, that a lot of innocent, Lebanese civilians had lost their lives. Always in the background was the fact of the use by Israel of American supplied airplanes. It was F-15s and F-16s which were dropping these bombs. Sometimes, they dropped cluster bombs.

Q: American munitions, too.

BROWN: American munitions, too. So there was very distinct tension. Washington would get into the act, and it was a very delicate and contentious business. To my surprise, on this particular occasion, Zippori said to me: "You know, Bill, I've argued against this in cabinet." I almost fell off my chair! I said to myself: "What a cable this is going to make!" Here is this Israeli hard liner who admits this to me in private, if you will. But, after all, I was the DCM or the Chargé d'Affaires, or whatever, on this occasion. Zippori said, "Yes, I have argued against this. You see, the problem that arises here, over the long run, is that the Arabs have this image that the Israelis," and here he imitated the Arab pronunciation, "rely exclusively on high tech American weapons. You know, your planes, your munitions, your gunsights, your radar, and so forth. And the odds are stacked against them. The Arabs say that the Zionists and the Imperialist Americans have ganged up against them. They think that it isn't a fair war."

He said, "My argument is that the way we ought to handle this is with cold steel. That is, good, Israeli boys going up there, taking that bayonet and sticking it in the Arabs' guts. Then they come to respect you for what you are." Thus disappeared the idea of a hot cable. Imagine, cold steel! It

really isn't very funny, but I relate this story to give the reader a flavor of the mindset of a tough, old Israeli soldier on this. Remember, the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army at the time was General Raphael Eytan. He was another, tough, old veteran. He still carries steel fragments in his skull from the battles for Jerusalem...

Q: In 1948.

BROWN: He had been heavily criticized for pardoning an Israeli Lieutenant who had choked a Palestinian prisoner to death in the 1978 invasion of Lebanon. He had a very simplistic view of how to handle the Arabs. In other words: "They are our enemy. Go kill our enemy," and that's that. So it was quite an atmosphere.

I'll give you another example. Ambassador Sam Lewis was away, and I was Chargé d'Affaires. On the new Israeli television service there appeared a scene of Beir Zeit University, an Arab university on the West Bank. It depicted a demonstration which resulted in Israeli Army troops moving in and shooting against Arabs who were throwing stones against them. The coverage of this incident on Israeli TV was particularly chilling that evening, and I protested it on my own, without instructions. I didn't need instructions. I met with Zippori at the airport, where he was waiting to receive Prime Minister Begin on his return from the United States. I said, "Modcha, did you see that scene on television last night? It was outrageous, horrible. There was a scene of a young Arab girl who was hopping down the sidewalk with one leg waving like a rag. She had been shot in the leg. She was the daughter of the President of Beir Zeit University. It was just shocking!"

Zippori's first comment was: "The goddamned media! You see, our own, Israeli media pounced on this without the background. Think of all the rocks thrown at our soldiers! We're trying to restore law and order. And the enemy is our own media!" I said, "Look, haven't you heard of the use of better police tactics all around the world? I mean, with shields and helmets, special police riot units which handle matters of this kind. Why are you using the Israeli Army for this kind of incident? Even tear gas is would be more useful." He said, "Bill, we used tear gas a couple of years ago. It caused a tremendous scandal. Some lieutenant, in the heat of the moment, threw a tear gas grenade into an Arab school. And the spectacle was on TV of the Arab students choking and gasping, coming out of school, having been exposed to tear gas. With our background of Hitler and the gas used in Europe, we just can't do that kind of thing." I said, "Okay, I'm no expert in this, but why use the Army?" And we went back and forth on this line. He was highlighting his dilemma in the face of my protests.

So that was part of my introduction to that kind of scene. It was to be repeated when I became Ambassador to Israel, when none other than Yitzhak Rabin or Moshe Arens was Minister of Defense. So I just give you this example. It had been going on for a long, long time. This kind of incident was to bedevil us and to bedevil our relationship for many, many years to come and is a factor, even now.

Okay, that takes us up through the end of the Carter administration [in 1981] and the installation of the Reagan administration. There was the resignation of the Defense Weizman and later the emergence of Ariel Sharon as the new Israeli Minister of Defense.

Q: A quick question, Bill. What was the feeling in the embassy, if you had time to sit down with Ambassador Sam Lewis or anyone else, before the Reagan administration came into office [in 1981]? Did you have a feel for what the new administration might do? The Carter administration had had one type of approach. Here was the new Reagan administration coming in. Was there concern or...

BROWN: Ambassador Sam Lewis was a career officer who had been appointed by the Carter administration. Sam Lewis lays out this experience in his interview in the Oral History. He was in a delicate position as Ambassador to Israel. Would he be kept in that office by the Reagan administration?

Earlier, my home leave had been deferred, and I decided to take it at this time. Ambassador Sam Lewis charged me with going into the Department of State and getting a feel for what the new, Reagan administration was like, as seen in and by the State Department. I got back to Washington, and the new Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs was Nick Veliotis who, earlier on, had been DCM and Chargé d'Affaires in Tel Aviv. I went over quietly to the Office of Policy Planning, headed by a new appointee, Paul Wolfowitz.

Seated in Wolfowitz's outer office was Jim Roche. Roche had been on a delegation with Senator Bill Bradley [Democrat, NJ] in 1979, which visited Israel. I had been Chargé d'Affaires at the time. I took Jim up to see various Israelis. Roche apparently had remembered me, so that, at the time of this encounter, he said, "Wait a minute," and went in to see Paul Wolfowitz. Then, in my presence, Roche opened the door of Wolfowitz's office and said, "Paul, you can talk with Brown. He's a good guy."

They let me look at some of their draft memos to the new Secretary of State, Al Haig. These drafts, shall we say, were quite pro-Israel in terms of approaching the overall problem of the Cold War and utilizing our relationship with the Israelis for the purposes of overall, American policy. Well, I learned that Nick Veliotis was appalled by their approach, so a split had already developed within the State Department as to who would gain favor and the upper hand with the new Secretary of State, Al Haig. The question was beyond me. This would all play out with the White House.

Meanwhile, there was a whole crowd, of new people, relatively unknown to me, who were Jewish and who had involved themselves in the victorious, Reagan campaign. There was a whole, new set of people who were coming into office. They were preparing to come out to Israel or had already been there, with or without our knowledge. So this presented quite a challenge.

Now, I've spoken of the early arrival of Al Haig. This is before Ariel Sharon became Israeli Minister of Defense.

Q: This would be about April, 1981.

BROWN: That's right. At this time Menachem Begin himself was the Minister of Defense. So Al

Haig called on Begin, and everything was rosy. They had talks when Ambassador Sam Lewis and I were present, and they had talks which were even more intimate when we were not present. They even had meetings one on one. This reflected that well known propensity among senior American figures to talk with the Israeli Prime Minister alone and really let their hair down in the hope that this will be reciprocated. This often is very dangerous. However, they developed a very good, initial relationship. In those initial talks there was consideration given somehow to codify this relationship. That is, describing on paper, this new, strategic relationship between Israel and the United States, given the Cold War overlay which the Reagan administration brought to it.

In June, 1981, the Israeli elections campaign was heating up. Sam Lewis' account of the situation in June, 1981, is set out eloquently in his Oral History interview. One weekend evening, Ambassador Sam Lewis had a speaking engagement and was meeting with a prominent visiting American. There was a senior Congressional figure who was also present. I received a radio call from Sam Lewis. I should add that we had mobile radio as well as telephonic communications. I was in my Chevrolet some place. Sam said, "Get on down to the Hilton Hotel right away. I've got to tell you something." So I raced over to the Hilton Hotel, met Sam outside, and he said, "The Prime Minister has just informed me that the Israelis have bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor. I've had a quick telephone conversation with Washington. Go to the embassy and write a cable on this, because I'm committed to this speaking engagement."

So I went to the embassy and did the best I could. Fortunately for me, as I tried to put this whole thing into perspective, Bob Ames was at the embassy that evening. He was a very senior, almost legendary figure in the CIA who was making a trip through the area. I told him what had happened in Iraq. He chatted with me to give me his view of the situation. I finally got off a cable. We were in hot water! This newly installed Reagan administration, which thought that it had a wonderful relationship with the Israeli Government under Prime Minister Menachem Begin, now woke up to the fact that the Israelis had used F-16s and, I think, F-15s to provide defensive cover for the F-16s, which had bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor with stunning success.

On the following day I went in with our Defense Attaché, Air Force Colonel Pete Hoag to get a briefing from the Chief of Israeli Military Intelligence. He laid out how they had accomplished this mission. They used a "High, Low" mission profile, flying over Jordan en route to Iraq. He kept stressing the fact that they had used conventional bombs. They hadn't used the so-called smart bombs which we had provided them with. Colonel Pete Hoag kept zeroing in on whether they had refueled the strike aircraft en route, because Headquarters of the U.S. Air Force in Washington wanted to know, among other things, how in the world the Israelis had refueled these F-16s. Were they refueled over Jordan, over Iraq, or over both? The Chief of Israeli Military Intelligence kept saying: "We didn't refuel." That was a fascinating, side issue. For several weeks Headquarters USAF refused to believe that the Israelis could accomplish this mission without refueling.

Well, it turned out that the strike mission against the Iraqi nuclear reactor had been flown from one of the two air bases in the Negev Desert in Israel, constructed by us at a cost of \$1.1 billion in U.S. taxpayers' money. These bases were built at our expense in compensation for the fields which the Israelis had lost when they evacuated their fields in the Sinai Desert, as part of the

settlement with Egypt. One of these fields was close to Eilat. From these airfields they had practically topped off the F-16s on the runway to provide the last drop of aviation gasoline, so that the aircraft could carry out the mission, drop the bombs, and make it back without refueling.

The Reagan administration went into quite a frenzy over this and made stern pronouncements to the Israelis. The administration was very disturbed that the Israelis had done this without consulting us and had carried out the attack with American-provided aircraft, and Lord knows what other American-provided equipment. We went through a very difficult and delicate period in this connection.

I was with Ambassador Sam Lewis when Israeli Prime Minister Begin, in response to the furor in Washington, reminded Sam of the fact that the Israelis had had very detailed and delicate talks with us about the alarming progress the Iraqis were making on this nuclear reactor over the previous six months or longer. The American and Israeli intelligence communities had reported on the movement of equipment from France and Italy to Baghdad for installation at this site. This equipment had an obvious dual use capability for producing nuclear weapons.

The American response to Israeli concerns over reports of the movement of French and Italian equipment to Baghdad had been: "Give us more time. We'll work on this with the French and the Italians." The situation had gone on and on, as Begin described it, and then there was a gap in the American handling of this issue. That gap occurred when the Reagan administration came into office. Begin reminded us that he had heard nothing further from us. Meanwhile, in his description, this Iraqi facility was so far advanced that the reactor would shortly become hot. As Defense Minister and Prime Minister, Begin said that he would be faced with the decision whether to bomb a hot nuclear reactor. He then conjured up the image of a great cloud of radioactive material descending over the poor children of Baghdad, should Israel wait until after the reactor had become hot before destroying it. So, he said that he had to order the strike then, before the Iraqi facility became hot.

Begin's analysis of this situation was very theatrically expressed, but it was a reminder to me of the following. When you're dealing with such complicated relationships of such a delicate nature, in a hot area, be very, very careful when there is a change in the U.S. administration. As a professional, take it upon yourself to remind and keep reminding the incoming administration that this matter is on the agenda, whether or not they know it or not. This was something which later on, when I was an Ambassador, I reminded all and sundry to bear in mind, as the Bush administration entered office. Now this was a transition from one Republican administration to another, from Reagan to Bush. However, I just wanted to remind them at that time of particularly explosive issues that might somehow have fallen through the cracks. My awareness of this matter came from this experience back then which I have just described.

Q: What was the feeling in the American Government at the time? Was it that this Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor was a bad thing?

BROWN: Yes. The Israeli air strike on the Iraqi nuclear reactor was a total surprise, American equipment was used, and such equipment had been provided for defensive purposes. Prime Minister Begin looked us in the eye and said, "Of course it was provided for defensive purposes.

What else would you call it?" The Reagan administration fumbled around and put a hold on the subsequent shipment of such equipment to the Israelis. This infuriated Begin and the Israeli Government. They said, "How could you possibly do such a thing?"

All of that took place just before the Israeli elections. So Begin reacted furiously to the suggestion that the Israeli strike against the Iraqi nuclear facility might have been politically motivated. He said, "How could anybody dream that I ordered the strike for anything other than the most humanitarian and defensive reasons?" The result was that Begin was reelected by the skin of his teeth, as it were. A very dejected Shimon Peres [leader of the Labour Party opposition to Begin] once again had to suffer defeat. Beyond that, this air strike resulted in immediate pressures exerted by Ariel Sharon, who had been waiting for several years. He finally made it into office as Minister of Defense.

At the time Sharon became Minister of Defense Ambassador Sam Lewis took a well-deserved period of home leave. He had gone through this business with Prime Minister Begin in the wake of the Israeli strike on the Iraqi nuclear reactor. In the furor which resulted from the Israeli attack on the nuclear reactor Secretary of State Haig sent Bud McFarland [National Security Adviser to President Reagan] out to Israel to try to put to rest the controversy over the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor. McFarland met with Prime Minister Begin and the reported that he had been successful. No sooner had he left Israel than the Israelis bombed PLO installations in Lebanon. This was at a time when we were supporting Phil Habib and Morrie Draper in connection with their cease-fire efforts with the Syrians in Lebanon.

Concurrently, we were negotiating to set up the multinational force in the Sinai Desert. I was heavily involved in that, but that is a Mike Sterner story, and you have interviewed him. All of these things were going on at the same time, while the Palestinian autonomy negotiations remained stalemated. Then there was the departure from office of Sol Linowitz at the end of the Carter administration and the arrival of Fairbanks to replace him.

I pause to illustrate the enormous strains on the embassy in Tel Aviv, with all of these things happening at the same time. I'm proud that Ambassador Sam Lewis brought me into his full trust. In turn we had a tremendous asset in the person of Charley Hill, who was Political Counselor. Charley now prepared to return to Washington to become eventually the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs. When Secretary of State Al Haig was bumped from office, George Shultz came in to replace him, and Charley became the Executive Secretary of the Department of State, as well as the speechwriter and the key policy advisor for Shultz. That was a relief, but all of these changes made for a tremendous, kaleidoscopic scene.

Now, you asked me about Ariel Sharon. Ambassador Sam Lewis has a whole section on him, which you have on reserve. Let me speak a little bit about Sharon from my own, personal experience.

Q: Let's finish your comments on Sharon and, perhaps, stop at that point. What do you think?

BROWN: We'll go into my comments on Sharon. We can't finish it, but let's see what we can do.

Q: Okay.

BROWN: Let's start it this way. As I said earlier, I had already met Ariel Sharon as Minister of Agriculture and also Chairman of the Settlements Committee. He was a driving personality who moved quickly to bulldoze the sites subsequently used for the construction of West Bank settlements that we are now aware of.

Indeed, I drove up to the West Bank and surveyed the bulldozing that was going on at a site which came to be known as "Ariel." It is now the residence of tens of thousands of settlers. I visited that site and saw what Sharon's bulldozers had done. I said to myself: "Wow! We are entering a new stage." Smaller settlements had already built under the earlier, Labour Party government of Prime Minister Rabin. However, they were nothing compared to the potential of what I saw being bulldozed and prepared, as well as the road infrastructure that went with them. A "whole new ball game was evolving."

As Ambassador Sam Lewis left on a well-deserved, home leave, which covered the period from July 14 to late August, 1981, a new cabinet came into office with Ariel Sharon as Minister of Defense. I don't think that Sharon had been in this new office a day or two when he telephoned me. He said, "Bill, it's Shabat [Saturday]. Why don't you and Helen come down to the farm." I said, "Sure." I knew that he wanted something. We drove down to Sharon's farm in the Negev.

Now Sharon was a man who was a distinguished farmer, in addition to his many other attributes. He had what he described as the largest farm in Israel. It certainly was the largest, privately-owned farm in Israel.

I was treated to what I would say was the Israeli equivalent to a visit to the King Ranch in Texas. He showed us around his extensive farm. We saw his tame Arab shepherd and a thousand head or so of sheep, goats, and so forth. He drove us down into groves of the finest melons and fields of grapes, cotton, and so forth. He really knew his stuff. He was exporting his produce primarily to Europe. He was a very, very accomplished farmer. He treated us to a magnificent meal of roast lamb on a spit, took us through his hacienda-like house there, up into the bedroom where beautiful grapes were growing in through the window. He showed us his Mexican saddles, magnificent tapestries, art, and so forth. He wined and dined us.

I kept thinking to myself: "What is it that he wants from us?" Well, toward the end of this visit, it came out that he wanted to visit the United States right away as the new Israeli Minister of Defense. He wanted to meet at least with Casper Weinberger, then the U.S. Secretary of Defense. I said to him: "Have you cleared this visit with Prime Minister Begin?" He said, "Don't worry about it." I knew right away that we had a problem.

Indeed, I separately and quietly approached Prime Minister Begin and told him of Sharon's plans. I said that I assumed that Begin was aware of this. At this point Begin was rather taciturn. This told me that Begin didn't yet know of Sharon's desire to visit the United States. So a whole, new tone was now to emerge in our relationship with the Israeli Ministry of Defense.

When Ambassador Sam Lewis returned to Israel from home leave...

Q: This would be in late August, 1981.

BROWN: Yes. When Ambassador Sam Lewis came back and met with Minister of Defense Sharon, Sharon made it very clear that we would have no more easy access of the kind that Sam and I had had to the Ministry of Defense.

Previously, we used to be able to make a quick phone call to former Minister of Defense Ezer Weizman or Mordechai Zippori and nip over there. The word had been passed to the guards at the gate of the Ministry of Defense, and we would be shown up to the Minister of Defense's office. We had serious business, and they knew it. The subjects we used to raise were often acrimonious, but at least we were dealing with gentlemen who were handling us as best they could. They often confided in us their rationale for this or that course of action.

By contrast, Ariel Sharon had his own agenda, and we were to find out, in short order, what this meant. However, part of this had to do with Prime Minister Begin's keen desire to put the U.S.-Israeli relationship on a new basis. That is, a kind of alliance, however this was to be done. Somehow, he wanted to get this on paper and formalize it so that he, Prime Minister Begin, could use it. For his part, Sharon was keen to get something like this on his own terms to enhance his own image.

Well, it was one thing to deal with Secretary of State Al Haig, the former NATO commander and a general officer who was very sympathetic with his Cold War overlay, which could be used to highlight Israel's utility as an alliance partner. It was quite another thing to deal with Casper Weinberger, who had radically different ideas on the Israeli-U.S. relationship. As Secretary of Defense, Weinberger had his own, particular view of the importance of Saudi Arabia, Middle Eastern oil, Egypt, the Suez Canal, and so forth.

So we had a situation where there were some new players involved. The Israelis rapidly came to see that Casper Weinberger was no Al Haig, in terms of both his personality and his attitude. Therefore, it was understandable that the Israelis tended to favor Al Haig and extract as much as they could from him. Weinberger was a different customer.

Meanwhile, things were heating up in Lebanon, but Phil Habib had managed to negotiate a cease-fire.

Q: This cease-fire was basically with the Syrians, wasn't it?

BROWN: Yes, de facto it was with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization], although we did not deal with them directly, and with the Syrians leaning on them. Full compliments to Phil Habib in this respect. Therefore, it was a challenge to ensure that this new understanding was implemented. There was this fear that it might break down, and we would have a crisis in Lebanon.

There was also the aftermath of the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor. There was the ongoing question of a deadline for the Israeli pullout from the Sinai Desert, which was a critical

matter for Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. It was absolutely critical that the Israelis pull out on time. There was the complicating factor of the Palestinian autonomy issue, because the Palestinians wouldn't play, and wouldn't have anything to do with it. The Egyptians were very sensitive to the fact that they were negotiating on behalf of the Palestinians, who didn't want to play. So the Egyptians felt the need to put on the best face they could for the Palestinians. However, they could see that the Israelis were not really going to give them what they wanted. That is, something that would be an Egyptian version of full autonomy, probably leading to self-determination and independence. There was no way that the Egyptians could get this, and they were frustrated on that score.

On the Sinai withdrawal we were working full blast to complete the airfields we had promised to build for the Egyptians to compensate them for the loss of their airfields in the Sinai area. This construction job was a very expensive proposition. We had a very large U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presence, with some of the contractors employing 2,000 Portuguese and 2,000 Thai workers and operating under demanding, desert-like conditions. They were working all out, 10 hours a day, in the Negev to build these airfields to Israeli specifications. These construction jobs were unparalleled as far as U.S. air base construction was concerned. The air bases had to be built to be virtually bombproof. We don't build U.S. air bases that way in the continental United States. We build U.S. air bases in the continental United States to operate from in flying to forward bases overseas. These bases in the Sinai Desert were built to withstand the heaviest kind of bombing attack. They were very expensive, and the completion deadline was sacrosanct.

We had the problem in that the Israeli Minister of Defense Ezer Weizman, said to us: "Do it and get it done. Don't get our unions involved." However, there was an understandable Israeli undercurrent of wanting to get the construction contracts. So there was this whole air base construction problem that I was involved in.

Then there was the question of setting up a respectable force in the Sinai Desert that would meet Prime Minister Menachem Begin's specifications. At the time the Soviets had made it clear that they would veto such a move and that they would not allow a United Nations force to perform this function.

Onto the scene came Michael Sterner, with whom I had entered the Foreign Service. He was an Arabist in the best sense of the word. He had walked the Saudi Arabian pipeline for Aramco before he came into the State Department. He spoke Arabic and had had a series of increasingly senior and responsible positions. He tells his story in another one of the interviews in your Oral History. I often went with him on calls on Begin and other senior officials and then followed up.

I will tell you one incident to highlight the sensitivity of this matter. What Prime Minister Begin wanted were American forces in the Sinai Desert. We couldn't agree to that, for a variety of reasons. It would have to be multinational if it couldn't be a United Nations force. We therefore had to set up something respectable and convincing as a substitute for a U.S. force.

In one conversation, one on one, with me, Prime Minister Begin said, "Bill, I'm not worried about the Sinai at present. We can handle the Sinai. I'm not worried about a year or two, or five years into the future. I'm worried about what happens 10 or 20 years from now. After I'm gone

from the scene and, who knows, after Sadat is gone from the scene, are we going to see another Nasser come to power in Egypt and do what he did in 1967: kick out the UN and threaten us? That's why I would like to have this a really stable, convincing, military presence." I said, "Well, Mr. Prime Minister, it can't be a solely American force." He said, "All right, but I don't want it run by a bunch of 'Banana Republics.'" That was a term that often came into his mind. He didn't want to be treated like a "Banana Republic," as he put it to Ambassador Sam Lewis. He said, "I'd like to see really respectable components for this force." I said, "What did you have in mind?" He said, "Well, people like the Australians, the New Zealanders, the Canadians. You know, people like that." I said to him: "How about the British?" He said, "Well," and he slipped away from that alternative.

We therefore had to go out and persuade the right kind of governments to put up the right kind of forces. Mike Sterner, Peter Constable, and others were engaged in setting this force up. It was fascinating to see what finally emerged. I ended up negotiating the follow up and at great length with Eli Rubinstein, who was the Secretary of the Israeli Cabinet, a lawyer who also had a Ministry of Defense background. [Addendum: He is now Attorney General.] Whenever I see Eli, we still joke about this. I'll never forget where he once had me pick up the phone in his office and negotiate on his behalf with Ray Hunt. In other words, he maneuvered me into a situation where I was in his office and sitting over there, feeding me what he wanted. I wanted to say, "Why the hell don't you do it yourself?" However, he had someone else on another phone. It was fascinating. Ray Hunt, by the way, bless him, was subsequently assassinated...

Q: In Rome.

BROWN: In Rome, by terrorists. I'll never forget going to his funeral. Anyhow, we set up, on time, a convincing multinational force for the Sinai. Even now most Americans and, indeed, most American Members of Congress, are totally unaware of the fact that we maintained a battalion of troops in the Sinai playing a crucial role and providing a quiet presence that has worked because the parties concerned want it to work. We negotiated an essential, as far as sharing the expenses were concerned. Basically, it violated the Egyptian amour propre to have a foreign force on their sacred, Sinai soil. So, over the years the Egyptians would chip away, incrementally, at the size and the composition of the force. However, it still remained a very, very important adjunct to a key treaty requirement of the time. Lessons were learned. We could set up, if necessary, a non-UN force. This arrangement created a precedent for such ticklish situations as might evolve. Look at the present situation in Kosovo, where we are using a NATO approach as opposed to a UN approach.

Q: There is a general feeling, and it really stems from Nasser getting U Thant, [the UN Secretary General], to pull out the UN force in the Sinai. A UN force is subject to so many political considerations on a worldwide basis that it is essentially unreliable.

BROWN: There is that factor. Now, the first military commander of this Sinai force was Bull Hanson, a Norwegian general and a very sophisticated gentleman. We always kept an American as the civilian head of this Sinai Force. This position was portrayed as an essentially administrative function for keeping the Force together. Fortunately, we chose excellent people, such as former Foreign Service Officers, to do this. They deserve full credit, to this day. (End of

tape)

Q: A question that you raised about the construction of these air bases in the Negev. I have no idea about this but I would have thought that we would have been concerned about Israeli construction because that gets into local politics, and all of that.

BROWN: Yes. In essence, Ezer Weizman, as Israeli Minister of Defense, having extracted the commitment that we would pay for the construction of these air bases, said to us quietly: "Now you do it, because I can't rely on Israeli labor to meet the deadline." It was crucial to him, politically, as well as from the security viewpoint, that these bases should be in place and functioning by the time of the withdrawal of the Israelis from Sinai.

Q: For the construction of these air bases we had essentially "controlled" labor, including non unionized Portuguese and Thai workers. They would not be liable to go on strike, as Israeli workers might be.

BROWN: Yes. It was a very sophisticated operation. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rented a seven to 10-story hotel, next to what was the Tel Aviv Hilton Hotel. They used satellite communications and employed American contractors, who then used Thai and Portuguese sub-contractors. We kept a really hard, constantly updated program going here and we met the deadline. Through it all we wondered what would be the eventual use of these air bases and in what situations.

Well, strange are the ways of the world. One use was to provide a base for the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor. Later on, another matter was, of course, the whole question of U.S. use of these bases. As Ambassador to Israel later on, I went up with the Apache helicopters which were secretly flown from Germany to one of these airfields, where they trained in the spring of 1990. It wasn't too many months after that that these bases were used in Desert Storm. We had no direct knowledge that the war would come, but it was awfully nice that our guys were able to train on one of these very air bases.

Q: Just to go back to the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor. If you look at it from a strategic point of view, we had this policy of non-proliferation. Saddam Hussein, the President of Iraq, even in those days, was not considered a tame person. He certainly was complicit in the whole attack on Iran. He was regarded as a dangerous character. There were suppliers from Germany, Italy, and other places, and maybe even the Soviet Union, bringing in equipment to Iraq to give him the ability to produce nuclear weapons.

BROWN: All under a UN regime, all under the relevant UN facility. It was all done in accordance with the regulations. Technically, this was done with UN inspectors. This Iraqi nuclear reactor was UN inspected and certified.

Q: So this was considered by us to be a relatively clean operation. What I'm getting at is this: was there any feeling in the U.S.: "Gee, I wish the Israelis hadn't attacked this Iraqi nuclear reactor, but thank God they did!"

BROWN: Yes. How shall I put it? Look at Al Haig's writings, the body language, his reported remarks, and so forth. He was in effect saying to the Israelis something like: "Hey, guys, you have to understand the sensitivities back here, but you did a good job!" Others on the Washington scene were railing against this Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor at the time. Years later, another Secretary of Defense [later Vice President], Dick Cheney, openly thanked the Israelis for having done this. You can argue various sides of the case.

In my presentation of this matter I used as an example all of the under currents which involved certain, very sensitive elements of the U.S.-Israeli relationship. There is no status quo. Things keep moving, and surprises, usually bad surprises, keep happening in the Middle East. You can take the Israelis only so far with assurances that you're looking at the problem and that you're seeking a solution of it. However, when it gets into something of this potential horror, you'd better come up with something convincing and stick with it, or you risk a real surprise. That has certainly been my experience.

Now, we are now talking about the summer of 1981. I've gone through these various exercises, many of them concurrent. I'd now like to take you into the fall and winter of 1981. By this time Israeli Minister of Defense Sharon had been to Washington, and he and Prime Minister Begin had run up against Casper Weinberger. I would like to highlight that and give you a little story just to show the delicacy of this portion of the U.S.-Israeli relationship.

Begin and Sharon presented a memorandum covering a strategic relationship between the U.S. and Israel. During one of his visits to Washington, Sharon went through a melodramatic presentation of what the Israelis could do, if the Cold War turned hot, possibly involving the Iranian, the Turkish, or the Persian Gulf situation. In other words, the Israelis had the capability, if they were supported, of moving armored forces great distances, leapfrogging them, and so forth. This, of course, chilled somebody like Weinberger.

Weinberger's response to this presentation was, shall we say, pretty weak tea. He spoke of something like emergency hospitals to deal with local disasters and so forth. This happened at one of those times when I was Chargé d'Affaires in Tel Aviv. I had to bring this matter up to Prime Minister Menachem Begin and make an oral presentation on it.

I started reading from a Weinberger draft, which I had privately recognized as awfully weak tea" vis-a-vis what the Israelis wanted to hear. Prime Minister Begin finally said, "Mr. Chargé," and whenever he used the term of address "Mr.," you knew that he was being particularly curt and official. Otherwise, he would say, "Sam" or "Bill." He said, "Mr. Chargé, let me read that piece of paper," and he reached over to me, and I passed it over to him. He read it and perused it for a while. Then he said to me: "Have you heard the story of the 'Unter den Linden?'" I said, "No." He said, "The story goes something like this. A rich, Prussian 'Junker' [a title of German nobility] fell in love with a poor, Jewish girl in a Berlin environment. He had several, passionate meetings with her. As the relationship became increasingly passionate, she said, 'When and where do we meet next?' He said, 'Well, as soon as possible, but, please, not along the Unter den Linden.'" This, I guess, was one of the main thoroughfares in Berlin.

Q: It was a main street with trees. In other words, it was under the Linden trees.

BROWN: In other words, the Junker was saying: "Honey, I'll meet you over the fence and down the alley. You're a poor, Jewish girl, and I don't want to meet you in public." Begin continued: "As I read this text, I am reminded of this story of Unter den Linden." In other words, he was asking."What is this?" It was a pretty embarrassing moment for me. I decided that in my reporting of this meeting I would handle it that way. I prepared a cable which told the Unter den Linden story.

Well, the Israelis eventually got a bit more out of it. Not all what they wanted, but that's the way it went.

Q: Basically, our position was that we were not going to have an essentially official, strategic relationship with Israel...

BROWN: We weren't going to have an official, strategic alliance relationship, which would create problems for our relationship with the Arabs, our oil interests, and so forth.

Q: By the way, did Sharon or Begin ever try to play the line with Casper Weinberger: "You're Jewish and we're Jewish?"

BROWN: On the contrary. I believe that Mr. Weinberger, whether it's true or not, was considered half-Jewish in the Israeli book. He had been raised as a Presbyterian, or at least was brought up as a Protestant. They learned long ago, with the likes of Barry Goldwater and several other cases to be very, very careful in handling gentlemen of such backgrounds.

Now, things went along. Sharon took firmer and firmer charge of the Israeli Ministry of Defense. His role on the political scene grew, and we got to the point where the Lebanese situation was heating up. It is now late 1981. Phil Habib was employed again in an effort to prevent a breakdown in the cease-fire arrangements which he had so brilliantly engineered. Habib came on another visit to Jerusalem. At about this time Prime Minister Begin had slipped in his bathroom and broken his hip. Therefore, Habib didn't get to see Begin, who was in pain and recuperating. Instead, Habib got to see Sharon.

The meeting with Sharon was set up at the Israeli Foreign Ministry up in Jerusalem. The Foreign Minister was Shamir but he was not present. In November, 1981, Ambassador Sam Lewis escorted Shamir to Washington. I was Chargé d'Affaires. Habib visited Damascus, [Syria], and then came to Israel. With Prime Minister Begin injured, the meeting took place with Sharon. That meeting is reported in Ambassador Sam Lewis' oral interview and also in a book jointly authored by Zeev Shiff and Ehud Yaari. The title of the book is something like, *Israel's Lebanon War*.

Obviously, Zeev and Ehud had gotten hold of the American cable reporting this meeting, which I strongly suspect Phil Habib leaked. The presentation is set forth in straightforward form, but there's a little portion of it that didn't get into the cable, which I'd like to dwell on. In the jockeying back and forth between Sharon and Habib, sort of wise guy talk, Sharon was somewhat critical of Phil Habib's efforts in Lebanon. On the one hand Sharon nominally praised

Phil's efforts but, on the other hand, he criticized them. In response to this Habib said something like, "Well, what do you propose?"

Sharon then laid out what later became the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. This meeting was held between December 4 and 6, 1981. My Political Counselor and notetaker at that stage was Paul Hare, a top officer who later became an Ambassador. He was the son of a former American Ambassador to Lebanon. Habib and the Israeli Foreign Ministry types participating in the meeting were stunned by Sharon's remarks. He presented them with the caveat that he was just speaking as an individual. He said, "What I've been saying to you hasn't been cleared by the Israeli cabinet. I've just been speaking to you as an individual." Well, hell, he was the Israeli Defense Minister. He laid out a campaign for pushing up the coast of Lebanon, taking out the Palestinian establishment, military and otherwise.

What was not in the cable, as I recall it, was that someone, and I think that it was I, said, "What about Beirut?" The version of this conversation by others is that Beirut was never discussed at this meeting. However, my recollection is that Beirut was handled this way. Sharon made a sweeping, enveloping motion with his arm, which could mean that he would just go around Beirut, or it could mean: "I'll surround it and then we'll see what happens." By this sweeping motion of his arm Sharon could have meant that the Israelis could bypass Beirut or he could have meant that they would encircle it and then reduce it in a way that Sharon liked to do.

The other thing that Sharon said quite bluntly was that such a plan would put the Syrians in a strategic dilemma. It would cut the road that goes from Beirut to Damascus, passing through Zakleh. The Syrians would either have to withdraw their forces from southern Lebanon or face being cut in half and decimated. Well, that formulation had Habib, me, and, I would say, the Israeli Foreign Ministry types present at the meeting on edge or right out of our seats. Phil Habib then said, "This is not 1967." In other words, you just can't get away very easily with doing something like that.

So that was it. We dashed off a cable, which was subsequently the basis for the passage incorporating this view of Sharon's in Zed Shiff and Ehud Yaari's book. Sharon had been careful to say, "This is just a personal view, etc." However, what we saw over the following six months was a whole series of call-up's of Israeli reserves and mock mobilizations so that what eventually happened was certainly no surprise. The only surprise was what day it would be done. There was no question in my mind that the Israelis were gearing up to do this, unless, by some means, we or somebody else could do away with the Palestinian threat to Northern Israel.

I dwell on this just a moment because it's often said that Begin's son, Benny Begin, was furious at the way his father had been allegedly manipulated by Sharon. However, I think that, with all due respect, Prime Minister Begin was much more aware of the situation, as Ambassador Sam Lewis has pointed out. There were Israeli cabinet meetings on this subject before the final attack on Lebanon was made. In dealing with that subject at cabinet meetings, Sharon had to tone it down to make it appear that the Israelis would be going 45 or 50 kilometers deep into southern Lebanon. That is, the approximate range of a PLO Katusha rocket which could hit northern Israel. Allegedly, the Israelis would take out that chunk of Lebanon and thereby limit their objective, rather than plunging on and doing what they ultimately tried to do: set up a whole,

new Lebanese Government, knock the Syrians out of Lebanon, and establish the Israelis as the alternative to the Syrians.

Now in early December, 1981, Habib returned to Washington. I was still Chargé d'Affaires and I got an indication that something was being developed on the whole Golan Heights business. In Sam Lewis' interview in this series, and I had forgotten this, he says that I alerted Washington to rumors suggesting that we use some very strong language to head off the possibility that the Israeli Knesset [Parliament] might pass legislation formally annexing the Golan Heights area.

Remember that in 1967 the Knesset passed legislation in the wake of the Israeli victory in the war of that year which, you could say, in effect annexed the Golan Heights area, as well as Jerusalem. These are two, different matters. However, the way the language of the legislation was worded in both cases, the Israelis could look us in the eye and say, "No, that's not annexation." In the case of the Golan Heights in particular, they could say, "It falls under our administrative jurisdiction." This could be represented to be something which was legally a little less than annexation. Then, under the Labour Government of Israel, they proceeded to settle the area. That is, they put Labour settlements of farmers, light industry, and so forth up on the Golan Heights. I had forgotten that I had sent in such a cable, and my thanks to Sam Lewis for putting that on the record in your Oral History.

In any event, Ambassador Sam Lewis returned to Israel, I believe, on Monday, December 13, 1981. Rumors were increasingly heard at this time that there was a bill before the Knesset annexing the Golan Heights area. It was presented by Knesset Member Glass, who was an independent. The bill was routed to a committee, and we were told by Israeli Government officials not to worry about it. We were told that this was one of those private member bills which had been routed to a committee and that it would die there. It would allegedly be pigeonholed.

Nevertheless, we were concerned about this bill. I had sent in a cable, suggesting that we use very strong language to block it. However, before any such language came back to us from the Department of State, Prime Minister Menachem Begin roused himself from his sickbed, was carried into a car, taken to the Knesset, put in a chair and wheeled into the Knesset, in a lightning series of moves. He put the Labour Opposition on the spot and engineered the rapid passage of a Knesset resolution annexing the Golan Heights. Of course, this very much upset Washington and the Department of State.

Against his whole background of seize the opportunity and seize the day, which was not peculiar to Begin, he faced everybody with a fait accompli. This action had a souring effect in those circumstances. I'm willing to continue...

Q: I think that this is a pretty good time to stop. We're now moving up to...

BROWN: We've moving up to the Sharon trip to Washington in May, 1982, and, shortly thereafter, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Q: This would be a good place to stop. So we'll pick it up at that point the next time we meet.

Today is May 6, 1999. Bill, let's pick up the story in May, 1982.

BROWN: Things were really heating up. Let me take you through the buildup to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and its immediate aftermath. This was in 1982.

Just a bit of background here. The PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] had unsuccessfully tried to overthrow King Hussein of Jordan in September, 1970. This effort failed, and the PLO was then driven out of Jordan and escaped into southern Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese internal situation had deteriorated to the point that the Christian Phalangists invited President Assad of Syria into Lebanon to cope with their problem with the Palestinians. So, in effect, Assad was the man who came to dinner but never left. His forces are still there in Lebanon. Assad moved his forces into Lebanon with an invitation from the Christian Phalangists. I don't claim to be either a Syrian or a Lebanese expert. However, my impression is that this was the fulfillment of a widely-held Syrian ambition. That is, whatever the Sykes-Picot arrangement reached during World War I between the British and the French regarding the establishment of a Lebanese Republic under French tutelage, from a Syrian viewpoint, this was all one piece of a larger Syrian entity.

It was the case then and, I believe, it is still the case that there was and is no Lebanese embassy in Damascus, [Syria]. Lebanese political figures either asked to go to Damascus to see President Assad or were summoned there to see him. With the introduction of the Syrian Army into Lebanon, Assad so strengthened his hold on Lebanon that, at the risk of only slight simplification one could say that it became virtually a Syrian protectorate or appendage. That is, rivalries continued, but thousands of Syrian troops were the power on the scene, and Assad could and did play one faction against the other. In a larger sense Assad could play on the Lebanese scene, vis-a-vis the Israelis as he sought to recover the Golan Heights lost to Israel in 1967. That was and remains the situation.

In this connection, the instrumentalities Assad used changed from time to time. During my time in Israel the instrumentality Assad used was the PLO. I would say that the PLO presence in southern Lebanon was approved of by Assad to a degree. Not only countenanced but encouraged as well, within certain limits. The PLO had to understand that the Syrians called the shots. Within those limits the PLO could build up their paramilitary organizations. They could, and did, attempt provocations against Israel, using mortars, rockets, demonstrations, infiltrators, hang gliders, and so forth. The Israelis responded to these cycles of provocations by the PLO with increasing vehemence.

Q: A question here. From the point of view of the American embassy in Israel, and looking at the situation at the time you were there, I would have thought that the Syrians would do everything they could to keep the PLO from staging such provocations. These provocations amounted to sticks used to annoy the tiger. As sure as anything, this would lead to the use of Syrian troops at some point.

BROWN: I would respond to that in this way. We saw this kind of behavior as a risky game, particularly with, shall we say, a hawkish Israeli Government dominated by the Likud Party. Ezer Weizman is a former President of Israel. He is now depicted in Israel as a paragon of peace, flexibility, and diplomacy. However, when he was Israeli Minister of Defense he led the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1978. This invasion went deeply into Lebanon and caused a flap in the UN, leading to the passage of UN Resolution 425.

However, if you try to look at this situation from the point of view of President Assad of Syria, he lost the Golan Heights to Israel in 1967. This area of traditional Syrian territory had already been settled by the then Labour Party Government of Israel. Those settlements weren't expanding enormously, but they were turning the Golan Heights into a fertile, agricultural and light industrial complex. Assad probably calculated that he would keep the pressure on Israel by these means. It was a tricky, risky business, but with Assad's hands on the reins, from time to time he had to tighten them and pull them back. So when Phil Habib did his shuttle diplomacy act, prior to the situation which I am now describing, remember that he always went to Damascus as well. The Syrians have good diplomats and wily foreign ministers. There was also President Assad himself, who is one of the wiliest negotiators on the face of the earth. There was never an admission that the Syrians called the shots. The Syrians had their own "Palestinians," if you will, who were potential rivals to Yasser Arafat, living in Damascus, both then and now.

So this was a dangerous game for the Syrians to play. The tempo varied, and it had the Israelis constantly on edge. At times, I can tell you, this situation became a very serious domestic problem in Israel. To a large extent, Israelis living on Israel's northern border with Lebanon were adherents and supporters of the Labour Party of Israel. There were kibbutzim [Israeli collective settlements] and so on dotted across that area.

However, on the subject of handling foreign policy vis-a-vis Assad of Syria and the PLO, I would say that along the northern border of Israel there was a nearly universal demand: "Do something! We cannot let this situation continue," with women and children in bomb shelters, an atmosphere of terror, and so on.

So by 1978 the Israelis had already created a kind of security zone in southern Lebanon. They had already allied themselves with southern Lebanese dissidents, such as Major Hadad and his entourage, a dissident, Christian faction, which was also allied with a Shiite element in southern Lebanon as well. I think that it is worth pausing just to take note of the fact that public opinion in the United States presently considers that these southern Lebanese dissidents are mostly Christians. In those days, this wasn't true. There were Shiite Muslim units, allied with Major Hadad and under his command, paid for and supplied by the Israelis, facing what we now call the Hezbollah, a rival radical group that rose among the Shiite community in Beirut and extended into southern Lebanon. So there was an intra-Shiite struggle going on over the years. In more recent times the pro-Iranian Hezbollah won out.

In any case, the scene heated up. It reached the point where the Israelis were increasingly strafing and bombing deeper and deeper into Lebanon. Phil Habib, in an exercise of brilliant diplomacy, had brought about a cease-fire. Now the situation was beginning to fray again after nearly a year

or so of a cease-fire. I think that it may have been slightly less than a year, in fact. The situation got worse and worse. Remember that, as of July, 1981, a reshuffled Begin Government was now in office, which had in it a very strong Minister of Defense, Ariel Sharon, with his own agenda. On December 4 or 5, 1981, he stunned Habib and myself, as well as his own Foreign Ministry officials by laying out a plan for the invasion of southern Lebanon.

Simultaneously, there were some other developments which I would like to touch on, at least briefly, because it is so easy to focus on only one. What I would like to leave our readers with is the terrific responsibilities carried by Ambassador Sam Lewis and the American embassy in Tel Aviv in coping simultaneously with the Israelis on a variety of hot subjects.

President Anwar Sadat of Egypt was assassinated in the autumn of 1981, which left the Israelis very, very nervous as to what would ensue under Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak as Sadat's successor. Mubarak, for his part, was committed to reaping the full fruits of the peace treaty with Israel. That is, getting the Israelis out of the Sinai. The peace treaty with Israel called for a staged demilitarization of the Sinai border between Egypt and Israel. Nominally, the withdrawals were equal, as both sides had to pull back a little bit. However, it was really designed as a thin strip with no Egyptian troops and then another, and wider, strip behind that which each side would have no armor or artillery. Then there would be a further strip behind that, which was the subject of intensive negotiations, involving very painful decisions for Israel. The Israelis had to demolish a very expensive series of bases, installations, and military infrastructure which they had installed in the Sinai area since 1967. It was very painful for the Israelis to do this.

The Israelis also had to remove Israeli settlers from this area of the Sinai. It was particularly painful for Prime Minister Menachem Begin to preside over the withdrawal of every last Israeli from the Sinai. One of the functions of Ariel Sharon, as the new Minister of Defense, was to go in and root out those settlers from such beautiful settlements as Yamit, which was like a gem in a sea of sand. The settlers initially resisted this removal but were finally ejected. We saw this process night after night on television in Tel Aviv.

But that wasn't the end of that story. As the deadlines approached, Prime Minister Begin summoned Ambassador Sam Lewis and made it very clear that he was aware, through his intelligence sources, and he knew that we were aware, that the Egyptians were defaulting on certain key provisions concerning the Sinai, such as trenches that were supposed to have been destroyed but hadn't been. Egyptian tank positions were still in place, and there were still Egyptian military personnel in positions where they shouldn't have been. Begin worked himself up to the point that he finally said, "Maybe we'd better consider delaying an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai, unless and until this situation can be cleaned up."

Well, Washington, of course, was very distraught at this. Begin went on to say, "Perhaps the new Secretary of State, General Haig, could come over to Israel, and we can settle this." Well, the Falkland Islands War broke out, so Haig sent his trusted deputy, Walter Stoessel, a distinguished, career diplomat and former Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Poland, to review the situation with the Israelis. Stoessel came to Israel, and Prime Minister Begin ran him through the wringer. He laid down all kinds of provisions that had to be met and assurances that had to be provided. He urged Stoessel to fly to Cairo and get these things done, and the process went on and on.

Meanwhile, in the midst of all of this, the Israelis were bombing southern Lebanon. I remember once, while Ambassador Stoessel was in Jerusalem, he was invited down to Tel Aviv to the Foreign Ministry by Minister of Defense Sharon. When he got there, we learned that Israeli F-16s had just conducted another, very dramatic raid. Defense Minister Sharon looked at us and said, "Why the long faces? These are your airplanes, F-16s. Look at the brilliant job that they've done! They're the finest available. You ought to be proud." In other words, he was rubbing it in.

I'll never forget what happened toward the end of this process, with the deadlines upon us. We had negotiated a multinational force, to be headed by an American civilian director, assisted by General Bull Hanson, a Norwegian general and an outstanding man.

In typical style Prime Minister Begin extracted the maximum that he could from Ambassador Stoessel. We ended up in the Prime Minister's residence at about 11:00 PM or midnight. An exhausted Stoessel gave his latest readout and assurances from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that things had been cleaned up and so forth. Begin said, "I want to thank you very much. You've worked very hard, and I deeply appreciate that. However, in view of what has happened, and given the reluctance of my cabinet, I'll have to take all of this to my cabinet for approval. I would like to go over some very important issues with you." There, on the couch, he had Defense Minister Sharon and other top people.

Begin said, "I think that in view of these circumstances it would be useful for the President of the United States to write me a letter. As a matter of fact," and he reached in his pocket and brought out a draft of such a letter. He said, "This is the kind of letter that I would appreciate receiving from the President of the United States." You can imagine the contents. The letter included a statement that, "All assurances given by the United States Government to the Government of Israel remain valid and will be fulfilled, especially those since 1973." Of course, that meant reams and reams of all kinds of assurances. Begin said to Deputy Undersecretary Stoessel: "Surely, you wouldn't have any difficulty in reaffirming all of the commitments that you've made to us." What could Stoessel say but: "Well, of course."

At that point I had an image of some little old lady in one of the Israeli ministries pulling out file cabinets of commitments, including both written and oral commitments, implied and official and unofficial commitments, etc. But that was Begin's style. Therefore, having finally extracted these oral assurances from Deputy Undersecretary Stoessel, Begin let us go, I guess, at about 1:00 AM.

Well, Ambassador Sam Lewis and I, as well as the other members of the American team, then dashed over to the American Consulate General in Jerusalem, where we had to notify Washington immediately of the apparent resolution of this crisis. General Bull Hanson was in town or due to be in town soon. He had to be briefed and brought up to speed on the commitments that had been made concerning the Multinational Force. There were a few surprises for him as well.

I think that the Egyptian Defense Minister was in Jerusalem and had to be taken care of. In the middle of all of this, at about 2:00 AM, while we were working furiously, having worked all day

and all night, I got a phone call from the Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, David Kimche and his cohort, Hanon Baron. These were two outstanding individuals. They said that there was a little more that Prime Minister Begin wanted to bring up. They asked if they could come and see us.

I said, "David, as you know, we're here in the American Consulate General." I was alluding to the fact that no Israeli official had EVER entered the American Consulate General in Jerusalem. Symbolically, this would have been impossible for an Israeli in ordinary circumstances. However, David said, "That's all right. We'll come over and see you." So they came over.

Q: You were saying that the list of the other matters that Prime Minister Begin wanted to bring up really sent you up the wall.

BROWN: It was an addendum to what Begin had already negotiated with Stoessel up to 1:00 AM that morning.

Q: Was this typical of Begin?

BROWN: I would say, yes. Look, Israel is a small country which has a survival syndrome and a style of its own. It is deeply suspicious of its Arab neighbors, no matter what. At this point Israel was about to give up the Jewel, this vast territory, the Sinai. This was some 90 percent of all of the territory that the Israelis had seized in 1967. This was a territory from which they had pumped oil, which had beautiful eco-tourist potential, and which gave Israel strategic depth against a renewed, Egyptian attack. Its occupation had put the Israelis on the Suez Canal. Giving this up, before the Camp David Agreement was reached, had been unthinkable for many Israelis.

Anyway, Prime Minister Begin was determined to extract what he could in exchange for giving up the Sinai. He would never again have this kind of a chance with the Egyptians and he knew it. Once the Sinai was returned to the Egyptians, Israeli leverage with the Egyptians would be very much diluted, to put it mildly. So Begin was making the best of it. We were grinding our teeth, but that was about all that we could do. As I said, all of this was going on simultaneously.

Q: While we're at it and while this was going on, what reading were you getting, both within the embassy in Tel Aviv and from our embassy in Cairo, about why the Egyptians were not fulfilling all of their obligations?

BROWN: Stuart, this is the Middle East. Pardon my cynical comment, but you really have to keep your eye on everything. Egypt has its own internal problems and its own bureaucracies. Some of those bureaucracies are military bureaucracies. Sometimes they are at odds with each other. Words, interpretations, and instructions get mixed up, and so forth. We checked the situation regularly but were not in a position to deny what the Israelis were telling us, if I may put it that way. However, at the eleventh hour, the situation was cleaned up.

At the same time Begin's, and particularly Sharon's remarks, were laced with such observations as Sharon put it: "I've told them, and you can tell them that I told you that I've told them. If they violate their commitments again, we'll be back in there in 24 hours." There was no ambiguity

about that. This was the situation after the nice play on words. Ezer Weizman was long gone as Defense Minister. He had had a very good relationship with Anwar Sadat, but Sharon was the tough guy. After all, Sharon had emerged as a great hero in the breakthrough at Suez and the encirclement and defeat of the Egyptian Army during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The Egyptians knew that they were dealing with a tough individual in the person of Ariel Sharon. So, as I said, the Israelis were extracting every particle of advantage that they could, while they could do so.

Now, let's go back to the Lebanese front which, as I've said, was heating up. Following Sharon's accession to power as Minister of Defense and his revealing his plans for the invasion of Lebanon to Habib and myself in December, 1981, there were further intimations of Israeli preparations to do this, if necessary. The same point came up during Sharon's visits to Washington. In his meetings there, Sharon tended to be melodramatic, depending on his interlocutor, his mood, and so forth. Of course, we were in the position of trying to dampen down all of this. So the services of Phil Habib were again in dire need. Nevertheless, the situation continued to spin out of control. In negotiating the cease-fire agreement Habib could not be in direct touch with the PLO, for that was verboten for American diplomats. We found out later, and you'll see this in George Shultz's book, that without Shultz's knowledge, William Casey, Director of Central Intelligence, had authorized Bob Ames and others to open their own channels with the PLO, unbeknownst to the State Department. However, the policy was that Phil Habib could not negotiate directly with the PLO. They were cheek by jowl, and there were Lebanese, French, and other interlocutors used to contact them. The cease-fire agreement included a prohibition on PLO attacks on Israel. The Israelis interpreted that to mean across the board. The Arafat interpretation of the agreement was that this commitment referred only to the Lebanese border. The PLO, in this view, was free to engage in the struggle against Zionist imperialism around the world. The PLO considered that, as long as the Israelis didn't attack them, they would not attack the Israelis on this particular Lebanese front.

This was a particular bone of contention between the two parties. This situation came to a real crunch and was used, either as a pretext or the reason, however you want to characterize it, for the invasion of Lebanon itself. On June 3, 1982, I believe, the Israeli Ambassador in London, Shlomo Argon, was shot and seriously wounded by a Palestinian terrorist while coming out of a function at a hotel. He was not killed, but he became virtually a vegetable. This was an unfortunate, tragic case. That was, if you will, the proximate provocation which led to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Prior to this, as I said, apart from Sharon's remarks to us in December, 1981, numerous Israeli reservists were mobilized and deployed toward the North.

Israeli reservists would be mobilized at a moment's notice, and the Israeli military and reserves would come out, crank up, and head toward the North. They were perceived as leaning forward in their foxholes and were just ready to go across the border. We would go to the Israelis and say, "What are you doing?" They would say, "It's just an exercise," and there would be a pullback. However, there was no surprise, as far as Israeli preparations for an attack on Lebanon were concerned.

So the Israelis went into Lebanon. Remember that in the discussions of this action the initial description of the campaign was most frequently portrayed as limited out of consideration of the

concerns expressed by the more nervous Nelliés in the Israeli cabinet. The invasion was portrayed as a cleanup of the Palestinian Katusha rocket capability in Lebanon. A Katusha rocket in those days could go about 40 or 45 kilometers and was frankly a terror weapon. The Palestinians were not aiming them at military targets.

Q: They mounted them on the back of trucks.

BROWN: Or even on the ground. You could also put them on the back of a truck. The Palestinians had a couple of pieces of artillery on hand. I think that these were 130 mm guns, which could reach targets in the Israeli northern border area. So the Israeli attack on Lebanon was initially portrayed as a limited operation.

Well, it was not limited or the limits soon went far beyond those described both to us, to the Israeli cabinet, to the Israeli Opposition, and to the Israeli public. One thing rapidly led to another. The Israeli Defense Forces went into Lebanon, and it wasn't just to a depth of 40 or 50 kilometers. The objective wasn't just the Zakharani or Letani Rivers. The operation went on and on.

We protested to the Israeli Government and so forth. However, by our own policy, we were not allowed to send in our own embassy military attachés, so we did not have someone up there, moving with the Israeli Army. We had to rely on what the Israelis would tell us. They would say, "Resistance was encountered, another PLO provocation occurred and it was necessary to move farther into Lebanon." Pretty soon the Israeli Army was at the door of Beirut.

Q: I've been interviewing people like Bob Dillon, who was our Ambassador in Beirut at the time. He was not happy with the reporting he was getting because, as he said, "The Israeli Army is doing this," and would report it to Washington. Washington would say, "Well, our embassy in Tel Aviv tells us this or that."

BROWN: And what our embassy in Tel Aviv was telling the Department was what the Israeli Army was telling us.

Q: Ambassador Dillon was getting reports from the front.

BROWN: From his viewpoint, he was getting reports from the front, but what was the front? These reports were from elements of the Lebanese armed forces at or near the front, or whatever civilian and other sources he had available. When we would pass this on to the Israelis and ask for their comments, they would dismiss these reports as rubbish. They would call these reports tainted, one-sided, and so forth.

Q: This situation raises the whole issue of reporting. First, you obviously could report to the Department what the Israelis were telling Embassy Tel Aviv. However, did you attach qualifiers to these reports and say, for example: "These guys are lying like hell a lot of the time?" Or did you just say, "This is what we have been told." In the normal course of events in Washington, if an Arab source says that the front is here, and the Israelis say that it is there, the tendency will always be to say that the Israelis are much more truthful than the Arabs.

BROWN: Yes, but remember that there are different channels of reporting. First of all, as the Israeli Army crashed across the Lebanese border, Minister of Defense Sharon was totally unavailable to us. He was up at the front, so we didn't see him for days. In that kind of situation, shall we say, he was one of the most active Israeli Defense Ministers that you could imagine. Even though he was no longer a general on active duty, he was right up there with the troops. Clearly, Sharon was trying to maximize whatever he could do.

Professionally speaking, our military attachés were getting their military read-outs from the Israeli military. The same thing applied to what our intelligence people were getting. We were left to deal with the Foreign Ministry under with Shamir, who was now the Foreign Minister, and with the Prime Minister's office.

Remember also that in the very early days of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon there was almost a sense of euphoria in Israel. Now I'll have to be careful how I describe this. Israelis were saying: "At last, we're going to clean up this mess, these constant provocations against Israeli border settlements by the PLO." So there was an initial cheerful period. The invasion of Lebanon was not regarded as a lark, but, let's face it, the PLO didn't have a regular army, whereas the Israelis had armored forces and knew what they were about. The Israelis had their plans and they implemented them. Here and there the Israelis bumped against this or that Syrian Army outfit which didn't quite withdraw as quickly as they should have. This developed into an escalating series of problems. We're talking about conventional, Israeli armor striking North in a characteristic, heavy push, leaving pockets of resistance in certain areas of encircled or bypassed Syrian Army units.

The Israelis were initially telling the world that they weren't attacking the Syrians but were just trying to clean up a PLO, terrorist phenomenon. Well, one thing led to another, and the fighting got worse and worse. A situation emerged where, as it developed, the Israeli Army surrounded Beirut and ringed it with tanks and artillery. Beirut, of course, was divided into Christian and Muslim sectors. The Israelis took the Christian sector and were now right on the edge of the Muslim sector, in which the PLO and a large, swollen Muslim population were located. The Israelis began hitting this area with air attacks, tanks, and direct artillery fire.

A day or two before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon began, which was on June 6, 1982, I believe, Phil Habib was in Europe. He was immediately rushed to Jerusalem. We took him up to see Prime Minister Begin, who solemnly assured him of the limited objectives of the Israeli attack. When Habib told Begin that he'd be going on to see President Assad of Syria, Begin said, "You can tell Assad that we're not attacking Syria. We're trying to clean this situation up. See what you can do."

During that very early period of the Israeli attack on Lebanon, remember that the Syrians had moved many anti-aircraft missile batteries into Lebanon, and the Zakleh area of Lebanon immediately leaps to mind. As the war broke out, up went the Israeli Air Force, the Syrian Air Force went up to meet it, and was immediately shot down. There was an enormous disparity between the two air forces. The Israelis lost nothing and shot down, I forget, something like 50 or more Syrian aircraft in major air battles.

The Israeli Air Force virtually wiped out the Soviet-supplied, Syrian Air Force. In the process, the Israelis used their latest techniques in which our Air Force people were very interested. At the risk of dramatizing the situation, you had a kind of prototype of Desert Storm, the war against Iraq in 1990-91. That is, the Israelis carried on a really integrated, air-ground struggle. The Israelis knocked out the Syrian Air Force and knocked out the Syrian radar and missiles, all at the same time. They also knocked out something like 225 Syrian tanks including the vaunted Soviet made T-72 tanks, and anything else that got in their way. This was all done in the name of “cleaning up the Palestinian mess.”

Habib flew to Syria, met President Assad, and at 3:00 AM sent us a FLASH cable to report his meeting with Assad. Ambassador Sam Lewis and I had moved during the night up to Jerusalem to get a readout of the situation from Phil Habib. We wanted to be able to contact Prime Minister Begin, which we did at about 4:00 AM. Habib reported that President Assad sat there, absolutely calm, as if he hadn't lost his tanks, his air force, and his missiles. Assad put on a great act. Prime Minister Begin subsequently reported this to the Israeli cabinet. The net effect of it was that Assad was not about to come to Begin's terms or do anything to help Menachem Begin in this mess.” From Begin's viewpoint, that reaction by Assad freed his hands to continue with the invasion of Lebanon, and continue they did. Habib...

Q: At this particular juncture, what was your reading, that is, yours and Ambassador Sam Lewis' reading, of where Prime Minister Begin stood on all of this? He had had this accident...

BROWN: Remember that a major aspect of the situation was the dominant figure of Minister of Defense Sharon. The picture that emerged was that Begin was being carried along by Sharon. However, Begin was no fool. He was the Israeli Prime Minister. Perhaps Begin's son, to this day, harbors deep resentment at the way his father was misled, but I doubted then, as I do now, that Menachem Begin was ever really in the dark.

Q: As far as you were concerned, you were dealing with an active Prime Minister Begin, who was carrying on a war.

BROWN: We were dealing with a hyperactive Defense Minister, [that is, Sharon], and a Prime Minister who was uncomfortable but who had among his top objectives the destruction of the PLO [in Lebanon]. Furthermore, if you read Ze'ev Shiff and Ehud Ya'ari's book, Israel's Lebanon War, Begin had already been in touch with the Phalangist leadership in Lebanon and had funded them to the tune of \$100 million or so. In other words, Begin was looking forward to another part of the Israeli agenda. Begin's agenda involved not only the cleanup of the Palestinian mess but the destruction of the PLO as a paramilitary, terrorist structure in South Lebanon. Beyond that, Begin was looking toward the emergence of an independent, Christian-dominated Lebanese Government which could hopefully stand up to President Assad of Syria and be more, shall we say, susceptible to Israeli persuasion, to put it mildly.

So all of that play was going on at the same time. The Israelis were dealing with the Gemayels, the Bashirs, etc. [all Lebanese Phalangist leaders], hoping to install them in power and get rid of the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Now, in this situation Phil Habib, moving desperately to bring

the fighting to a halt and negotiate another cease-fire, moved to the American Ambassador's residence at Yahrzeh, in the mountains above Beirut. Here we have the phenomenon of a street smart, outstanding American negotiator, Phil Habib, with all of his experience worldwide in negotiating hot situations, deeply involved in what became, more and more, an emotional involvement for him. He was watching this panorama unfold in Beirut, below him.

The Israelis were insisting that they were not doing certain things which Phil Habib damned well either saw or heard, or at least thought he saw or heard...

Q: Apparently, the Israelis, with their artillery, were very close to our Ambassador's residence.

BROWN: There were situations where Habib reported that Israeli artillery was firing from positions a couple of hundred yards away from him. The Israelis were denying it. Habib was saying: "For God's sake, they're right next door to me."

Q: He was holding out the telephone to pick up the sound of the firing of Israeli artillery.

BROWN: He certainly was, and I'll come to that. I'll read you a very short passage which relates to all of this. It appears in George Shultz's book.

Remember also that we were now in a new era in communications. Phil Habib had the use of a TACSAT, which transmitted through a small military satellite. Washington had instant communications with him, via this satellite. We didn't have this facility in Tel Aviv, but we had phone connection with the State Ops Center. So Phil Habib was now turning into an observer and not just a negotiator. He became a passionate observer or player in the whole thing. It became a very emotional experience for Habib.

At this juncture Ambassador Sam Lewis was in Washington, coping as best he could. Al Haig's tenure as Secretary of State was suddenly ending. George Shultz, in his wonderful book, *Turmoil and Triumph*, eloquently describes the scene where he had been tapped to leave the Bechtel Company and become the Secretary of State. However, pending his hearing and confirmation by the Senate, he couldn't make decisions. At President Reagan's request, Shultz phoned Haig and said, "The President thinks that it's time for you to leave your position as Secretary of State." This was okay, but Al Haig then lingered on in office, pending the swearing in of George Shultz.

At this time things were very messy back here in Washington. As you can see from the Shultz book, in the highest circles in Washington, there was a furor going on regarding how to handle this situation. Ed Meese [Attorney General], Jim Baker [Director of the Office of Management and Budget], and Casper Weinberger [Secretary of Defense] were livid at what the Israelis were doing. Among them, Weinberger was calling for a cutoff in supplies to the Israelis, sanctions, and so forth. President Reagan, however, didn't want to do this. Meanwhile, the situation got worse and worse.

Phil Habib's reporting from the hills above Beirut became more and more shrill, and so did his recommendations. His recommendations were not coming to us in the embassy in Tel Aviv. They were going by TACSAT right to the Operations Center in the Department of State and, of

course, to the NSC [National Security Council]. For example, he recommended cutting off supplies to the Israelis. He said that they would never stop what they were doing, despite their assurances to the contrary.

In this context, just to give you a little flavor, during this relevant period, somehow I have it in mind that I negotiated nine out of 10 cease-fires. Most of them were done by phone. Some of them were, perhaps, 10 minutes long. Some of them lasted for perhaps two weeks. I've forgotten many of the details, but I was constantly in touch with David Kimche and Hanon Baron in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, who were reporting directly to Prime Minister Begin and other players on the Israeli side.

Q: Did you feel that the Israeli Foreign Ministry at that time was really one of the “players?”

BROWN: No. Or, perhaps, only in the sense of giving their judgments to Prime Minister Begin. David Kimche, who had been a top Mossad [Israeli intelligence organization] man and who had been installed in the Foreign Ministry as the new Director General, had good access to the Prime Minister. Someone had once used the expression that Kimche was the “Prince of Lebanon.” He had been a case officer for the top Christian families of Lebanon, the Gemayels, the Chamouns, and so forth. He was considered “Mr. Lebanon” in the Israeli Government, so he had that extra cachet and aura about him.

In any case the Lebanese situation worsened. The Israelis had surrounded Beirut and were bombarding it with artillery, tank fire, and air strikes. They had cut off the water and the food supply to the civilian population. Washington was just going up the wall at this situation.

The second thing, in communications terms, that I would mention to you is that this was a TV War. TV, including Israeli TV, showed the world, including Israeli audiences, pictures of Arab women coming out with dead babies and children with their limbs blown off as a result of Israeli attacks. They were coming into the streets, wailing and so forth. From a humanitarian point of view, it was just dreadful. It was terrifically poignant. This impacted directly on Israel's image, ruining it around the world. These TV images stirred up various Arab populations, including the people in our Consul General's consular district on the West Bank of the Jordan, as well as ours in the Gaza Strip, as well as the Arabs in all of the neighboring countries. All of the Arabs and Muslims were just frantic over these scenes on TV. These images were now beginning to have an impact on Israeli public opinion, the more so as the bodies of Israeli soldiers started coming home for burial. The Israelis rolled over their Opposition, but snipers, mines, explosive charges and so forth began to take their toll.

The Israeli people began to realize that they received not only fresh fruit and vegetables from Lebanon, but body bags as well were starting to come back to Israel. This really began to have an impact on them.

I'll read you a short passage from George Shultz's book, Turmoil and Triumph, covering one of the peaks of this situation in Lebanon. This is taken from pages 58 and 59 of the book. Shultz writes that one day: “I came into the Department at 5:00 AM. Habib was screaming in rage on the TACSAT. He said that the Israeli shelling of Beirut was the worst that he had seen in eight

weeks of war. We had to get the Israelis to stop. Charley Hill was talking to Habib in Beirut on a telephone, on the one hand, and Deputy Chief of Mission Bill Brown, in Jerusalem, was talking on a telephone in his other hand. Brown was also holding two receivers, talking to Hill, on one hand, and Prime Minister Begin on the other. Begin was calmly denying that any shelling was taking place. This had just been confirmed by Defense Minister Ariel Sharon.

[Begin...] “said, 'There is no intent to occupy West Beirut. If there had been such an intent, I would write to Ronald Reagan,' Begin said. [He added]: 'The United States was being fed hysterical, inflated reporting,' Begin said. Hill relayed this to Habib. 'Oh, yeah,' Habib said, and he held his TACSAT earpiece out the window so that we could hear the Israeli artillery firing. Hill counted eight shells within 30 seconds from IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] artillery batteries located just below Habib's position. When Bill Brown reported Begin's assurances, we told him to tell Begin that at that very moment he was reassuring us, we could hear the noise of Israeli guns. Begin telephoned Bill Brown again. It was now 5:10 AM in Washington. The Israeli Chief of Staff reported that the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] had been using a great variety of weapons. The IDF had fired back, but only at the [point of] origin of the firing against them. The Israelis were not advancing at all. Begin said, 'Do you think that the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces is misleading me?’”

Well, I'll stop right there, just to highlight the kind of situation that we were dealing with. This is not in Shultz's book, but I'll just continue with it. Here I was, as the Chargé d'Affaires, talking to the Prime Minister of Israel, under tremendous pressure himself. He was getting all of this on various channels from Washington, and not just from me. Israeli Foreign Minister Shamir was in Washington, and all kinds of people were reporting in on the Israeli side. Begin said, “Do you suggest that my Chief of Staff and my Defense Minister are misleading me?” I said, “I suggest that Phil Habib is reporting this enormous barrage which is going on.” I said, “Perhaps it would be useful, Mr. Prime Minister, if I met with your Defense Minister.” Begin said, “It shall be done.” Shortly thereafter I got a phone call from Defense Minister Sharon. He asked me to come over to his office, and indeed I did, later that morning.

I took with me Paul Hare, our Political Counselor; and our Military Attaché, Pete Hoag. When I arrived at Sharon's office, his ministerial office in Tel Aviv was really filled. In fact, there was standing room only. He had generals, colonels, note-takers, maps, and so forth. He proceeded in a very sarcastic, cynical manner to attack our reporting. He said, “If you had a qualified Defense Attaché there [in Beirut],” which was a dig at us, “or if you let your Defense Attachés go up [to Beirut] with us, you would see that a lot of this reporting is exaggerated. Not even on D-Day [June 6, 1944 in Normandy] was there such a barrage as Mr. Habib reports, sticking his telephone out the window.”

I said, “Mr. Minister,” and there was no more 'Ariel' and 'Bill' as this point, “I want to stress at the beginning that I intend to report this conversation in its entirety and in as much detail as I can, accurately and objectively. I just want to go through this with you, step by step. The Prime Minister has told me that nothing happened [in Beirut] last night. He said that you had told him that nothing happened last night, that there was no bombardment of West Beirut. Is that true?” Sharon answered: “Well, in response to 'provocations' and so forth, we had to respond.” I said, “Are you claiming that no Israeli tanks moved forward?” He said, “Well, there may have been a

little movement on the fringes, here and there, repositioning themselves and so on. But we are not invading West Beirut,” and so forth, giving his usual spiel. I asked my note-taker to take it all down and closed by saying to Sharon: “Rest assured that I will report every word of yours that I can remember, as accurately and faithfully as I can, as you've given it to me.” Then I left Sharon's office.

I got back to my office at the embassy. As we were sending out the reporting cable on this conversation with Sharon, the phone rang again. It was David Kimche, the Director General of the Foreign Ministry. He said, “Bill, I understand that you had a conversation with the Prime Minister early this morning.” I said to myself: “Aha, and I'll bet you were listening in on an extension.” I said, “Yes, I did, David.” He said, “You reported that the Prime Minister said that nothing happened during last night.” I said, “Yes, that's what he told me he had heard from his Defense Minister and his Chief of Staff.” David Kimche said, “What he meant was that at the time you were talking, at 7:00 or 8:00 AM today, Bill, there was nothing going on.” I said, “Thank you very much, David. I'll report that as well.” In other words, the Israelis saw themselves now in a real “fix,” and so they were.

Of course, that conversation, which is in Shultz's book and which I've just skimmed over, was preceded by another. I'd called David Kimche at 4:00 AM to tell him what Charley Hill was telling me. In other words, I called Kimche to get him to wake up Prime Minister Begin. Well, the situation worsened. There were assurances and very temporary lulls, but the Israelis kept the water cut off. Food shipments into West Beirut were kept to an absolute minimum. This was extremely upsetting. I would pause here and say that, looking back on it, what we were dealing with was not just Begin or Sharon. We were dealing with an Israeli approach to crisis management of a conflict with Arabs. That is, if it comes to a showdown, you go for the jugular vein, you get your hand on the Arab's throat, whether it's surrounding his army on the other side of the Suez Canal or taking the Golan Heights, or whatever it is, you keep your hand on your opponent's throat until you get what you want. This is in contrast with their perception of an American approach, which is more humane. You go in and do what's necessary and then you negotiate. For the Israelis, allowing a paramilitary structure led by Arafat, whom they hated, to remain able to oppose them in any way was anathema. The Israelis were out to destroy this Arab paramilitary structure and, if necessary, to destroy Arafat. Indeed, we were concerned at the time that the Israelis were out to assassinate him if they could get to him.

Now, in all of this, as the situation worsened dramatically from Arafat's viewpoint, he began, through interlocutors, to approach Phil Habib with something that would allow the final resolution of this situation. That is, a cease-fire and a pullout of Arafat and his forces. This happened in August, 1982. There were all kinds of dramatic breakdowns and so forth, in which I was involved. However, I think that, rather than go on in great detail, I'll pause there. Ambassador Sam Lewis returned from home leave and engaged directly with the Prime Minister. I assisted in all of this. It went on, day and night. It was agonizing and it was horrible. Among other things, we were dealing with a very emotional Phil Habib. I think that I left Tel Aviv when the basic deal had been negotiated. That is, Arafat would be allowed to leave Lebanon, with his PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] troops. The Israelis gave us assurances that nothing would happen to the Palestinians in the refugee camps.

The Syrian forces were called the Arab Deterrent Force, or the ADF. They were allowed to get out via the route from Beirut, leading to Damascus, which had been cut by the Israelis. Under this arrangement, the Israelis would avert their gazes so as to lessen the humiliation of the departing Syrians and some of their Palestinian adherents. Some Palestinians went with the Syrians to Damascus. This is all described eloquently in Shultz's book.

I left an exhausted American Ambassador. I turned over my office to Bob Flatten, who was my successor as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]. I said, "Go to it, friend." Reflecting back on that, I have to say that I was an exhausted DCM after three years of this. I was in good shape, physically, but I was exhausted. I said to myself: "How much the more so Ambassador Sam Lewis must be." His fun was only just beginning, because, shortly thereafter, there came such things as the massacres at the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila and the surprise Reagan peace plan announced, I think, on September 1, [1982], without prior consultation with the Israelis. Ambassador Sam Lewis had to go up there and deliver this proposal to Prime Minister Menachem Begin at his residence in Nahariya, as it was released worldwide. Begin reacted very, very strongly, saying that Israel would not be treated as a banana republic.

After a fantastic tour in Tel Aviv, my wife Helen and I left Israel and went on to the University of New Hampshire. However, before leaving the subject of Israel, there are a couple of other things that I'd like to cover.

Q: And then I will have some questions.

BROWN: I alluded earlier on to the question of the tremendous strain on an embassy which was not all of that large, handling so many crises at the same time. We had a brilliant, forceful, energetic Ambassador. He had recruited a wonderful collection of Foreign Service Officers for service in the embassy in Tel Aviv. They traveled widely in Israel. Some of them spoke very good Hebrew, so through the contacts they made Ambassador Sam Lewis was better able to keep his fingers on the pulse of the various strings in the Israeli political spectrum.

In those days you might remember, notwithstanding our best efforts, we were unsuccessful in our effort to implement that portion of the Camp David discussions which was incomplete. That is, a regime to accommodate Palestinian autonomy. The Israelis stiffarmed us on this issue. The Egyptians were not willing to go beyond their position. The Palestinians would have absolutely nothing to do with it. Of course, President Assad of Syria and others were shrilly condemning the Egyptians as a bunch of sellouts to the Zionist enemy and so forth.

So our contacts with Palestinians were essentially those of Brandon Grove, then Consul General in Jerusalem, with people in Jerusalem and Muslim Arabs living on the West Bank of the Jordan River. We had another, embassy responsibility, the Gaza Strip. Well, the Gazans weren't interested, any more than the West Bankers, in getting into autonomy talks. In other words, our engagement with these people was very limited. However, we arranged for Arabic training for an officer who already spoke Hebrew. I think that his name was David Greenlee. We sent him to an intensive, Arabic language immersion course at ULPAN. As a result, he could talk with "Israeli Arabs," or, these days, you might say "Israeli Palestinians" or Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, however you want to describe it. He was therefore also able to go to Gaza, should

that area show any signs of progress.

The strain on these officers, their wives, and their family lives was enormous, over a protracted period. Ambassador Sam Lewis would do everything that he could in terms of embassy functions and inviting them in to chat with him. He had an open door policy. They could debate with him. Sam and Sally held functions at home, including these officers in their manifold social and representational activities. Sam was also very demanding. He was a real professional diplomat. He was a stickler for the right procedure, as well as ensuring that their jobs were done in terms of substance. That embassy really hummed. (End of tape)

Dealing with the Israeli military establishment requires very good and well rounded people who can take it, because the Israelis are very difficult interlocutors at times. On the one hand, they love to shmooze [talk]. On the other hand, they can be quite sharp and shrill. They have a propensity to try and extract what they can from you and maneuver you. The Israeli press is sensationalist par excellence. It will do virtually anything to get an exciting story. If necessary, it will engage in misquotes, gross overinterpretation, and distortions.

In this sense I'm speaking as far as certain individuals are concerned. There are also other kinds of problems. An American diplomat working in Israel receives a large number of visitors, many of whom have their own agendas, and often are at odds with each other. At times they are at odds with elements of U.S. policy. Some of them parade themselves as having the inner ear of the highest ranking policy makers in Washington, including the White House. In other words, they suggest that you forget what the American embassy is telling you. They more or less state: "I'm giving you the real story." They speak for constituencies which are often at odds with each other.

Much has been made of the various Israeli lobbies in the United States.

Q: AIPAC [American Israeli Public Affairs Council], of course, is the big one.

BROWN: AIPAC is the big one, but there are others. Some of them are liberal in terms of political orientation. They extend across quite a broad, political spectrum. Previously, I alluded to the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin's cultivation of the Christian Fundamentalist communities in the United States, to the dismay of both my Israeli and American liberal friends. However, "There was gold in them there hills," as far as the Likud Party was concerned, and they cultivated the American fundamentalists.

There were other Christians interested in Israel, including those who were deeply concerned with access to Christian shrines in the Holy Land and the state of Christian communities there.

There was a growing Arab-American community in the United States. The number of these Arab-Americans living in the United States was increasing, as the situation in Lebanon deteriorated. Muslim Arabs living in the West Bank of the Jordan River area, and particularly in Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem, were growing in number. Bethlehem, which we used to think of as a Christian town, where Jesus Christ is traditionally believed to have been born, was rapidly becoming a Muslim town. The Christian element in Bethlehem, ably represented by Mayor Freij, was steadily becoming more of a minority. That trend has continued over the years.

Many Christian Arabs in the Holy Land migrated to the United States. Some of them felt impelled to go into politics and, to a lesser but increasingly significant degree, they were making their views known through certain members of Congress.

There were other American elements who were disturbed at the way the Israelis handled certain matters. I'll give you an example. During my time in Israel I found that we had to deal with a problem which I had never known of previously. That is, a group known as the "Black Hebrews." [Addendum: they now refer to themselves as the "African Israelite" community.]

An American gentleman who changed his name to read "Ben Ammi Carter" and who came from either Chicago or Detroit, reportedly had a rather apocalyptic vision of the world. According to him, there would be a great disaster or series of disasters, involving fire and water. In his view his group, whom he considered the "forgotten Hebrews" or the "Black Hebrews," should reestablish themselves in the Holy Land and prepare for this apocalyptic event. Then they would reemerge and live in the post-apocalyptic era. They began moving as individuals to Israel, entering the country on visitor visas and then illegally staying on. They would go down to towns like Dimona in the Negev area, where they would pick up odd jobs. As their presence increased, the Israeli Ministry of the Interior began to ferret out these Black Hebrews and crack down on them. The ministry did this because, after Ben Ammi Carter had established himself in Israel, he set up what some people would call a cult or sect.

The Black Hebrews became a consular problem for the embassy in Tel Aviv. They were American citizens but were a very different group of American citizens. They developed means of support from their followers in the United States. One result of this was that African-Americans visiting Israel for whatever purpose were often stopped at Ben Gurion International Airport and very thoroughly interrogated. They were often subjected to body searches and so forth. Many of them deeply resented this treatment and protested to their Congressional representatives in the United States.

Ben Ammi Carter had some advisers around him who were styled as princes. Members of the group lived apart from other people and had their own, rigorous approach to life. I think that they were strict vegetarians, although I am not sure of this. They lived on a very sparse diet, dictated by the leadership. Women members of the group were supposed to thin down so that the whole membership would be able to survive a protracted apocalypse. They believed that a mountain would unfold, fire would envelop them, and they would go inside.

Bear in mind that I can't speak of this group from any first hand experience. My information was based on accounts which were reported to me by other people. Reportedly, the leaders applied very severe discipline to their followers. Members were supposed to give the leaders their passports. All of their Social Security checks and anything else of value were to be handed over. The circumstances of birth and familial relationships were dominated by the leadership. Pretty soon some members began to defect out of fear.

This situation created real, consular problems. I was involved, along with Ambassador Sam Lewis, in trying to negotiate some sort of resolution of this set of problems with the Israeli

Government and, more particularly, with the Israeli Ministry of the Interior which, at that time, was headed by Dr. Yosef Burg. He was a sophisticated, Germanic Jew who spoke many languages and could pun in all of them. He was a real gentleman, but we found that we got nowhere with him in discussing this issue. So this was a problem which continued to fester during my first tour of duty in Israel. When I came back to Israel as ambassador many years later, I found that I was faced with something which I had to deal with. We'll talk about that later.

Q: I think that off mic you mentioned that it was during this time that you sensed a certain hostility on the part of African-Americans in leadership positions who visited Israel. Could you talk about your sense of this?

BROWN: Yes. I think that you are talking about a phenomenon which was a reflection of American domestic developments. Bear in mind that Martin Luther King and his followers enjoyed the support of many, very dedicated, liberal Jews, some of whom paid with their lives for this support during the time of the civil rights movement.

Q: Some of them lost their lives in Mississippi.

BROWN: Yes. Many African-American leaders had worked on overlapping, political agendas with leaders of the American Jewish community, at both the local and regional levels. I could cite many of them, including Congressman Charles Rangel [Democrat, NY] and others, who had a warm, working, political relationship with liberal Americans. These included some who happened to be American Jews as well.

I leave it to analysts of the American political scene to describe this situation, but my impression is that tensions grew in certain sectors of the African-American community vis-a-vis the American Jewish leadership. Leaders of these sectors apparently felt that the cake wasn't being sliced properly. They seemed to feel that certain African-American communities were very much getting the short end of the stick. In some cases more radical African-Americans felt that they had been discriminated against by local pawn brokers and business people, some of whom were Jews. Words and rhetoric aside, these African-Americans felt that the deck was stacked against them and that American Jewish leaders had not exercised the right kind of leadership in addressing these particular African-American problems.

Already during my first tour in Israel that feeling was occasionally apparent during the visits of certain African-Americans to Israel. I won't say that this view was held by all African-American leaders. By no means all, but by the leaders of certain groups, including those who had younger members, say those who were 40 or younger. One would notice this tendency in the entourage of these leaders, including such evidence as the body language displayed and the questions asked. This made me feel very unhappy, and I'm sure that this attitude affected the Israelis whom these African-Americans met, as well.

Well, in that atmosphere concern was expressed about the plight, if you will, of the Black Hebrews down there in the heat of the Negev Desert area. They were living in an unregulated status and were liable to deportation. Occasionally, officials from the Israeli Ministry of the

Interior mentioned possible deportation of the Black Hebrews as a matter under consideration. So sometimes there was some conflict in that respect. I was involved in that as well.

Rarely did I see Arab-American visitors to Israel in those days, but there were American Christians who might not have been Arabs but who felt deep, deep pain over the plight of Christian Arabs within Israel. This tendency was noticeable across the denominational front. You would find this attitude among both Catholics and Protestants, to say nothing of Orthodox Christians. A large majority of the Christian Arabs in the Holy Land were followers of the Greek Orthodox Church. We didn't get into their problems too much, but I was keenly aware of the difficulties faced by Greek diplomatic counterparts in that respect.

Q: Bill, I have a number of questions that I would like to ask before we leave this subject. First, what was the feeling, at the time, of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon? Much has been made of the fact that Secretary of State Haig basically winked when Ariel Sharon talked about invading Lebanon. What were you getting at that time, about this particular matter?

BROWN: I was getting an earful. You have accounts, including Haig's own book, Caveat, in which he defends what he said and did. He denies having given Sharon the green light or permissive wink, or whatever you want to call it, for Israel to invade Lebanon. There are other accounts available in published form to which I would call your attention, including the book, Israel's Lebanon War, by Ze'ev Shiff and Ehud Ya'ari. The same subject has been treated elsewhere.

At this particular time and on this particular issue I had a very good contact in none other than Mordecai Zippori, a hard line Israeli a member of Likud and a member of the Herut before that. He was a former career military officer who had risen within the Likud Party and the political structure to become deputy defense minister when Weizman quit, and Prime Minister Begin took over the portfolio himself. Begin made Zippori his deputy defense minister. Zippori ran the day to day affairs of the Ministry of Defense. He was the gentleman with whom I dealt on Lebanon and other, military matters as well. Subsequently, in the new cabinet, when Ariel Sharon came in as Minister of Defense, Zippori and Sharon were at odds, so Zippori was moved out of that job. They made him Minister of Communications.

Now, there was no love lost between Sharon and many other ex-military types, including Zippori. For his part Zippori said to me: "What is the real message on Lebanon?" I gave him chapter and verse on U.S. policy on Lebanon. Zippori would shake his head and say, "Bill, that's not what I'm hearing." It got to the point, during the preparations for the Sharon visit to the United States in May, 1982, and other matters where we were delivering the line as set forth in State Department cables of instruction to us, only to find that the Israelis were getting other versions of U.S. policy. As instructed, we faithfully presented the official line to the Israeli Government, chapter and verse. So the official message was being delivered, but Zippori was not alone in questioning what the U.S. message really was regarding Lebanon. For purposes of this discussion I have chosen to highlight what Zippori said.

We finally got to the point where in the absence of Sam Lewis I invited Zippori to my residence and showed him the green copy of an action cable from Washington. I said, "Here it is, chapter

and verse. You'll notice that the name on the bottom of this cable is the name of the Secretary of State, Al Haig. Here it is!" He read the cable, digested it, and said, "Thank you very much, Bill, but I have to tell you that that's not what's being reported in the Israeli cabinet meetings. I sit there and listen to another view of the matter."

What he meant was that Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon was conveying, by his own means and in his own way, his version of what he thought was American policy. He had visited Washington and talked with Secretary Haig and others. Don't forget that the Israeli ambassador to the United States at this time was Moshe Arens who, for all of his American accent and American upbringing, was a hawkish, Likud representative. I consider him to this day to be a good friend, but he was then as always a Likud member. If you look at the memoirs of former Secretary of State George Shultz and others, you'll see that Ambassador Arens was delivering the "Begin line." He saw Secretary of State Haig, when he had access to him.

In this particular case, I called someone in Washington on a secure phone. I said, "You have given me an appreciation of what Al Haig said, in a meeting with Israeli Defense Minister Sharon, or with Ambassador Arens. There were note-takers, both Israeli and U.S. present. I'm not disputing that report of what was said. However, was there a subsequent meeting?" My interlocutor said, "Well, after that meeting there was a private meeting with Secretary." I said, "Well, can you tell me what happened at that meeting?" My interlocutor said, "No, that was an 'Eyes Only' conversation."

I was left with this lingering concern that something may have been said at the subsequent meeting which was then elaborated, distorted, or spun by an Israeli, unbeknownst to me. Those things happen. And they happen, not only in U.S.-Israeli relations but they happen in many other cases.

Q: The Israeli embassy in the United States, probably as much as the American embassy in Tel Aviv, was also in bed with our cabinet officials, members of Congress, and other figures. Were you concerned that, because Ambassador Arens was there in Washington, there was a spin that was coming out to Tel Aviv that the Israelis were not playing a straightforward game, or was it a political tactic? Was that a concern of yours at the time?

BROWN: You said rightly that the Israeli embassy in Washington had been, is, and will be heavily involved with American figures, across a very broad spectrum. This doesn't just involve the Israeli embassy in Washington. There are Israeli consulates and the UN Mission in New York, friends, and so forth. The Israelis in the U.S. work energetically, day and night, across a very wide spectrum of issues. Ambassadors are supposed to echo and present the views of their government. Ambassador Arens was no ordinary diplomat. He is and was a Likud Party member or, if you will, before the Likud Party was established, a member of the Herut Party, born, bred, and raised in that way, long before he even emigrated to Israel. So Arens, as an ambassador, would see things first as Israeli ambassador, in a very prestigious and important post, but also as a prominent member of the Likud. Remember that as a prominent member of the Labour Party Yitzhak Rabin had been Israeli ambassador to the United States.

In any case, Arens went back to Tel Aviv after being ambassador to the United States and

became Israeli Minister of Defense. And he is once again Israeli Minister of Defense, as we speak, in 1999. As is the case in the United States Foreign Service, an Israeli ambassador to the U.S. in certain situations may be a career diplomat. In my time I dealt with an Israeli Ambassador, Moshe Arad, an excellent career diplomat who happened to have been appointed through the influence of Shimon Peres, who is a member of the Labour Party. However, whatever his personal feelings, he echoed and presented the views of the Shamir Government later on, as faithfully as he could. He did his job. So it varies greatly, Stuart. However, one must never forget the possibility that, with all of this confusion which can exist, particularly in times of crisis, even within the American body politic at its highest levels, an Israeli Mission can get a variety of conflicting signals from the U.S. Government.

That subject is dealt with in George Shultz's memoirs where he discusses having a frank discussion with Arens. He knew Arens, had dealt with him before, and was acquainted with Arens' hawkish reputation, if you will. Shultz said to Arens: "Look, I want to be straight with you. We have a crisis here which is very severely impacting Israel's image and which now has reached the stage where it gravely affects our relations with you. You had better do this or that. Otherwise, this will have very deep implications for us."

In the situation which I have highlighted here, that is, when Yasser Arafat [the PLO leader] was on the edge, the Arafat structure almost broke up. It felt itself surrounded and beleaguered. The Israelis had to decide whether to allow the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] to ease off, to let them slip out of their encirclement, or to let them go someplace else and regroup. Should the Israelis let this Arafat, who was dedicated to their destruction, regroup elsewhere with his military and paramilitary forces and start all over again? Or should the Israelis attack him? What should they do?

An understandable, American or European approach might be: "For goodness sake, you've humiliated Yasser Arafat and you've broken up his presence and structure in Lebanon. Let him go to a place like Tunis. He won't be a problem there." Well, some Israelis would go along with this kind of attitude. Other Israelis would have a very different view. In fact, Arafat's fortunes went way down as he was shipped or transported to Tunis. However, he made his comeback in a very different atmosphere.

Q: When you were in Israel, one of your advantages was that you were coming from "outside." This hadn't been your area of experience. Did you see a strong element of what I can't describe any better than racism as far as the Israelis' attitude toward the Arabs was concerned. Did they feel that the Arabs were a lesser breed? Did they feel that if they fired artillery at the Arabs, after all, this wasn't quite the same thing as having artillery fired into an Israeli kibbutz, or something like that? Were you able to see anything like that?

BROWN: Look, there are Israelis with a superb cultural and academic background. We used to use the expression, "Orientalists." These were men and women in the upper strata of the intelligentsia who spoke fluent Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, or other languages of the Middle East. They were tremendously educated and deeply steeped in the Middle East. However, that didn't make them automatically pro-Arab or pro-Muslim. Some of those individuals were, in the modern term "peaceniks." Others were tough. They had gone through Oxford and other great,

European universities, or the finest Israeli universities. They had had classical educations. However, their outlook, training and experience contributed to an existing hard line mentality.

Over time there is nothing like around the clock confrontation to harden prejudices on both sides. This phenomenon was also noticeable in this case. The Israelis had a significantly expanding Israeli Arab community. The demographics of all of this situation continued to work. During my first tour of duty in Israel, and this trend continued during my second time in Israel, the proportion of Israeli citizens of Arab origin was increasing. This was without reference to what the Israelis call “*aliyah*,” immigration of Jews from Europe into Israel. The Israelis worried about the true loyalties of their own, Arab citizens.

There were other entities involved in Israel. I would mention the Bedouin, a lesser minority on whom ordinary Arabs looked down. The Israelis used the Bedouin as trackers in the Israeli Army in operations against Arab terrorists. They spoke a form of Arabic and fiercely resented what they felt was Arab discrimination against them. They were the lesser beings of the Sinai Desert.

Another important element here was the Druze, who straddle the Lebanese-Israeli border and also live up in the Golan Heights area. The Druze of Lebanese-Israeli border region threw their lot in with the Israelis. They not only received but “*demand*ed” full Israeli citizenship and the right to serve, even the right to be conscripted in the Israeli Defense Forces, where they served loyally and became some of the toughest soldiers. You may talk about tough Israeli tactics in handling Arab riots and demonstrations. The Israeli Border Police, and particularly the Druze elements thereof are the toughest. They can swear in Arabic, using the lowest form of Arab obscenities. Their own formula for handling a riot by an Arab crowd is awesome, to put it mildly.

So there are these overlays that have an impact here. On any given day I could show you a peacenik with outstanding Orientalist credentials. I could show you a professor who might be concurrently a colonel in Israeli Military Intelligence and who was a governor of some region on the West Bank. The Israeli government often used these gentlemen with their Arab, Muslim academic backgrounds. Some of them may have started out gentle and then turned tough. At the same time, rising within the Israeli system were Sephardic Israelis who were the sons and daughters of people who had been driven out of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and so forth. They would bring to the table very strong attitudes on how to handle Arabs.

There were Jews of Ashkenazi [i.e., European] origin who were liberal, on the one hand, and supporters of the Labour Party in relative terms. However, having handled successive conflicts as members of the Israeli Defense Forces, they had hardened over time. There were others who, like Menachem Begin, were seized with the Holocaust kind of mentality and who tended to exaggerate and equate President Assad of Syria with Hitler and, along with him, other bad characters in the Arab world.

In all of this there were excellent Israeli radio and communications specialists who carefully monitored the sermons being given on Friday mornings in the various mosques located nearby and throughout the Middle East. They listened to the words of Anwar Sadat of Egypt before, if you will, he became enlightened on the prospects of peace with Israel. I saw a collection of

Sadat's earlier remarks which were chilling in echoing certain, negative comments about the Jews.

Then, behind all of this, there was propaganda being ground out by the Arab state propaganda machines. As we dealt then, so we were dealing later, even at the height of Israeli-Egyptian peace negotiations, with an Egyptian press which was turning out, and I saw these, stereotyped cartoons of Menachem Begin as a cobra. The cobra was reared up and had its hood out, facing you, with its venom spitting at you, marked with the Star of David. The Egyptian press contained the crudest forms of incendiary cartoons and propaganda being ground out, even at the peak, if you will, of Israeli-Egyptian peace negotiations. These would be called to our attention. We would be urged to bring these to the attention of the Egyptian authorities, who would dismiss these as examples of a free press and evidence that people have their feelings.

Q: It's an example of the Middle East.

BROWN: To say nothing of Soviet propaganda. During my time in Moscow and on a daily basis I had had a stomach full of articles and illustrations in Pravda and Izvestia of hook-nosed Jews, with their hands and feet drenched in Arab blood. There would be illustrations of Israelis in Storm Trooper boots stomping on innocent Arabs. All of this horrendous propaganda from various sources went on. This is something that you cannot just dismiss. It had its effect. These stereotypes from all sides, and I stress this, emerged on different sides of the equation.

Q: In a way this is something which would be somewhat removed, but still within the same context, or perhaps the consular context or even beyond that, but what about extremely Orthodox Jews? Who was it, was it Ludovicker and other sects...

BROWN: Already during the first of my three assignments in Israel, and this was a much longer period of time than I expected to spend in that country, Israeli coalition politics had worked to the benefit of these emergent, political parties. First of all, there were the Orthodox Jews, and their organization was and is called the National Religious Party. They were hard line, they recorded a significant vote, and members of this group held important positions in the Israeli cabinet.

Then there was the group called Ultra Orthodox Jews, who were even more conservative than the others. These people belonged to a number of smaller parties. Israeli elections to Parliament are conducted on the basis of proportional representation. You don't vote for individuals but rather for a party list. If a given party or even one person posing as a party could get 1% of the total vote in a given electoral district, he or she would get a seat in the Knesset. So this arrangement drives various constituencies to coalesce to get that 1% or whatever additional number of votes they could get. The elections themselves are just the first stage. Then, in the later negotiations, they could bargain on that basis for the formation of coalitions. The Labour Party and Likud, the two major parties, approach, and are approached by, these lesser parties, which ask: "What will you give me?" So finally there may be a Knesset member who is a liberal, Labour Party sympathizer. However, the arithmetic drives him to negotiate, say, with an ultra Orthodox group which is being wooed by the Likud Party.

In that process of bargaining, what are they asking for? They're asking for more money in exchange for the support of so many seats. They may also want cabinet or sub-cabinet positions. As an extreme example, I've known of cases involving an ultra-orthodox party, which was anti-Zionist. Their position is that they do not believe in a Zionist government. They believe that a true government will be formed only after the Messiah arrives. Only then, they say, you can have a Zionist government. Until then, they say that they will not accept full ministerial positions in a government which is allegedly Zionist. However, they can be something else. They might accept sub-ministerial positions or the position of Director General of a government ministry or service. Meanwhile, they want their own schools and don't want to do military service, because that runs against their religious principles. However, they want the equivalent of what veterans get after performing Israeli military service. For example, this might include so many years of guaranteed educational benefits. They want their young men to go into special schools, or "Yeshiva," where they study the Torah as they teach it. They also ask for hospitals, community centers, and other goodies. In short, they want a guarantee that they will continue to share in the power structure. They want so many seats and committee assignments in the Knesset and so many positions as cabinet ministers, sub-ministers, and positions as senior civil servants. However, they do not want to serve in the military and they do not support the Zionist program.

Then there are splits and divisions among these smaller parties and groups. There are also rivalries of very peculiar origin, based on the Lithuanian, Polish, and Baltic groups from which they come. For example, a man may be designated as the unquestioned leader of a sect. Very often this position is inherited or comes down from a brother, nephew, or other, family member. These people are so revered that it may be difficult for an outsider fully to understand. Often there are rival sects with their own, particular views on how questions involving diet, marriage, family life, and education should be resolved.

Until now I've been speaking of a significantly European-based form of ultra-orthodoxy. A relatively new form of ultra-orthodoxy has emerged...

Q: This was during your first tour in Israel.

BROWN: Yes. It emerged, but it wasn't nearly as strong as when I came back to Israel as ambassador. However, it's worth noting. A Sephardic, ultra-orthodox group emerged, some of whose leaders had sat at the feet, as it were, of European, Ashkenazi, and ultra-orthodox leaders. These Sephardic leaders have adopted Ashkenazi views and added to them their own spin, if you will. Now they appeal to Sephardic, ultra-orthodox communities who originated in Morocco or elsewhere in Africa. These divisions and splits go on and on. They played a much more significant role years later, when I returned to Israel as ambassador. However, these divisions were already distinguishable.

Q: In the work of the embassy, particularly at the consular level, did you find that the leadership of these ultra-orthodox groups was in Brooklyn or somewhere else in the world? I assume that these groups could be very demanding.

BROWN: You are speaking of those of them who have an American base. It's true of those communities that, having suffered near liquidation under the Nazis, that is, their fathers and

grandfathers were liquidated, many of them re-established themselves in the United States. Then they went forth to multiply. Their families are something to behold. Some of them have 10, 12, and more children. I've been in places where USAID [United States Agency for International Development] funded a wing of their hospital. I was proudly shown a woman who had given birth to even more than the 10 or 12 children.

As you know, with your consular background, the birth of additional children brings a whole bevy of consular problems. People get married and have children. In some cases those kids have American citizenship if their parents had it. They travel back and forth between Israel and the United States. They are educated both in the Israel and in the United States. Funds are raised, political parties emerge, alliances are formed, and rivalries develop. It's a remarkable phenomenon.

Q: Two last questions on this subject. What about human rights reports? We're now well past the period of the Carter administration, which made much of the issue of human rights. However, Congress during the Ford administration required the State Department to prepare annual, human rights reports on virtually all countries of the world. These annual reports are now well ingrained in our system. The section on human rights in Israel were always a bone of contention.

BROWN: You mentioned the Carter administration, in which Pat Derian was Assistant Secretary of State for Humanitarian Affairs. She picked up the humanitarian torch and went at it with a will. In many cases she ran straight into the resistance or hostility of foreign cultures, governments, and officials in various Foreign Ministries who were terribly concerned that a distorted picture was conveyed to Washington or came out of Washington. That included Israeli officials. (End of tape)

Meanwhile, there was a situation developing in the Israel occupied territories which we call the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. During my first tour in Israel there was also the Sinai Desert area, although, at that time, this wasn't much of a problem because the Sinai is so sparsely populated with Bedouin, who are lapping up Israeli largesse. They were being educated, vaccinated, and provided with various jobs by the Israeli Government. It can be argued that they were enjoying life as they never enjoyed it previously, under Egyptian administration. So the Sinai was not a problem in that context.

However, in human rights and reporting terms there was a problem both in the West Bank and Gaza. These are areas which have been under Israeli occupation since at least 1957. The Israeli legal establishment and the Foreign Ministry immediately present the argument that these areas cannot be dealt with in ordinary, human rights reporting circumstances under the various Geneva conventions. The Israelis, as an occupying power, felt that they had certain responsibilities to fulfill. They argued that they were doing their best to give the people in these areas the best possible standard of living, including health and economic services. They pointed out that there are terrorists within these areas who are working steadily to terrorize the population, as well as to terrorize Israelis, including Israelis who were now moving to, building, and occupying settlements in these areas. Remember, it's not just the West Bank. The Gaza Strip is also involved in this situation. There were not so many people involved in Gaza, but the situation was equally explosive. Clashes were taking place as Palestinian nationalism took hold in the occupied

territories through the years and as the Israelis cracked down against this or that demonstration.

Now came the TV age. I mentioned in a previous session of this interview the particularly dramatic and poignant scene of a young Arab girl, who happened to be the daughter of the President of a Palestinian university, shot in the leg by the Israelis during a demonstration there. That sort of image sent our human rights people in the State Department up the wall. It also sent the Israelis up the wall in response to our presentation of this case.

This is not just a problem of a Likud administration under the Menachem Begin Government. This was a problem involving the Israeli occupation of these territories, which were administered by the Israeli Ministry of Defense. So we were not just talking about Menachem Begin and his Likud allies. We were talking about the Israeli military administration, using civilian experts, many of whom were well versed in Arabic and Muslim customs. They were coping with a situation which started during the Labour Party Government, involving small, highly-charged settlements, some of them in highly explosive areas, such as Hebron itself and outside other hot spots.

There were in your face incidents involving highly ideologically and, in some cases, religiously motivated Israelis, some of them speaking English with American-like accents.

Q: That's right. These people, speaking with American accents, seem to be among the most militant of the Israelis.

BROWN: They were very militant. However, be careful, because those apparently American accents tend to be overdramatized in the presentation of these incidents in the media. These people are a minority but an articulate minority. Beware of what later became such an easy way of characterizing them as American-based nuts. No, we're talking about something much broader than that, in which some people with apparently American accents loomed large.

Q: It's easier for journalists to interview them, for one thing.

BROWN: That's right. And some of these settlers are American citizens or claim American citizenship. They may be dual citizens of the United States and of Israel.

By the way, you as a consular officer, with a consular background, can bear witness to our evolving attitudes during our respective careers regarding matters such as dual citizenship. During my time at the consulate general in Hong Kong I remember and may have told you of my having confiscated the passport of a Chinese who may have gone to Taiwan, using Taiwan documents, and voted there.

U.S. Supreme Court rulings over the years have been such that, by the time I arrived in Israel as DCM [deputy chief of mission] during the American election campaign of 1980, the rules on voting in foreign elections and the implications of serving in foreign armed forces have changed substantially. One day I was coming into the embassy and found myself walking toward the Marine Security Guard behind an Israeli soldier in uniform, who had an automatic weapon slung over his shoulder and a Yarmulke on his head.

He approached the Marine Guard at the entrance gate. I said to him: "Excuse me. Can I help you? Whom are you looking for?" He said, "I'm looking for the consul. I've got to cast my absentee ballot in the American elections." Of course, in those earlier days Americans living in Israel had been tipped off not to take an oath of allegiance to the Israeli Government and not to do this or that. When they were conscripted into the Israeli Defense Forces they were often put under the handkerchief. They were not required to take an oath of allegiance to Israel, so they could look at somebody in the eye and say, "I was drafted. It wasn't my fault. I didn't take an oath of allegiance to the Israeli Government." They would try and maintain their citizenship in that way. Some were able to do this, and some were unsuccessful with this explanation.

Over the years this line of policy evolved to a remarkable degree. Many Israelis served in the Israeli Army, held dual citizenship, and voted by absentee ballots in American elections.

Q: We're getting away from the annual human rights report issued by the State Department.

BROWN: Okay. On the human rights front already, back in my time in the Department of State, this report was beginning to be prepared on an annual basis. In the preparation of these reports the Department seeks first drafts from its constituent posts. For example, the American embassy in Tel Aviv prepares the first draft of the report on Israel. The Embassy also has jurisdiction over American interests in the Gaza Strip. The American consulate general in Jerusalem has in its consular jurisdiction Jerusalem and what we call the West Bank. Many Israelis call the West Bank "Judea and Samaria." So there is a built-in tension here between various reporting elements.

The staff of the consulate general in Jerusalem is bombarded, day and night, with stories of Israeli atrocities and violations of human rights and Arab dignity. These reports relate not only to Jerusalem but more especially to areas of the West Bank. In the preparation of these reports our people visit Israeli prisons and observe the Israeli military justice system and Israeli detention and interrogation practices.

As the Israelis watch this process, they say, "But you've got to distinguish between 'normal' court practices and a situation of 'occupation.' That is a special situation and should be treated separately. We've got the most liberal democracy in the world, with its independent Supreme Court and the High Court. Come and see our judicial system. Come and see how it functions."

Melding the Israeli normal court practices and those in the occupied areas is a challenge in the best of circumstances. Then you get into critical situations, including the Lebanese overlay, such as I've described here, including Israeli bombardment of Lebanese areas. The atmosphere then becomes supercharged, as it were, across the whole front. Relatives of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Jerusalem are being killed in southern Lebanon. Terrible things happen, and they're being portrayed on television.

Israeli peaceniks in those days were a small but growing group of people. They were incensed at what was happening to their international image and their domestic, civilian life. What is happening to our country, they ask, particularly as this is portrayed on TV. Protest movements

have emerged in Israel itself. As the body bags come home to Israel, the protest movements grow in size, and these people are bending our ears with what they see as wrong with Israeli society and, in particular, the Likud government. So already, back then, the atmosphere was getting pretty charged up. By the time I returned to Israel as ambassador, all of this had further developed.

Q: When you left Israel toward the end of 1982, Bill, and we'll stop at this point, did you feel that a very significant thing had happened during your time in the country? That developed almost at the end of the honeymoon feeling toward Israel in the United States. Originally, there had been a feeling in the U.S. that the Israelis could almost do no wrong and that the situation there was almost like paradise. That had been the attitude. Then, all of a sudden, with TV images of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, there was very little left of the previous feeling of little Israel fighting off the Arab hordes. Did you feel that this was happening?

BROWN: Israel suffered terribly from what was happening in the West Bank and Gaza and in southern Lebanon. This had a very significant and negative impact on the Israeli image.

At the same time, other things were happening elsewhere among Israel's neighbors. You have to remember, Stu, that in the midst of all that I've been describing, there was a conservative or fundamentalist uprising in Syria. President Assad responded to this by surrounding the people in several Syrian cities and slaughtering something like 20,000 to 30,000 of his own people, in the most brutal way, using tanks, artillery, and aerial bombardment.

Q: Thomas Friedman covered that very thoroughly in his book, From Beirut to Jerusalem.

BROWN: Yes. Other things were happening elsewhere. There was the situation in Iran, which impacted on the American and Western European views of that country. Even though the Iranians are not Arabs, they are Muslims, and that particular brand of Islamic fundamentalism at that time, and what they were doing to each other, their minority groups, and their neighbors is another aspect of the same situation. Then there was Saddam Hussein, and all of that. There was the assassination of Anwar Sadat in Egypt and riots in Egypt carried out by fundamentalists there. There was the growing plight of the Coptic Christians in Egypt. So other things were also impinging on the overall Israeli image.

It is true that Israel was suffering badly in terms of its image, at this particular juncture. However, it is also true that other things were happening which played into the negative stereotypes concerning Israel in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Q: That is, of the Arabs and Muslims.

BROWN: Yes, of Arabs and Muslims. Unfortunately, those two words are often equated. It's unfair, but there we are.

Q: Well, we'll pick this up from this rather benign spot in Tel Aviv to a really tense situation in New Hampshire. [Laughter]

BROWN: Okay. I spent an academic year teaching a course on Arab and Israeli relations. It turned out that the course dealt at length with the situation in Lebanon. However, the course was ostensibly on Arab/Israeli relations. I taught another course on China at the same time, at the University of New Hampshire.

Q: We'll pick this up, then.

Today is May 19, 1999. Bill, we now have you leaving Tel Aviv, and you're off to the University of New Hampshire. When was this?

BROWN: I left Israel in the latter half of August, 1982. I'm a little fuzzy about the exact date. This is relevant because all hell was breaking loose on the Lebanon War front. I might just say a brief word about this because, two days ago [May 17, 1999], the long-awaited Israeli elections took place. One of the features of that election was that the incumbent Prime Minister, Bibi Netanyahu, used security as a theme piece, implying that his opponents would be weak toward the Palestinians, Israel's opponents, and so forth. This makes me laugh in this peculiar sense.

Netanyahu's main opponents in the race for Prime Minister were Ehud Barak, former Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, who has personally killed more Palestinians than, I think, many people would believe. Barak is a man, and I'll talk about him later when I get to my ambassadorship in Israel, who came up on the route of Special Operations. Barak was a key planner in the raid on Entebbe, Uganda. He wasn't on the plane which landed there, but he was in another aircraft farther back, circling, or something like that. He was a key planner in that extremely delicate and ultimately highly successful rescue operation. Barak was the man who led the hit teams in connection with the hijacking of the SABENA [Belgian airline] airliner. He was dressed up in a mechanic's white uniform. The plane had been boarded and hijacked by Palestinians. He led the Israeli rescue team, dressed as a mechanic. During this operation the whole Palestinian hit team was eliminated.

Barak appeared one night on the streets of Beirut with a colleague who, I think, was Sha'hak. Sha'hak was also a key player, though somewhat in the background, in the Mordecai camp in this recent political campaign. Both Barak and Mordecai were dressed as women who appeared before the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] headquarters in Beirut after a PLO raid. They asked the guard for a light and then, after killing him, went into the PLO headquarters. The two of them then knocked off the top PLO leadership in a very daring raid and were whisked out.

So for Bibi Netanyahu to picture himself as the protector of Israeli security and trying to portray Barak as weak was a bit far-fetched, I thought, as far as the average Israeli's image of Barak was concerned.

The second individual was General Mordecai. He was of Kurdish, Jewish ancestry. He came to Israel at the bottom of the Sephardic scale, was conscripted into the Army, and then worked his way up. Mordecai had a tremendous record as a combat soldier. He was in the Chinese Farm operation, as it was called, on the Egyptian front, which involved an assault on a key Egyptian

fortress in which his unit took very heavy losses.

Q: This was in the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

BROWN: Yes. Mordecai was a Brigade Commander in OPERATION LETANI in 1978, before I arrived in Israel. He went deep into Lebanon in response to a terrorist attack. In the Lebanon War of my time [1982], Mordecai was the commander who led the direct assault against PLO regular forces, if you will. That was really no contest. Mordecai had a whole string of tough, military assignments, and I'll come back to that subject when I describe the period when I was ambassador to Israel. He was later the commander of the Northern Front in Israel. I don't think that you could find an individual who was more of a soldier's soldier.

I thought that it was a bit much for Netanyahu to attack Barak and Mordecai as soft. Well, a day or two before the election, Mordecai suddenly withdrew and asked his followers among the voters to support Barak. Two days later, after a strenuous campaign, Barak emerged as the new Prime Minister of Israel.

In my discussion of the Lebanon War I spoke not only of the book Turmoil and Triumph by former Secretary of State George Shultz, which gives you the Washington perspective in some detail, as former Secretary of State Al Haig left the Department at the beginning of the Lebanon War [in 1982]. Haig was followed as Secretary of State by George Shultz. I also called attention to a book by two Israeli authors, Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, called, Israel's Lebanon War. They describe this war in great detail, the buildup to it, the secret Israeli negotiations with the leadership of the Christian Phalangists, the Israeli funding of the Phalangists, and then the whole campaign in Lebanon, which was led by Ariel Sharon.

I have already noted how, among other things, very early in Israel's Lebanon War, Sharon expanded it from something that had been billed as a "40 kilometer effort" to rid southern Lebanon of PLO artillery, including Katusha rockets and 130 mm. artillery which could hit the northern borders of Israel. He expanded the initial effort to a much larger campaign.

Beginning on June 8, 1982, the Israelis, in a well-planned operation, executed something of great, political significance, the attack on Syrian facilities in Lebanon. This was done, contrary to the impression of many members of the Israeli cabinet. The Israelis attacked Syrian ground, air, and missile defenses around Zakleh. When the Syrians responded by sending in their Soviet-made MiG fighters and using a Soviet air defense system. I suspect that the Syrians even had Soviet advisers present, down to the battalion level, including some in Syria. On the first day the Syrians lost 29 fighters, their entire missile defense system, and something like 200 Soviet-made tanks.

Those events caused a great commotion in Washington, out of fear that this campaign, however it had been described to us, would now lead to an Israeli-Syrian war. Phil Habib [then Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs] was dispatched to the scene. He went to Damascus, Syria, and came back from a futile effort to broker a cease-fire.

Apart from all of that, there was a very interesting, technical aspect here. I would say that in

operational terms you could describe this fighting as a “mini-Persian Gulf War.” That is, the use of the latest, if you will, techniques to detect and eliminate Soviet-made missile batteries by using their radar emissions. The Syrian jets suddenly heard Beethoven in their ears, just before being shot out of the sky! The Israelis controlled the whole battlefield.

I might add that this was of very great interest to professional U.S. military people from the Pentagon and elsewhere as to how this was done. The Israelis described all of this to us. After all, they were using American-built equipment: F-16s, F-15s, and all kinds of other, sophisticated material which we made and which they improved and supplemented. In technical, professional planning terms, it was quite an operation which was of great interest back in Washington. The lessons of this engagement were applied in subsequent years.

I left Israel with my wife Helen. We took a little side trip to Greece, Turkey, Crete, and Spain. We arrived at the University of New Hampshire on about September 1, 1982, where I was a Diplomat in Residence. The arrangement was that I could really do what I wanted to do, but I was signed up to teach two courses: one on China and one on Arab-Israeli relations. As we arrived at the campus of the University of New Hampshire, to Helen's chagrin she found that I had signed up for a tiny graduate student's or faculty member's apartment. It was really small, but I was close to the campus and could walk to work.

When we arrived on campus, there was a worldwide announcement of the Reagan Peace Plan, which is described in George Shultz's book. Ambassador Sam Lewis has discussed it in his interview with you. It was a very well-intentioned plan which caught not only the Arabs by surprise but was also a surprise to Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin as well. Begin berated Ambassador Sam Lewis and Washington for springing this on him without prior consultation.

This peace plan went nowhere, although a great effort was put into it. It involved a Jordanian option. I would say that in typical fashion King Hussein of Jordan went along with this plan to a certain point. However, as always, he had an escape hatch open.

Q: Did you have the feeling that this plan was one of those things that was put together in Washington after a great deal of difficulty? However, the field wasn't consulted, as so often happens. This happened with President Carter and his disarmament plan, which was opposed by the embassy in Moscow.

BROWN: That's right. Well, here you have an example of the great problem in dealing with the Middle East in terms of a new initiative. The dilemma, from the Washington policy planning viewpoint, is that, if you consult with other countries, there is a considerable risk of “leaks.” If you really consult, since it involves the Israelis and the occupied territories, you have to consult the Prime Minister of Israel in the middle of a war. That's a very difficult thing to do. That remains a dilemma in terms of major policy initiatives involving the Middle East. If you consult other countries, how much time do you really give them? How much real consultation do you go through?

Remember now that President Anwar Sadat of Egypt was dead. President Mubarak, his replacement, was very cautious. He faced great difficulties in view of the Israeli-Lebanon war

and how to handle that. Other Arab countries were very concerned about what was described as a slaughter in Lebanon. They were at cross purposes with each other, which made things very difficult. In these circumstances Washington decided to handle this peace initiative in that way.

A great deal of thought and effort had been put into this initiative. We had some really skilled people back in Washington. Nick Veliotis was the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs. Charley Hill was a key adviser to Secretary Shultz and one of his speechwriters. He was also Executive Secretary of the State Department but he was really much more than that. Also contributing to this peace initiative was Hal Saunders in INR [Bureau of Intelligence Research]. There was a wealth of really experienced talent in Washington.

In 1985 after his retirement from the Department of State and harking back to this initiative, Ambassador Sam Lewis said in his interview in this Oral History program, something like: "This was a noble effort with very worthy aims. However, the timing was wrong and, if anything, set back our relationship with the Israelis." So, there we were.

However, in any case I was arriving at the University of New Hampshire at about this time. Here was a brand new peace initiative for the Middle East, the Lebanon War, and the whole bit, just as I was about to start teaching a course on Arab-Israeli relationships.

By the time I began teaching my course, a second event hit like a bombshell. That is, the massacre or slaughter, however you want to describe or characterize it, at the Palestinian refugee camps at Sabra and Shatila just South of Beirut. I don't know whether the exact facts concerning this event will ever be known. However, the Israelis had overall responsibility. They had launched a campaign in Lebanon and had taken this area. Yasser Arafat had departed Lebanon under a deal brokered by Phil Habib [Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs]. One of the key elements of the undertakings given to Arafat in this deal was that Palestinian refugee camps, containing those Palestinians that Arafat was leaving behind, would be protected.

Ariel Sharon was the Israeli Minister of Defense. The Israeli General on the spot was approached by the Lebanese Phalangists, who discussed the general situation with him. Shall we say, under his nose, the Phalangists went in with knife and gun and proceeded to slaughter Palestinians in those camps, men, women, and children. This harks back to the unfavorable comments made by certain Israelis about the nature of the Phalangists in the Lebanon cauldron. In this situation nobody's hands were clean. When one side got the leverage or felt that it had the upper hand, the result was mighty dirty business, to put it mildly.

The slaughter at these refugee camps caused a worldwide sense of horror. Certainly, given the Israeli free press and television, this had a terrible impact in Israel. Ariel Sharon was forced to resign his post as Minister of Defense. A formal inquiry was opened into these events. The Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, General Rafel Eytan, was implicated in it, but it was noted that he was about to retire anyway. I guess that his application for retirement had already been submitted. He was allowed to retire with a cloud over his head but he retired in any case. Sharon remained in the cabinet as a Minister Without Portfolio. Overall, the world felt a sense of revulsion, and Israel's image was badly tarnished.

ROBERT W. DUEMLING
Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1980-1982)

Ambassador Robert W. Duemling was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1929. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Yale University. Prior to becoming a Foreign Service officer, Ambassador Duemling served in U.S. Navy intelligence and was stationed in Japan. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Rome, Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo, Ottawa, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Suriname. Ambassador Duemling was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: You were assigned to the Sinai which was territory between the Israeli and the Egyptians.

DUEMLING: That is right. After four years as DCM in Ottawa, I rather belatedly went to the Senior Seminar which was a terrific experience that I enjoyed greatly. The year I graduated was a bad time in the Department's history as far as its personnel situation was concerned. Not a single one of my State Department colleagues in the Senior Seminar -- not one -- had an onward assignment when we graduated from the Seminar. We were told that we were on our own and that we could roam the corridors to see whether we could find a job. It was an appalling situation. I went looking around and happened upon the fact that there was a new organization being started called the "Multinational Force and Observers". It was the successor organization to the observer teams we had in the Sinai earlier. But this new organization had to be created to implement the Camp David Accords. There had to be a combination of civilian and military observer force. The State Department took the responsibility for getting in touch with other governments to see whether they would participate in this endeavor. Initially we had hoped for a U.N. peace-keeping force, but the Russians were going to veto that in the Security Council. So the U.S. had to sponsor the effort. This was the first and perhaps the only multinational force organized outside of UN auspices, except Vietnam. The Department went around and signed up about eleven different countries, who agreed in principle. Then the U.S. as the lead country had to design this force -- there was not really any prototype for it. It was decided that what was needed were somewhere between 4,000 and 6,000 troops which included a helicopter component. Under the Camp David accords, the Sinai was divided into three zones. The Israeli were going to withdraw and the Egyptians would move in behind them incrementally, eventually taking over the entire Sinai, which is the situation at the present. There were various levels of armaments permitted and other agreements that required daily verification by both military and civilians to maintain the integrity of the Camp David accords.

We had to set up this observer force. The commitments were made by about eleven countries; then we had to go to these countries and fill in the blanks on the table of organization. At the time, the countries had only committed in principle, not to any specific mode or type of contribution. When I joined this organization, it was still in the process of trying to design itself. It was deciding what the table of organization would be, what units would be involved, the nature and size of these units, and what the civilian role would be. The U.S. was going to provide

all the civilians and a full battalion of troops and a lot of logistic support, but we were looking to the other participants for two more battalions, trucks and drivers and mechanics to support the transportation fleet, helicopters and pilots and mechanics, a headquarters company, a signal company, etc. There had been no agreements that anybody would do anything specific. I was assigned to this organization to be a negotiator to go to governments as we determined which we thought could fill the various responsibilities. I would go as part of a team to persuade governments to give us what we needed as opposed to what they might have in surplus and would be willing to give us. In that capacity, I worked initially with Frank Maestroni and a couple of others, but eventually I ended up leading the teams myself. In addition, even if a country had agreed to give us what we needed, we had then to negotiate the terms and conditions and the remuneration, the timing, the logistics, etc. I worked with the Colombians in Bogota to work out their commitments for a battalion of troops. I visited Montevideo to work out the terms and conditions of the trucking unit from the Uruguayans. I visited London and The Hague to discuss with the Dutch the assignment of a signals company and with the British, the headquarters company. That was tricky, because we initially had intended that the signals company be British because that is a hard requirement to fill. This company needed highly skilled radio technicians, who are in short supply in any country's military forces. You need radio technicians who are communicators trained to the NATO standards, using English and the NATO signal-books. That narrows the field. The British refused to provide such a company because they didn't have the man-power. The only country left was Holland.

I was despatched as a "one man Mission Impossible" to go to The Hague to try to persuade the Dutch military that they should provide this company. I met with the commanding general of the Dutch army, who was very nice, very polite. I laid out our problem and the reasons for having the Dutch -- namely, that they were virtually the only force that could do it. He listened to me and then said that I was asking for the impossible. He said that the Dutch had barely enough of those skills in their own army as it was. He pointed out that the Dutch had a draft Army, which had very short periods of service -- only six months. Communicators had to spend another six months or more. By the time the Dutch finished the training, they only had three months left in their service. He pointed out that I had asked for six months assignments. He concluded that the request was just impossible because the soldiers would have to re-enlist for another three months to fulfill my request. He thought that was hopeless and no one would do that. I asked him to do me a favor and to publicize the opportunity to serve in the Sinai. If anybody wanted to volunteer, they would have to re-enlist for another three months to complete a six months' tour in the Sinai. He agreed to that for us, but didn't give it much of a chance. When he did announce the program, there were 1,000 volunteers. These young people wanted a little adventure. All we needed was sixty, so the Dutch were able to fill our request.

I take my hat off to the negotiators of the Camp David accords. They made that whole thing work. You never hear about peace-keeping problems in the Sinai because that whole operation is in place, very effectively administered and we never had any problems with it. It continues to this day and you never read about it.

As it worked out, the borders between Jordan and Israel would be adjusted by a unique method. Israel would cede certain, disputed areas back to Jordan, but Israel would hold them for a long period under a rental arrangement. There would be the possibility of a joint, Israeli-Jordanian

airport near Eilat and Aqaba, at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. Water issues would be dealt with. It was a great breakthrough. There would be a possibility for Israeli investment in Jordan because, of course, Jordan had a very weak economy, which had been further weakened by the embargoes which the Saudis and others had proclaimed against Jordan because of its stance during the Gulf War. There was hope that something could be done in this respect. So that's how that particular breakthrough worked out.

DAVID N. GREENLEE
Political Officer
Tel Aviv (1980-1982)

Ambassador Greenlee was born and raised in New York and educated at Yale University. After service in the Peace Corps in Bolivia and the US Army in Vietnam, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. In the course of his career the ambassador served in Peru, Bolivia (three tours), Israel, Spain and Chile, as well as in the Department of State, where he was involved in Haitian and Egyptian affairs, and at the Pentagon, where he was Political Advisor. Three of his foreign tours were as Deputy Chief of Mission. He served as United States Ambassador to Paraguay and Bolivia. Ambassador Greenlee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

GREENLEE: I left in December of 1979, and I went to Tel Aviv. It's interesting how I got that assignment. I was a very active political officer in Bolivia. I was quite inexperienced, but I was getting a lot of exposure, and it was a heady time for me. I didn't know what I wanted to do next, but I wanted a good follow-on assignment. I wasn't finding anything I really wanted, though, so I sought a six month extension, which would have put me into the summer cycle the following year. But around that time the Department sent out a worldwide cable soliciting bids for an assignment to Israel. It said the candidate should be and an FSO4. An FSO4 is today's FO2, since the system has been restructured.

Q: That was a lieutenant-colonel level assignment?

GREENLEE: Yes. The other requirement was that the candidates speak Arabic and Hebrew. The job would be representing the ambassador at the working-level sessions of the Camp David autonomy talks with Egypt and Israel. I saw this cable and thought, "This can't have anything to do with somebody like me." But my section head, Bob Fouche, said, "You ought to apply for this." I said, "There's no way I can get something like this. Why would I waste my time?" He said, "Put your name in. You never can tell." So I did.

About two weeks later, Ambassador Boeker asked in a staff meeting whether anybody needed any personnel work done, because he was going up to Washington. I told him afterward that I had put my name in for the Tel Aviv job, but there was nothing in my background that would qualify me for it. Boeker must have been gone three weeks, a month, and I didn't hear anything. Then I got a call from M. Charles Hill -- Charlie Hill. At that time he was the deputy director of

IAI (Israel and Arab- Israel Affairs) in NEA (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs). Charlie said, “Are you interested in this job?” I said, “Yes, but I don’t have the background.” He said, “Don’t worry about it. Are you interested in the job?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Paul Boeker was up here talking about you, and we’d like you to take it.”

I was flabbergasted. I heard later that they had had 14 bids on the job, and there were Arabists, and there were Hebrew speakers. What I later learned about NEA was that people tended to walk on different sides of the aisle. The Arabists cancelled out the Hebraists and vice-versa. I was the only one left standing, and got the job. They wanted me right away. They wanted me to go up there and learn Hebrew, but Ambassador Boeker wouldn’t let go of me that fast. I stayed in Bolivia another four months, finally leaving in December. During that time our fourth child, Nicole, was born. We left Bolivia in December of 1979, and arrived in Tel Aviv three weeks later.

Q: You were there from when to when?

GREENLEE: I was in Tel Aviv from January of 1980 until July of 1982. Two and a half years.

Q: What was the situation in Israel at that time?

GREENLEE: The Camp David Accords had been concluded, and there was peace with Egypt, but no peace with the other Arab states and no way to resolve the problem of the Palestinians in what the Israelis called the “administered” territories and the world called the “occupied territories”—the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinians didn’t want to be involved in the Camp David framework. Part of the deal with Egypt was that there should be a way to address the Palestinian issue. The Palestinians wanted a Palestinian state, but Camp David only provided for Palestinian autonomy. To achieve that there had to be talks that logically would involve the Palestinians. The Egyptians negotiated on their behalf. The U.S. was a party to the talks. We were the facilitators, suggesting ways around obstacles that arose. There was a team from Washington, and representatives from Embassy Tel Aviv and Embassy Cairo.

I went out to do that job, to be involved in those talks-- not as a negotiator but as an observer for the embassy. In fact, when I arrived in Israel, that wasn’t my role, not immediately, because there was already somebody doing it. I folded into the political section and became the guy who went down to Gaza and reported on Palestinian thinking there, and also on the policies and actions of the military government on the West Bank. I didn’t do things directly with the Palestinians on the West Bank, as opposed to Gaza, because the West Bank, with the exception of the military government, was the responsibility of the Consulate General in Jerusalem.

I don’t know if you want me to get into the Israeli stuff now, but I can. It is fascinating.

Q: I do.

GREENLEE: It was a jolt coming from Bolivia to Israel, which was of hyper interest to Washington and the media. It was quite a change. Embassy Tel Aviv was a high-pressure place. The demands were heavy. The ambassador was not just a Type A, but a Type A Plus. So were

most of the officers there.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

GREENLEE: A very competent man: Samuel Lewis. He was ambassador for many years in Bolivia, probably six-plus years. He drove people hard. Before I arrived, the embassy had a reputation for door-slamming. When I go there, though, the atmosphere was calmer. There was a new DCM, Bill Brown, who was very low key, and Charlie Hill had migrated out to be the political counselor. Hill was extraordinarily competent, and a pleasure to work with. He hired me for the job, and Sam Lewis let me know that he had personally vetted me. It was a way of saying if you don't perform to expectation, you will be letting us down.

Ambassador Lewis was an incredibly quick and literate drafter. He dictated his cables and they were sent out without any editing much of the time. He might do three or four cables a day, some of them with "no distribution" or "eyes only" caveats. He was like an entire political section by himself. Charlie Hill often wrote first-person cables for the ambassador, and he was like another whole political section. He would be the note-taker for the ambassador's meetings with Menahem Begin, for example. Charlie wrote with a meticulous hand, very clear print, and it was wonderful stuff. This would be the high-level input that would go to Washington every day. The rest of us ground out cables, of course, but our output paled next to Lewis' and Hills'.

There were also high-level sensitive phone calls. The secure phone in the front office was in frequent use. The calls wouldn't usually go to the officer director. They would go to the under secretary for political affairs, or the deputy secretary or secretary. They would go to the NSC (National Security Council). That was what happened at the top, but there were things going on at my level, too. I became the reporter for the autonomy talks and I also took frequent turns at internal political reporting, which was not my primary responsibility.

I had an office without windows, and I would go in and shut the door and type. Word processors, "Wangs," didn't come in until I was leaving post. I never had one. I was working with an old typewriter—an IBM Selectric—in this office with no windows. I would grind away. I was a good reporter, but I was a slow. What happened in that embassy was that the people who could write without the need of much editing got more and more of the burden of the section. I ended up being one of those people. I wrote slowly, but I didn't need much editing. So I was given as much as I could handle. It was exhausting. My chronological file was about six inches thick at the end of a year.

Q: What were you writing?

GREENLEE: I was writing color pieces on the political scene, developments affecting the peace process. I wrote about border issues, water issues, the Israeli Arabs, the Arabs who were citizens of Israel. I wasn't the internal reporting officer, but I would cover the Knesset debates sometimes, depending on what was needed. I would collect and report, as in Bolivia, but much more up-tempo.

To give you an example, I went one time to the foreign ministry, shortly after arriving in country.

The Israelis were delighted that I was not an Arabist. They saw me as a clean slate. I talked to a guy who was explaining how Israel was handling the situation on the border with Lebanon. The problem in those days was not Hezbollah, but the PLO. The Israelis in fact were working with the Shia against the Palestinians. This guy told me that although the Shia of south Lebanon were sworn enemies of Israel, they could work together against the PLO. He said, "You know the patterns of political relationships in the Middle East are kaleidoscopic in nature. They change with every turn of the wheel." That was an interesting way to put it. A year later, after I understood things better, I went back and talked to this guy again. I told him that I was grateful for this kaleidoscope metaphor. There was somebody else in the room, another Israeli foreign ministry guy. He said, "What was the metaphor?" So I told him. Both these guys looked puzzled. They looked at each other and said, "Something's missing." Then one of them said, I know: "The pattern changes with every turn of the wheel, but the colors always remain the same." [laughter]

I wrote on all that stuff. I wrote on the problems in the Bekaa Valley, the problems with Syria and Syrian influence on Lebanon, as the Israelis saw it. I learned about how to write for Washington, and I learned it much better after I left Israel and went to work on the Israel desk and when I was deputy director for Egyptian affairs. What I learned was that it was not what you wrote that was important, but what was read. The trick was to be read. I think we understood that better in Tel Aviv, and in NEA/IAI, than the reporters at the Arab posts and Arab-affairs offices in Washington. But I am sure people who worked in those places would disagree.

There were cables that many times—and this also happened with the consulate general—seemed to be about feelings, about injustice, about how the Israelis were trampling on the rights of the Palestinians. But they were not cables that were going to change policy in Washington. They were probably not going to be read. One thing I got from Charlie Hill was that if you want to change policy in Washington, it's possible to do so, but you don't do it by slapping Washington in the face. You do it by slowly turning inside the gyre. Write your cables in such a way-- write your summaries in such a way-- that they will be read. That was a valuable lesson.

Q: Could you talk about the consul general in Jerusalem? Who was consul general there, and how were relations?

GREENLEE: Relations were always good when I was at the embassy, but previously I think they were somewhat strained. Brandon Grove was the consul general and Jock Covey was his deputy. The word was that they were sent to Jerusalem in part to strengthen the relationship with the embassy. One of them would come each week to Sam Lewis' country team meeting.

Q: Were there divisions in the embassy on how people viewed Israel?

GREENLEE: The ambassador was so dominant, and the senior part of the embassy was so powerful, Charlie Hill and Bill Brown, that what might be called divisions elsewhere were not evident. There were different points of view sometimes, but not divisions. There was almost a total absence of people who had served at Arab posts. U.S. policy was to support Israel and that's what the embassy did. There could be heated exchanges with the Israelis over aspects of the bilateral relationship, and the Israelis could be testy and difficult. But we were committed to

Israel's security and well-being. I didn't see people saying, "Should we really be so hard over with the Israelis? Shouldn't we be more balanced?" I didn't see it in Tel Aviv, but I did see it back in Washington. And of course the views of people at the consulate general in Jerusalem tended to be quite different from ours at the embassy.

The Arabs would talk about the importance of the U.S. being even-handed, but the Israelis considered that a code phrase for stacking the deck against Israel. We were supposed to support Israel, not take a neutral position. The Arabs would talk about the need for Palestinian self-determination. The Israelis saw that as a code word for an independent Palestinian state. In those days the Israelis wouldn't consider anything beyond "autonomy," which was the word they insisted on including in the Camp David Accords. There were these little keys that you always had to be aware of. Words counted. If there were a slip, particularly at a high-level, the Israelis would catch it and worry about a shift in U.S. policy.

You had to know the theology of the peace process, and it took a while to get it down. You had to know UN Security Council Resolution 242, and you had to know Resolution 338, and you had to know what was emphasized by the different sides. I got to be quite a theologian of the process. Camp David is a framework, but 242 is a basis for negotiation. It was the foundation of Camp David. The Palestinians accepted 242, but not Camp David, which they saw as limiting 242. Resolution 242 calls for Israel to withdraw from "territories occupied." The Arabs interpreted this to mean "all" the territories occupied in the 1967 war, including East Jerusalem. The Israelis, on the other hand, underscored the absence of the article "the" before territories and insisted that this meant Israel would have to withdraw from only part of the occupied territories, and only in exchange for peace and security. These nuances were crucial.

Q: Did you have the feeling when you got there that you would be scrutinized by the Israelis, that they would be wary of a pro-Arab bias?

GREENLEE: Yes, I did. But I was sympathetic to their situation. I didn't ever think, "Should Israel exist as a country?" I saw Israel, as a Jewish state, being essential in the aftermath of the Holocaust. I felt that and I still feel that. I think some of the Israelis assumed I was Jewish.

Q: The name Greenlee might give that impression.

GREENLEE: It could possibly. The one conversational exchange I had with Ehud Olmert, who became Prime Minister, touched on that. He was then a member of the Knesset. I had met him sort of randomly and at one point I said, because he was considering my last name, that I wasn't Jewish. He said, "I know that. If you were Green, maybe, but Greenlee, never." But the truth is a lot of Israelis assumed I was Jewish. Also a lot of people in the Department.

There were some odd experiences. I knew pretty well an Israeli who was originally from South Africa. He's a very good contact. He looked to me like an Old Testament prophet. He had a beard and very Semitic features. We went to a restaurant in Tel Aviv where they served a lot of dishes based on eggplant. It was a wonderful restaurant. We sat down and I was given the menu in Hebrew. He got the one in English. Israel is such an interesting place! It really is a cosmopolitan place. My wife, who is copper-skinned and has jet black hair, looked very much

like an Israeli from Yemen. With reddish hair I looked like an Israeli from Poland. We fit in there better than in any place we had ever been in terms of how we looked as a couple.

Q: Did you ever think, given Israel's occupation policies and the growth of population and arms proliferation on the Arab side, that Israel's future could be problematic?

GREENLEE: This was constantly on the minds of the Israelis. They wanted to make sure they retained a technological edge in military equipment so that they could counter the Arab advantage in population. And their enemies are very close. Damascus is just over the horizon from the Golan Heights, which the Israelis have held since the '67 war.

It doesn't take long to reach Tel Aviv from neighboring Arab states by air. The Israelis were constantly thinking about that, and we were constantly thinking about it. We were always committed to making sure that Israel had the level of sophistication in their equipment that they needed to defend themselves. They would then tell us that we, the Israelis, are a great asset to you, the U.S., because we've developed certain systems that you can employ in defense of your own interests--conformal fuel tanks to extend the range of tactical aircraft, for example, or upgraded electronics. There was a very active political military dialogue.

Q: How did you see Israel's attitude toward a negotiated peace?

GREENLEE: The problem in the Arab-Israeli negotiations was that they were seen as "zero-sum," and neither side ever wanted to yield. Some thought that if the Israelis gave way on settlements, then you could have a break-through on the other side. So pressure would build on the Israelis. But if anything the Israelis would become less flexible. They don't respond well to pressure. The Israelis, I'm sure, want peace, but they don't want to risk being flexible in ways that they think they won't be able to recover from.

I've had a lot of conversations with Israelis about settlements. The position of the U.S. government was always that settlements were "unhelpful" and obstacles to peace. We would sometimes say to the Israelis, "Just when things look like they could have gotten better, you guys start establishing new settlements." The Israelis would say, "You are wrong to think the settlements are a lynchpin for everything. We could get rid of all the settlements, and would still have the same problem. The settlements aren't the issue."

Q: Talk about Israeli democracy. How did it impress you?

Israel is a really active democracy. It's the kind of debating-school type of democracy. There are actors within Israel who have considerable leverage and weight even though they are not numerically significant. Sometimes the settlers are in a position to be the "balance wheel" of a coalition government. That is also the case with the comparatively small religious party. Their price of support for an otherwise wobbly coalition government would be, for example, the requirement for all hotels to maintain kosher kitchens. The settlers, who often came from places like Brooklyn, would also have substantial political input. Narrow interests had a way of becoming national interests.

Q: The settlers from Brooklyn were extremists...

GREENLEE: That was certainly the perception, at least in regard to many of them. Meir Kahane, of the Jewish Defense League, for example, was from Brooklyn. You would talk to Israelis, and they would say, "Yeah, these guys are nuts." But then, as you got into it a little, there would be this sense that they weren't entirely nuts. I remember there was this general who was on the Israeli delegation for the autonomy talks, who would say that the essential point was that the West Bank should never be what the Nazis called "Judenrein"—that is, denied to Jews. A lot of the Israelis saw the settlers as ensuring that interest. And there was a strong religious component to that interest. Unlike in Gaza, there were highly significant Jewish religious sites on the West Bank. The Israelis wanted to make sure they would always have access to them.

If you were insistent on the need for Israeli to freeze settlement activity, you would begin to touch nerves. You would find that as an American you could only go so far. The Israelis would say, "We know these Arabs; you don't. We know what they're up to." There were exceptions to that, of course, like the "Peace Now" group, which was opposed to settlements. There are so many dimensions to the settlement issue, and many different kinds of settlements. Some are vast apartment or housing complexes. Some are tents on a hillside occupied by just handful of families. There are settlements along the Jordan River put down by the Labor Party after the 1967 war, strategic settlements. There is a large settlement dating from before the Israeli State. It's too facile to lump them all into a single issue, to say, simply, that they are "unhelpful" or "illegal" or even "obstacles to peace." Like everyone involved with the Middle East, we can get caught in our own rhetoric.

Q: I never dealt with Israel, but I would think that they have the ability to push buttons in congress....

GREENLEE: The Israelis have a remarkable ability to push buttons in congress, as well as in the executive branch, at the most senior levels of the State Department and the White House. We understood that at the embassy in Tel Aviv. It was part of the terrain on which we operated. I remember once Prime Minister Menahem Begin didn't like a position that we were taking. He might have picked up on a talking point to "press" the Israelis on some issue. He said publicly that if we wanted to "press," he would know how to "press back." That was a credible comment. That was what we had to deal with. But Israel isn't the only country whose interests figure in our internal politics. There's a domestic component to our policy with respect to many countries, for example, Greece.

Q: Ireland.

GREENLEE: Yes, Ireland is another example. Our citizens have roots in many places and they frequently make their interests in support of those places known to their congressional representatives.

This is a major factor in the U.S.-Israeli relationship. There are people with a lot of economic and political power who are committed to Israel--Republicans and Democrats. It's almost to the point where when you talk about the U.S. national interest as it relates to Israel, you're also

talking about a U.S. national interest as it relates to internal considerations in the United States. I used to tell people who would ask why we support Israel so strongly that—and this sounds a little over the top, I know—it is almost like dealing with an interest that might pertain to the state of New Jersey. It was that hard to disentangle from our domestic politics.

There are other examples of this. Look at our Cuba policy. Try to separate that from the internal politics of south Florida and arithmetic of our national elections. The Cuban exile community is passionately interested in the way we relate to Cuba. So whether it's Israel or it's Cuba or it's Greece or Ireland, there are domestic components to our foreign policy.

Q: Did you find that the Israelis were quick to accuse people critical of their policies as being anti-Semitic?

GREENLEE: The Israelis don't want to undermine their own historical arguments, but they are quick to pounce on what they perceive as anti-Semitism. They sense it sometime in people who are simply putting forward positions, who don't consider themselves in any way anti-Semitic.

I often saw this in the way Israeli officials sized up people at the embassy or official visitors from the U.S. They would make up their minds quickly about whether people were sympathetic to their situation or not. I could almost see it registering in their eyes when they met people. It was important for them to know where people stood, whether they understood certain fundamental issues—security issues, especially—as Israelis understood them.

If the Israelis didn't trust you to be committed to Israel's security and well-being, which was U.S. policy, then they would wonder whether you were really representing U.S. policy or whether there was a weakening of U.S. policy. It was important in talking to Israelis to make sure that they understood that, if you had a disagreeable message, it was not rooted in a fundamental shift in policy or in something deeper, like anti-Semitism. That was often difficult.

It also was difficult sometimes in Washington when people didn't buy into policy. I can give you an example. There was a very powerful person in the Reagan administration who came in from the outside and was at the National Security Council. This was when I was in the office of Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs at the State Department. It was interesting that the nomenclature for the office was Israel-Arab-Israel affairs, not Arab-Israeli affairs. They changed that now, but at that time the distinction seemed important. Political theology was *very* important.

In any case, the Israelis, probably the prime minister, wrote a letter of complaint about something that required a response. We drafted the response, which included the assurance that the United States remained committed to Israel's "security and well-being"—standard language. The senior official at the NSC, however, struck this sentence from the letter as being inconsistent with the tone we wanted to convey. We had to say, "Wait a second. If you don't have that phrase in there, you're going to open up a whole different issue. You don't want to go there." He reluctantly backed down, and the phrase was restored. It shows you the kind of level of detail you had to use when dealing with the Israelis. Also, the basic commitment that, "We're here behind you. We don't want you to disappear. We want you to keep your military edge. We may disagree on this or that, but we don't disagree that you ought to exist as a country."

Q: Were the Israelis comfortable getting so much assistance from us? I would have thought that, as a proud people, there would be a certain resentment about being so dependent..

GREENLEE: They never quite expressed it the way that you have expressed it. They liked their big friend being there, and they needed their big friend. At the same time, they went about things their own way. They made it very clear to us that they would never ask a U.S. soldier to shed blood on their behalf. They'd do their own fighting.

I remember very well that one guy I dealt with—in fact, he became a very important person in the Israeli context, both as a diplomatic representative, as a representative in their legal system—told me, “You know, we have lots of issues with the United States, but the United States is honest. These other countries—meaning the Europeans—are not honest.” I think that what he really meant was that, “We know at the end of the day that you're not going to abandon us, and these other countries are going to go their own way.”

Israel is a very small country but it punches over its weight. Its human resources are extraordinary. Absolutely extraordinary. For years it had a significant military edge over its Arab neighbors. When it struck, it prevailed. But its situation began to change in the early 1980s. As I left Israel, they were getting mired in Lebanon. Before that, they would do these very precise strikes, whether it rescuing hostages from Entebbe (Uganda) or winning militarily in the '67 war and '73 wars.

There was a lot of élan in the country, a sense that, “We need help internationally, politically, and we need resources, and we need access to technology, but we can do it ourselves.” In fact, there was much more of that than certain other countries that I've been involved with where they really can't do things by themselves.

Q: You talked about American not shedding blood for Israelis. What immediately comes to mind is the USS Liberty. I don't understand why the Israelis attacked that American naval vessel. It is clear that it wasn't a mistake. There was obviously no mistake.

GREENLEE: It was not something that was discussed much when I was in Israel. I was at the embassy from January 1980 until July or so of 1982. The attack on the *Liberty* happened during the '67 war, but there was a book published when I was out there, by somebody who was on the *Liberty*. I didn't read the book, but there was a buzz about it. The author said the U.S. flag was clearly visible, but the Israelis attacked again and again.

The theory behind the attack was that the Israelis were trying to knock out the U.S. listening capabilities so they could do certain things without our knowledge. There was the suggestion that they were trying to lure Jordan into the conflict so that they could seize East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Maybe that was so. I don't know. The Jordanians did come in when they should have stayed out.

I think that none of us who served in Israel had any illusions about what the Israelis would do when it came to pursuing their state interests—even if it meant inflicting U.S. casualties. I can

imagine circumstances where we might do things to the Israelis. I know there were some very difficult moments in Lebanon in 1982 at the field command level, for example, that could have erupted, but fortunately did not.

Q: How did we talk with the Israelis about defense issues?

GREENLEE: There were significant political-military talks with Israel. When I was on the desk, after leaving Tel Aviv, they really got underway in a formal sense. I was not involved in the information exchanges about technologies or weapons, but I was aware they were taking place. There was a lot of interest in the way Israelis were employing U.S. technology, and how they were modifying it for their specific needs. The Israelis maintained that their modifications and upgrades gave us reciprocal benefits that we did not always fully appreciate. That was a political position, certainly, but I think it was more than a talking point for, say, the U.S. Congress. My sense—it is only that—is that we learned from the Israelis just as they learned from us.

Q: You were there from '79 to '82?

GREENLEE: I was there from January of 1980 until early July of 1982.

Q: How was the Iranian hostage business playing then?

GREENLEE: I was not involved in talks with Israelis about the hostage crisis, but I felt, as I think we all felt at the embassy, that we should be able to do more to get our people back. The operation that Carter mounted to try to rescue the hostages happened when I was in Tel Aviv. Its disastrous failure, the collision of the aircraft in the desert, was depressing. It was admirably ambitious but seemed militarily inept. The Israelis were sympathetic but critical, at least in the press. One officer who had been involved in the planning of the Entebbe operation was quoted as saying that it was inexplicable that the U.S. had no back-up plan. Later, a team came out from the Pentagon and gave a through briefing to the Israelis. I was not there, but I heard later that it was professionally done and that the Israelis were impressed by what we had attempted, and the planning that went into it, even though it ended in failure.

The hostage crisis was something that certainly angered all of us, and we were waiting to see how it played out. Then there was the election of 1980 and Carter lost. The Iranians gave up the hostages as Reagan prepared to take over.

Another thing that happened when I was posted to Tel Aviv was the Israeli air action to take out the construction of the Iraqi nuclear reactor. This was the summer of 1981. I was on R&R (rest and recuperation) in Greece, and I read about it in the International Herald Tribune. There was a big outcry internationally and in the U.S. media. How could the Israelis have done such a thing? I wondered how we would handle it at the embassy. I expected a firestorm. But that was not the case.

When I got back to Tel Aviv, I got the sense that the U.S. administration was basically content with the Israeli action, at least at the top levels, although we formally condemned it. This was a time when the Israelis never seemed to fail at these high-drama military strikes. I recall that they

used Kfirs and F-16s or F-15s with conformal fuel tanks to be able to go the distance. They dropped the extra fuel tanks over Jordan. The first planes bombed the reactor roof and the others put bombs through the holes. It was technically quite impressive.

Q: The nuclear issues remain problematic. I'm not quite sure where Iran is in the development of a nuclear capability, but I suspect there will be trouble if things continue as they are.

GREENLEE: Maybe so. The Israeli nuclear capability has always been a sensitive matter as well. There were open secrets--I shouldn't say secrets--but assumptions about what the Israelis had. People would speculate about their facility in Dimona, in the Negev desert. In Dimona, they would say—that's where they turn out the warheads. There was a lot of speculation in the press, especially the international press. Israelis officials would not admit to a nuclear capability but at times were provocatively Delphic. I'll give you an example. The official Israeli position was that Israel would not be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons to the region. But I remember one time a cabinet minister, at a particularly tense time, added, "And Israel will not be the second."

Q: Were you there during the invasion of Lebanon?

GREENLEE: Yes. I was, but I was there for only about a month after it started. It was an invasion foretold in many ways. I remember that I took notes at a briefing many weeks before the invasion by Ariel Sharon. I think he had the defense portfolio at the time. This must have been in about February or March, as the invasion was in June. Sharon had a map of Lebanon with a series of plastic or acetate overlays. He would show the current situation, with the Syrian troop deployments and other factors—PLO enclaves, where the Christians had influence or the Druze. Then he would flip back to a chart showing how the areas of influence of the different groups looked years earlier, then back and back—trying to make the point that things were better before.

The implication of the briefing was, "Why can't we go back to how things were, when the Christians were really in charge? Why do you need these other influences? They don't have to be there." As I looked back on it after the Israeli invasion Sharon was signaling, "This is what could happen. This is what we and the Christians might do." It was all there. It wasn't an announcement, but it was a clear articulation of the Israeli rationale to act. So when the Israelis went in, it wasn't surprising. It wasn't a shock.

It was interesting to see Israel mobilize for the invasion. I was not in Israel during other conflicts, but I had read a lot about how the nation came together in 1967 and 1973. I remember an American tourist telling me how Israeli Kfirs flew over Tel Aviv in a star of David formation when the Israelis pre-empted in the '67 War, and the emotion it brought. In the '73 War the Egyptians attacked on the Jewish day of atonement, on Yom Kipur. The Israelis were caught off guard but were able to rally quickly since all the reservists were at home and easy to locate. In 1982, I saw the mobilization. Israel is a small country. The Lebanese border is only a couple of hours from Tel Aviv by road. In the afternoon before the invasion there was a line of long-bed trucks carrying tanks covered by netting. At intersections as they headed north, school girls handed flowers to the drivers. At that point there was no secret about what was going to happen.

The Israelis rolled in with little opposition and were in Beirut, sitting in cafes drinking coffee with the Christian Phalange within a week. It began as a walk-over. I think the Israelis shot down about 90 Syrian planes, with the loss of only one. But later it got very complicated.

Q: What was going on with Egypt?

GREENLEE: The great achievement of the Camp David Accords was peace with Egypt. The saying was that the Arabs couldn't make war without Egypt, or peace without Syria. Syria wasn't caught in the net, and there wasn't a broad peace—but at least there was a peace treaty with Egypt. This took Egypt out of the mix of belligerents.

I was in Israel during the final phase of the Sinai withdrawal. It was a three- phase thing. Egypt had diplomatic relations with Israel. Some Israelis visited Egypt. You could drive through Gaza and across the Sinai, or you could go through Elat and Sharm el Sheikh and there was also a commercial air link. There was an El Al flight and an Egyptian charter flight. This was consistent with the peace accord.

The Israelis loved to go to Egypt. In the beginning there was a lot of Israeli tourism there, but none the other way. The Egyptians didn't visit Israel. What the Israelis wanted above all was to be accepted in the region, as a country among other countries. They made a step toward that with the peace treaty, but they wanted more. They wanted what they called a warm peace. What they got was a cold peace—and they complained about that a lot. They still have a cold peace with Egypt, but at least it is peace.

Q: How was Sharon viewed at the embassy by the time you left?

GREENLEE: Sharon was a real tough guy, and there were several Israelis in leadership positions like that. When I was in Israel Menahem Begin was the prime minister. Begin was involved in blowing up the King David Hotel during the British occupation—what today we would call a terrorist act. I took notes in some of the meetings with Begin. He was a very aggressive, sharp, interesting guy. He had the credentials to make peace with Egypt. It was like Nixon with China. When I was still on the Israel account, Begin fell in his bathroom and broke his hip. He seemed quite frail after that. He also became despondent after his wife died. One day Begin declared in a cabinet meeting that he couldn't continue and disappeared from public life. Yitzhak Shamir became prime minister—another real tough guy. He had been in the Stern Gang.

Q: He was an assassin, wasn't he?

GREENLEE: Right. That was said to be his background, a "shooter." Then there were others from that generation of founders, like Moshe Dayan, who had more the image of what foreigners wanted Israeli leaders to be like. Dayan died when I was out there, and I attended his funeral along with a few people from the embassy. He was buried at the moshav where he grew up. It was a very simple ceremony. His coffin was a plain pine box covered by the Israeli flag. It was a funeral with a kind of Israeli mystique.

But back to Sharon. He was probably the best known warrior of the '73 war. What happened then was that the Israelis were caught off guard. The Egyptians stormed over the Suez Canal and overran the Israeli positions in front of the Canal. They pressed through the Sinai, and some say could have penetrated as far as Beersheva in the Negev. Sharon led an Israeli counter attack back across the Canal. His tanks surrounded the largest part of the Egyptian army and could have annihilated it. That became Israel's bargaining chip in the armistice talks that followed.

I always heard that Begin looked at Sharon with particular respect. It was one tough guy deferring to another. Sharon held different ministerial portfolios, always pushing his interests, like settlements, aggressively. There was a swagger about him, a tank-like, forward pitch to his walk. He was formidable.

I remember a reception at Ambassador Lewis' residence. Herman Wouk, author of War and Remembrance, was there with his wife and son. I admired Wouk's writing, and was talking with him. It was a kind of thrilling moment in my early diplomatic life. All of a sudden Wouk, looking over my shoulder, saw Sharon. "There's Arik!" he said, and bolted away. He left me in mid-sentence.

Q: When you left Israel, where did you go?

GREENLEE: You know, I found work in Israel very, very hard. I wasn't burned out, but I kept thinking that my real career would be in Latin America, not the Middle East. I started angling for a good onward assignment in Latin America. But I had lost my leverage with the Bureau of American Republics Affairs. They had forgotten about me. The Near East and Southeast Asia Bureau, on the other hand, wanted to keep me on board. In personnel terms, it seemed to track people better.

Charlie Hill had returned to Washington as the Director of the Office of Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs. He and his deputy, Bill Kirby, put the arm on me to work for them in Washington. Hill went on to a front office position almost immediately and then to be executive secretary of the Department and later Secretary Shultz' executive assistant. But I worked closely with Kirby and to some degree, in a direct arrangement, with Hill after that.

At IAI I became one of a team of people who worked on what was called the Reagan initiative. This was an attempt to drive the Camp David process forward by giving more clarity to our views on how the final status arrangements should look. The Reagan initiative was presented when I was on home leave after Israel and before reporting for duty in IAI. I called Charlie Hill right after the Reagan Initiative was made public, and I said, "This new initiative sounds interesting. Do you need me to come in now?" He said, "No, just take your leave. You'll have plenty to do later." That was the case. I worked really hard.

THOMAS MACKLIN, JR.
Personnel Officer
Tel Aviv (1980-1982)

Thomas Macklin Jr. was born in Fort Worth, Texas in October of 1935. He attended San Diego State University and majored in political science, later receiving a masters degree in history. He entered the Foreign Service in 1965 and took his first post as a Consular Officer in Amsterdam. His career took him to The Hague, Vietnam, Barbados, Israel, Russia, and Italy as well as several posts within the State Department. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 2000.

Q: Today is November 17, 2000. Tom, you were in Tel Aviv from 1980 to when?

MACKLIN: 1982.

Q: Your position was as personnel officer. Could you describe Israel in 1980 when you got there, the state of things?

MACKLIN: It seems to me that Camp David was sometime [before my arrival]. So, everybody thought Camp David solved a lot of the problems. In fact, the Begin government continued to establish settlements in the West Bank. During that period, the West Bank and Gaza were surprisingly quiet. Security was extremely good. There were no bombings. The only danger was being shot at by Israelis, which happened from time to time to embassy people. If you were driving around the West Bank they were pretty free with their bullets. But Palestinians were surprisingly docile at that time. There was a little friction but not a lot of friction between the consulate in Jerusalem, which really represented the Arab constituency, and the embassy in Tel Aviv. The Begin government was really dominated by the Shamir/Sharon group, very right wing. They felt that the Palestinians had a state. There was a Palestinian state. It was called Jordan. Indeed, there were a lot of people in the embassy that felt, "Look, we're in sort of a transitional period, but what really has to happen is, all the Palestinians need to be pushed into Jordan. Let's just get it over with because this all belongs to Israel." I was in Israel at the time the Israelis withdrew from the Sinai. There was one settlement that was down very close to Gaza but inside Sinai. I remember the agony that they went through in finally evacuating that. There were a lot of people in Israel that felt that any Jewish settlement was holy. There was no historic association with that site. But it was a pretty intransigent thing. The Taba issue was a major thing in the Gulf of Aqaba. Taba was a little sliver of land about 12 miles long and about two miles wide. It went up in the armpit of the Gulf of Aqaba. It was part of a land that was supposed to be given back to Egypt and in fact ultimately was given back to Egypt. But the Israelis hung on to it and the Egyptians had to take them to an international court to get it back, but the Israelis, who were better at legal maneuvering, managed to fight the thing off for years. It was one of the big issues at the time.

It was a pleasant time to be there. I remember talking with Palestinian cab drivers. I went to Jordan a couple of times and went up to Jerusalem a lot. I can remember in particular one of the cab drivers said to me, "I can't fight the Israelis. I can't fight Begin. We don't have any guns. But the one thing I can do is go home and have more kids. I'm going to have the biggest family I can. That's how we're going to get the Israelis." Considering the population of the Palestinians... The PLO operated out of Lebanon in those days. Our ambassador was Sam Lewis. We had very

competent staff. Sam Lewis was ultimately there eight or nine years. He was a very good ambassador. I had a lot of respect for him. He was superb at explaining to congressman how to walk the tightrope of visits to Israel and not saying things that commit us to one thing or another. The Israelis had a habit in negotiations of saying, "Yes, but back in 1953, you said blah blah blah." So, Sam Lewis, having been there through a long transition period, was very effective at countering that kind of stuff, those debating tactics. Sam Lewis' deputy was a guy named Bill Brown, who was later ambassador. The political counselor was Charlie Hill and then later Paul Hare. Rich Kauzlarich was the economic counselor. Dennis Jett was the science guy. They all became ambassadors. Jett was a good guy.

Q: You were a guy thrown in there without any particular commitment to the Arab or Israeli world. Was there an atmosphere on the political issue in Tel Aviv with our embassy that was hostile to the Begin group or pro-Begin?

MACKLIN: Sam Lewis had gone off as ambassador at about the same time that Begin had been elected over Rabin. There was a scandal involving Rabin's wife and the Labor government for the first time in the history of Israel was out of office. Begin, who had been a rock throwing terrorist, became prime minister. Sam Lewis got off the plane and said, "This is the best thing that could happen to Israel. Begin is a great man and that's the kind of leadership they need." So, they started off on the right foot. By 1980, by the time I got there, the relationship was a little bit frayed. Begin was extremely arrogant, didn't give a damn for anybody who wasn't Jewish. One of the big issues while I was there was when the Israelis would invade Lebanon to "clean out" the Palestinian problem. There were Palestinians in the Bekaa Valley and all over southern Lebanon in force. That is where Arafat spent a lot of his time. There were occasionally rockets lobbed in, not nearly as much hostility as there is now, but at the time, the Israelis felt that what they needed to do was go up there, clean that out, turn the country back to the Lebanese, and everybody would thank them. Of course, we all know how that turned out. But during the massacre of the two refugee camps, Sabra and Shatila, I remember afterwards, it was semi-orchestrated by Sharon, who cleared a path for a Lebanese group to go in and do their dirty work. They were very much involved in the process. But the Begin government was astounded that anybody blamed the Israelis for this. Begin's statement to the press was, "Goyim kill Goyim and they come and blame the Jews." So, Sam Lewis' effort in my last year in Israel, '81-'82, was trying to talk Begin out of invading Lebanon. There were several times when they had a timetable and they were ready to roll and Sam Lewis and Charlie Hill managed to talk them out of it. But eventually, they decided to go ahead and do it. There were also various provocations along the way. I remember one episode where the Israelis had done something that was really embarrassing to us and Sam Lewis talked to Begin about it and Begin threw a temper tantrum and said, "We're not a banana republic. You can't push us around." So, it was a difficult, but positive, creative relationship.

Q: How did you feel about being there? There has been this idea that the Arabists are all anti-Semitic which I think is more a creation of the Israeli Information Service than anything. Was there a feeling of frustration about a small country which essentially could dictate to the U.S.?

MACKLIN: There wasn't within the embassy. There were an incredible number of American Jews at the embassy who were very pro-Israel, no question of loyalties – FSOs. They all did their

job well and some of them spoke Hebrew fluently and had good access and were good officers. They didn't do anything they shouldn't. They didn't spy for Israel. They didn't leak information. They were very good officers. Sam Lewis was nobody to cross, but their loyalties were very clear. They were very pro-Israel. These were some of the guys who would say to me, "This is a transition time. The sooner we get all these Palestinians out of Israel and into Jordan, the better off we're going to be."

Q: When you say "Israel," you mean basically the West Bank.

MACKLIN: Yes. I went to Israel as a disciplinary assignment. I had switched from political to admin because my wife was a political cone officer and I thought I had to. I was never accepted very well by the admin people. It was a very cliquish outfit and they really very much wanted me to go off to Africa. I couldn't go to Africa because of my hepatitis. So, there were bad feelings. I went there replacing an FSO-6 who had done just a wretched job. I was not terribly pleased about the assignment, although I liked the Middle East. I had some friends there. I knew the admin counselor, who was a guy named Pete Mollat. He was a nice guy who was very tightly strung, kind of a piano wire kind of guy. But he was a decent guy as long as you didn't mind having him shout at you three times a day; he was okay to work for. After you were ripped, he'd come back later and apologize. Then he left after the first year and Tom Lindville took his place. He was the very opposite. He was so laid back you didn't know he was awake. He was a great delegator and delegated. I did the Personnel job for two years. It had a lot to do with classification, salary and wage surveys. But I tried to dabble in other stuff. The second year I was there, Sam Lewis became the dean of the diplomatic corps. There had been an Austrian who was dean of the diplomatic corps. He left. Sam was the senior ambassador, so he became dean of the corps and like everything, he wanted to be an activist. So, he wanted to organize monthly luncheons and all kinds of stuff and work with certain embassies on certain issues. He didn't like his special assistant, so he brought me in to handle all of his diplomatic relationship issues and help him be dean of the corps. It was fun. I got to go up to Jerusalem a lot and deal with the foreign office and other embassies. It was a good time. I enjoyed that.

Q: How did you find the diplomatic corps? Did they have some of the same political pressures that we had?

MACKLIN: Not that I ever saw.

Q: I'm really talking about the Jewish and maybe Christian fundamentalists support of Israel, which meant that diplomatically our hands were really pretty well tied.

MACKLIN: No, I didn't see that. I didn't know very many Brits. But I knew a lot of Australians. Their ambassador was a tough little guy and he seemed to have a completely free hand. No problems at all doing what he thought was right. The Europeans generally had just a handful of people there. But they took a very EU approach to all this, that we needed to be more evenhanded. For the most part, they had no influence. They just had a mission there to report on things.

Q: How about Jerusalem? Did you get involved with our consulate general there at all?

MACKLIN: We went up there a lot. At the time, there were a lot of peace talks going on. We had a lot of SecState visits. Every time there was a visit, we would wind up setting up CODEL offices or SecState offices at the King David. So, I went up there a lot. It's a wonderful city. The number two in the Consular Section in Tel Aviv, Susan Jacobs, her husband, Barry Jacobs, was the branch PAO in Jerusalem. The number two was Jock Covey, whom I had known from Washington. I knew the admin. guy pretty well, Steve Noland. There was a guy named Tom Wookish, who was there as political officer. Wookish is one of these strange kind of 19th century archeologist types who is a walking encyclopedia. He was wonderful to talk to and I went on a couple of CODEL trips with him. He could find old roman aqueducts and biblical locations that I never dreamed existed. He was a very bright guy, very pro-Arab. There was not so much friction between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Sam Lewis was pretty firm on that. But there were differences of opinion.

Q: As a personnel officer, how were the local personnel? How did we view the Israelis who we hired?

MACKLIN: There was a senior FSN in Personnel who was really kind of a nitwit who had been there for a long time. I kind of worked around her. I hired in some new people. My experience in Israel was that it was the best FSN labor pool I've ever seen in my life. There were a lot of people there from Britain, from British colonies. I had three secretaries, all of them bilingual, trilingual. They could all take dictation. So, I could dictate to one and then they'd bring me a draft, I'd rewrite it. I turned out more correspondence in two years in Israel than I did in the rest of my career. In GSO, in Budget, almost everywhere we went, we had really skilled FSNs, a very good labor pool. I thought they were very impressive. There were two guys in GSO who were extremely good at visits, who were kind of famous in the whole Middle Eastern community. One of them later died of throat cancer. After he died, it turned out that he had been involved in a small ring in GSO raking off money from various contracts, which was most sad because he had been a captain in the RAF in World War II and was really a good guy. The Israeli FSN salary scale was a greater secret than any we had in the Political Section. We did not report the salary scale to the government of Israel. We paid the FSNs in cash every other week. They would line up and receive cash. So, they could report whatever they wanted to the government and of course, they underreported. So, there was a lot of sensitivity there. When I'd go and out and do wage surveys, I took the head of the Budget Section with me, who was a kind of spokesman for all the FSNs. He was an Iraqi-Israeli and was very good.

Q: When I was in Naples just about this time, we were under great pressure to report to the Italian government how much we were paying our people. This was an extremely sensitive issue because many of our people had not paid any taxes. Finally, a couple of years after I left, we agreed to tell the Italians how much we were paying. A considerable number of our staff retired very quickly so that it wouldn't be reported. What you were doing was probably illegal, wasn't it? According to Israeli law, an employer is supposed to tell the government how much they're paying somebody.

MACKLIN: Because we were a foreign government, we didn't fall under Israeli law. So, what we did we did as diplomats who were immune from prosecution. What Israeli employees did

with their own government was their concern, although frankly they had their own fraternal order of FSNs and they worked out a mock salary schedule that would make their reporting internally consistent.

Q: 70% of the Israeli population is Sephardic.

MACKLIN: It wasn't then. There were a lot of them. In the election of '81, that was a really important election in terms of the Middle East. People were upset with Begin. He was seen as too hard-line. Peres was the leader of the Labor Party and he was favored by something like 20 points. Begin outmaneuvered him. Had Peres come in, he had said, "I will curtail settlements. I'll try to work out a peace deal." What Begin did was, he worked an agreement where he said, "Fine, we'll have elections," but because of all the things that are going on, they provided for more campaigning time than they normally do. They wound up giving the Begin government something like four months, an unusual amount of time. In that time, he adopted a lot of measures that were generally popular and kind of eroded away Peres' lead. Then a couple of weeks before the elections, there was an Israeli comic who had a big public meeting in Tel Aviv. He made a crack about the Sephardic. There is a racial name that Israelis call a Sephardic Israeli who is too dark skinned. So, this comic who wasn't particularly bigoted, made this comment at this big meeting on TV about, "Well, all the really great people are here, none of that riffraff." Well, Begin picked up on the riffraff and used that as a banner. They had posters out within a day or two about "The leader of the people." So, he got the Sephardic vote and won the election by not much of a margin, but enough to stay in power. That was a really pivotal thing. Sam Lewis knows all the details on that election.

Q: I was thinking more as a personnel officer, were you under any constraints? Were you having Arab (we're not talking about Sephardic or Ashkenazi)-Israelis, many of them coming in as regular FSNs?

MACKLIN: I don't remember if we had any. I don't think we had any in Tel Aviv. The staff in Jerusalem was mostly Arab.

Q: I interviewed Mike Metrisko, who around '91 was consul general in Tel Aviv and was saying that he found when he needed to go up to Jerusalem to see Palestinian-Americans who were arrested, there was nobody that he could call in the Consular Section who spoke Arabic and that there had been a policy of not hiring Arab-Israelis. I think the inspectors came out about that time and said, "Cut it out." This sounded like a system where you don't hire blacks or something like that.

MACKLIN: I had no guidance on hiring. I was allowed to hire... I didn't make decisions on my own. When there was a vacancy, we'd go through certain procedures, but then you'd go to the section chief and interview people together and say to the head of GSO and the head of budget or the Political Section or whomever, "Who do you think is best and why?" But I can't remember ever having an Arab-Israeli apply for a job. In Jerusalem, we had several very sharp FSNs at the consulate. If they needed an Arab speaker, there were tons of them up there. But Mike's a smart cookie. That was not a problem I ever saw.

Q: How did you work it out with your wife? She's in Paris and you're in Tel Aviv.

MACKLIN: We just had great vacations. We wouldn't take them together as a rule. She would come to Tel Aviv and I would kind of keep working for the most part. We didn't have a lot of annual leave. So, we'd maximize it. Then I'd go to Paris for a couple of weeks. So, we'd try to get together about every three months. It was a bit tedious, but great vacations.

**BRANDON H. GROVE Jr.
Consul General
Jerusalem (1980-1983)**

Ambassador Brandon Grove Jr. was born in Chicago in 1929 and lived in Hamburg, Germany at the time of Hitler's rise to power. Before Germany invaded Poland, his father was transferred to Holland and later to Madrid in 1940. He attended Fordham University and later Bard College and Princeton University. His Foreign Service career took him to such places as the Ivory Coast, India, West Berlin, and Jerusalem as well as an ambassadorship to Zaire.

GROVE: The first memories that come to me about Jerusalem are its sunsets and sunrises. I have never seen light of such soft and rosy hue as it reflects off the Jerusalem stone of buildings in the old part of the city. It has a golden glow at times, in Jerusalem's uncontaminated air three thousand feet above the sea. Yet the city has a feeling of solemnity. Christ, as he reached the summit of the Mount of Olives, is said to have gazed on Jerusalem and wept. Today, he would surely do the same.

Jerusalem is the home of friends to me and my family. Father Godfrey, a Franciscan friar, was such a person. He was best known for his knowledge as an archeologist and tour guide in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and for his sense of humor. In his brown frock, he reminded us of Friar Tuck--round, warm, jovial, and quite a gourmet. He was a native of Washington, DC although he lived for many years in Jerusalem.

Freddy Weisgal was an American Jew living in Jerusalem. He and his wife Jean opened their home to other Americans. Freddy was a fine jazz pianist and a raucously funny man, a great friend of American journalists, well known for his parties. He invited us to Yom Kippur and other Jewish holidays, a wonderful entry, through American eyes, into Jewish life in Jerusalem. On my last night in Jerusalem, Freddy gave a party at the old American Colony Hotel. As we gathered around the piano in the bar after dinner, Freddy played his incomparable rendition of Ellington's "Black and Blue," my favorite, and an apt description of how I felt after three years among Palestinians and Likudniks.

And then there were the Harman and Eitan families, scholars and diplomats, the most delightful and generous of friends. Amos and Beth Elon, perceptive and sensitive people, were so painfully troubled by the actions of their government in Lebanon and on the West Bank that it was sometimes hard to be in their company.

Jerusalem is a city of hats: Armenian priests with triangular hats, Greek Orthodox with cylindrical hats, skull caps--*kipahs*--Israeli men wear, Palestinians with their scarves and headbands, and Russian Orthodox priests whose hats resemble flower pots more than anything else. Never have I been in a place where head dress plays such a defining role. Jerusalem is also a city of distinct neighborhoods, with its heart inside the old walls. Mea Shearim is home to ultra-orthodox Jews, where men wear Polish medieval clothes, and women are covered from head to foot. A Jewish friend wearing a light Parisian summer dress told me she had been spat upon in Mea Shearim.

The century old American Colony Hotel, with its beautiful inner court and a muezzin in a mosque nearby who wakes people early each morning with his call to prayers, is situated in the Arab quarter of East Jerusalem. Founded by the Spafford and Vester families generations earlier, it was a refuge in an Ottoman style for journalists and others who chose not to stay at the King David Hotel in West Jerusalem, despite its spectacular views. The esteemed Philadelphia Restaurant where its owner Walid so generously presided, was nearby.

Easter brings vivid memories. My sons, some friends, and I would rise in chilly darkness, and go to one of the hilltops around Jerusalem from which we could look toward Jericho. As the sun appeared, we heard donkeys bray and roosters crow. Groups of Christians sang hymns and assured each other that Christ had risen. Then we had an Easter champagne breakfast spread upon the ground. Ramadan, a Muslim holiday of fasting to celebrate the poor, touched us in its self-denial.

Jews say that if you leave Jerusalem on a journey, you have not returned until you revisit the Wall. I came to understand, and felt this way myself. During my assignment I left Israel often, and never believed I had truly returned until I touched the Wall again. I fondly recall the run-down Anglican School in the former Hadassah Hospital, which two of my children attended. Paul graduated from there, and my youngest son, Mark, was heartbroken and cried when we had to leave.

My favorite place was half-way down into the old city where the Jewish Quarter abuts the Arab. There, at a certain high point, you find yourself in a small and empty square, one side of which is open to an astonishing view beyond the cramped Arab homes with their red-tiled roofs and cats below. Straight ahead and also below, is the Western Wall with the Dome of the Rock above it, sacred to Jews and Muslims. Beyond the old city a Christian church spire rises on the Mount of Olives. All of this in one frame. I came here often, because this sight was such an extraordinary physical representation of the confluence of three great faiths in Jerusalem. One could stand in that quiet and empty square, and see evidence in stone of the great cross-currents that shaped, with so much bloodshed, the city's course through history.

Jerusalem is a place of religious observances, none more solemn than Yom Kippur. During this time of soul-searching, the city comes to a silent standstill, except for emergency services. I recall walking down King George Street, a major thoroughfare, with my son Mark. It was deserted. Mark stretched out in the middle of the street, celebrating the absence of people and traffic. During Yom Kippur, Jerusalem is miraculously filled with the sounds of its birds.

Jerusalem has no international airport. This city on hilltops is approached from the ground, either from the sea or desert. One climbs up to reach Jerusalem. In the early 1980s, there was still a feeling of having arrived at a small and quiet place, a rather sparse and somber enclave where the mood was set by scholarship and gods.

In jarring contrast are the Jewish settlements that now ring the city like the wall against Arabs they are partly intended to be. Politically motivated, hastily built and often unneeded apartment complexes, the settlements are strategically placed to defend the city from its hilltops and expand Jerusalem's perimeters. In nearly every case, they are built on expropriated land Palestinians believe to be their own. The settlements bring more cars, pollution, population and ugliness to the environs of Jerusalem. They form a harsh skyline. Settlements crowd this former city of open places and small stone houses and squeeze it toward its ancient core. The old city becomes increasingly quaint, an attraction to tourists, archeologists and pilgrims. It no longer seems the heart and *raison d'etre* of Jerusalem, around which the rest of the city emerged over centuries to provide support.

People in the Foreign Service are asked what their favorite post was. It is a difficult question to answer, because all assignments have their good and bad aspects for professional and personal reasons. When you are young and at the bottom of the ladder there is the challenge of getting it right and the satisfaction of being promoted. Parents and children are young too, and that is a special pleasure as well as responsibility. Years later, with hard work and luck, you may be near the top of your profession and enjoying the responsibilities and perquisites of its senior members, as in being an ambassador. But the children have grown and are gone and family life has changed. These two lines can intersect, like the curves of supply and demand. In my case, and I believe for my children also, this occurred in Jerusalem, where the struggles of Arabs and Jews were our daily life, and the city, when you know its neighborhoods and Anglican School, and become close to people living there, takes you over. I answer this question by saying Jerusalem, because of its intrusive mood and beauty when we were there, and its capacity to humble.

Jerusalem and its Consulates

My assignment to Jerusalem took me by surprise. As I finished my work in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs in the winter of 1979, I expected to become ambassador to Haiti, and started preparing for that appointment when I received a call from Personnel. Secretary of State Vance, who normally took no interest in assignments below the ambassadorial level, had decided to select the new consul general to Jerusalem himself, because of the importance of implementing the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel concluded on September 17, 1978. Would I be interested in going? Jerusalem of course was not an embassy, while Haiti was, but it had many of the attributes of a chief of mission posting and would be engrossing work.

Jerusalem was the farthest place from my mind. When I asked Personnel why they had thought of me, their answer was that I had the right credentials: no association with Jerusalem, and neither the Israelis nor Palestinians knew of me. Initially, at least, I would not be a problem for either side.

I went to Philip Habib for advice. He was under secretary of State for political affairs at the time. Phil knew the Middle East as few did and took an interest in his younger colleagues. I told him I was intrigued by Jerusalem. Jerusalem, he replied was "the big time," and I would be foolish to turn down such an opportunity. Samuel Lewis was then our ambassador to Israel. He and I had known each other since my early days in the Foreign Service, when we both worked for under secretary Chester Bowles. Personnel had consulted him, and when the assignment was made it had Sam's blessing.

I had a general knowledge of the Middle East, thanks to Bayard Dodge's graduate seminar at Princeton conducted in his living room on Mercer Street. My parents had lived in Egypt from 1950-53, when my father was president of Mobil's company there, and I visited them one summer while a graduate student. But I knew little about Jerusalem, and would have to start from scratch. Most of my briefings were arranged by a bright, precise, and exceptionally competent young officer named James (Jock) Covey, who was then on the Arab-Israeli desk. He would later become my deputy in Jerusalem.

The few consulates general in Jerusalem are unique in status. They are neither embassies, nor traditional constituent posts. They function independently of embassy supervision and report directly to their capitals at home. My efficiency ratings would be written by the assistant secretary for the Middle East, not our ambassador in Tel Aviv, guaranteeing independence in reporting on such topics as Palestinian attitudes and Israeli settlements.

The US view of Jerusalem is that it is a single, undivided city whose final status can be determined only when the parties involved reach a mutually satisfactory agreement. Until that happens, Jerusalem exists in a kind of limbo. Its circumstances are different, however, from the limbo of Berlin, whose final status was also undetermined during the Cold War, but defined by the outcome of World War II and extensive quadripartite agreements reached by the occupying powers. Jerusalem, fully occupied by Israel after the 1967 War, lacks any formal legal definition of its status.

Today, Israel has jurisdiction over all of Jerusalem. We and most other countries officially regard a portion of the city, the former Jordanian-occupied East Jerusalem, as "occupied territory." We and most other countries have not located our embassy in Jerusalem in recognition of other legitimate interests in its ultimate status, and to encourage peaceful agreement in reaching accord on that status. Settling the Jerusalem issue will probably be the last hurdle in arriving at a comprehensive structure for peace in the region.

When I arrived at Lod Airport in Tel Aviv in the winter of 1980, I was met by two members of the consulate's staff, in whose company I drove for the first time up the hills to Jerusalem. When we reached my future home and the garden gates opened to let us in, I saw why this Ottoman residence was one of the most striking properties our government owns abroad. Stately yet welcoming, its three stories covered with vines climbing beyond high windows, it spoke of history. I opened the front door and, like Alice through her looking glass, drew breath and stepped into a new life. Once my suitcases were placed in an enormous bedroom with a vaulted ceiling, I climbed the separate stairs to my office on the third floor, with its lingering whiff of

prewar times, and signed a telegram to the State Department reporting I had arrived and taken charge.

This was the extent of my official installation. I was not accredited to the government of Israel and therefore did not have an *exequatur*, a formal document normally issued to a consular officer by the host government acknowledging the right of that officer to discharge consular responsibilities. I was able, as my predecessors had been, to make calls on the foreign ministry in Jerusalem, where I was acknowledged as an American official with consular authority in the city. My calls were on the chief of protocol and head of the consular division. Both were seasoned pros who received me graciously. We had the normal consular workload: Americans getting arrested, being born, dying, losing their passports. We did not issue immigrant visas, which was done in Tel Aviv. We were concerned not only with Americans in Jerusalem, but also those on the West Bank, many of dual nationality.

Our consular district covered the city of Jerusalem and the West Bank, but not Gaza. Gaza came under the purview of the embassy, a legacy from its occupation by Egypt. I went to Gaza often and met socially with officials there, including Mayor Shawwa. I liked Gaza which I had first visited in 1952, during a summer with my parents in Egypt. Even then there were 200,000 displaced Arabs living in UN refugee camps.

My Berlin experience, with its emphasis on symbols and precedents, helped me in Jerusalem. One such question was whether, and if so when, I should fly the American flag on our official vehicle. While this may sound like a trivial matter, flying a flag is a statement about the status of the occupant of the vehicle. I was not the American ambassador to Israel, and Israelis regard Jerusalem as their capital. I discussed the matter with Sam Lewis, and we agreed I would fly the flag during official calls at the foreign ministry and on the mayor, when attending national day celebrations of other consulates, and on formal visits to patriarchs.

All of the Israeli ministries, except defense, were located in Jerusalem. Defense, for security reasons, remained in Tel Aviv. This required ambassadors and several of their staff members stationed in Tel Aviv to drive back and forth to Jerusalem, which took about an hour each way. Sometimes Lewis was obliged to make the trip as many as three times in one day. Our consulate provided him and his staff office space, communication facilities, food, drink, and a place to rest. It was complicated and time consuming for everybody. We had a public affairs officer, and commercial and trade promotion programs for Jerusalem and the West Bank. We provided support to a half dozen American private voluntary organizations working with great success and dedication on the West Bank. Ours was the largest official foreign presence in Jerusalem, as it is nearly everywhere, dwarfing the other consulates some of which were one-person operations. We were responsible, too, for maintaining informal contacts with the various religious denominations represented in Jerusalem.

The Vatican's representative was *primus inter pares*. France, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Spain, Great Britain, Greece and Turkey also had their consulates general in the city, as powers represented in Jerusalem during the Ottoman Empire. We formed a small and close-knit consular corps, whose members bore responsibilities similar to mine, except that the US was the only

country that did not include Gaza in its consular district, and I had no formal religious responsibilities as most other consuls did.

We had different degrees of access to the Palestinians, based upon traditional ties and the politics of the moment. The US inevitably was cast in the role of the "heavy" after the Camp David Accords, and the more radicalized Palestinians refused to see American officials. Monthly meetings of the consular corps, chaired on a rotating basis, amounted to discussions of how each of us viewed the situation on the West Bank and in Gaza, and more broadly the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. They gave me an opportunity to brief my colleagues on the lack of progress in the peace process envisioned in the Camp David Accords, and on US involvement in Lebanon through Phil Habib's negotiations.

As a consular corps, we had formal and long-standing relationships with the Greek, Armenian, and Russian Orthodox Patriarchs and the Vatican's representative. For the US, these were matters of observing protocol and showing good will. For the Greek, Italian, and Turkish consuls, however, religious ties were their most important responsibilities. Dinners hosted by the Orthodox patriarchs took place in a medieval court-like atmosphere. We were literally "thumped" into the Patriarch's presence by a *kawas*, a uniformed Arab attendant with a long and heavy metal-tipped staff which he banged loudly on stone floors to clear an imaginary path through empty halls and announce our coming. It is a particularly odd feeling to be calling alone and be preceded by a *kawas*. Except for the austere quarters of the Vatican representative, the patriarchs in their splendor left one wondering which century this was.

Life and Work at the American Consulate

Before I left Washington I was briefed on the ties between our embassy in Tel Aviv and the consulate general in Jerusalem. Harold H. Saunders, then assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, a wise and gentle man, went over that relationship with some care because historically it has been troubled. Maintaining the independence of Jerusalem was important, and just as important was that I be perceived as maintaining it, he said. There had been periods during which ambassadors and consuls general were not speaking to each other. Hal pointed out that Sam Lewis was a strong individual; he hoped I would resist efforts by the embassy to encroach on my responsibilities. I said I had known Sam for a long time, and had no reason to anticipate difficulties.

As it turned out, Sam and I had an excellent relationship. We never had differences concerning our respective roles or "turf." There was a minimum amount of friction between our staffs, because Sam and his DCM, and my deputy and I, monitored the relationship carefully. Once, Sam asked whether he could use my residence for a social occasion. He would be the host. I replied it could cloud the US view of Jerusalem's status in other people's eyes. He pondered this for a few moments and agreed.

I attended the weekly country team meetings at the embassy in Tel Aviv, reporting on West Bank developments and listening to discussions of US-Israeli relations. When it was relevant, I provided a Palestinian perspective or urged the embassy to take a particular initiative vis-a-vis the Israeli government with respect to our concerns about Palestinians. I was included in various

social events hosted by the embassy staff, as were other members of the consulate, and we sometimes added embassy staff to our guest lists in Jerusalem. Sam and I stressed that the US had only one set of policies concerning Jerusalem and the West Bank. Government officials and journalists heard the same line from me as they did from Sam.

Social occasions in Tel Aviv gave me an opportunity to provide Israelis the flavor and mood of the West Bank. They were interested in the way someone outside the always turbulent political situation in the capital saw it. Our military attachés in Tel Aviv reported regularly on the West Bank. One day, driving to Tel Aviv shortly before Israel's invasion of Lebanon, I encountered a long column of flatbed trucks carrying tanks from the south northward toward Lebanon. I counted the tanks, and was able to provide timely information to our military attaché for his reporting. Our cooperation was productive.

The Jerusalem consulate general is the only foreign service post where Israelis and Arabs work side by side. When there were disputes, these had to do with conditions of work, and were not politically motivated. I was struck by how ready both sides were to live and work together. When a Palestinian employee had a baby, Israeli staff members went to the hospital to see the mother and child. The reverse was also true. Weddings were attended by both groups. We were, in fact, a family at the consulate general. Most of the local staff had been working there for many years. We had good jobs for Palestinians, and Israelis also found satisfaction in working for the US government. The residence staff, especially the gardeners, had been there for decades; most were Jordanians living on the West Bank who stayed after the 1967 War.

The major-domo in the residence, an all-seeing man in his sixties of unbounded tact named Mohammed Latif, had been the major-domo in Amman when William B. Macomber was ambassador there. Bill once visited me in Jerusalem, and these two men fell into each others' arms. When I told Mohammed that Macomber would be coming to dinner, he said Macomber had been easy to work for; all he ever wanted for lunch was a hamburger.

The American staff at the consulate general was small and its quality uniformly good. Jock Covey, who soon became my deputy, was active in training our junior officers of whom we had three at all times. When Phil Habib's Lebanese negotiations intensified, we served as an executive secretariat to him. Our staff worked hard and long hours. Backstopping Habib was rewarding for junior officers learning how negotiations are conducted. They had responsibility and tight deadlines thrust upon them and responded superbly.

Even after 1967, when Jerusalem ceased to be a divided city, we kept our office building in East Jerusalem and performed consular, information and cultural functions in that building. The compound on Agron Road in West Jerusalem was used by the consul general, and the political, economic/commercial, and administrative staffs. The third floor of the residence was the consul general's office. It could be reached directly; a visitor would not go through the living quarters on the first two floors to get to the office on the third. Our 19th century buildings in Jerusalem dated to Turkish times; we had owned them for many years and been able to invest sufficient money to maintain them reasonably well. The office floor housed communications equipment that weighed tons, and we worried about the load, which, indeed, eventually became a serious structural problem.

The consul general's residence is known for its Ottoman character and unselfconscious dignity. It speaks of other times in a pastoral Jerusalem of wide roads and quiet, tree-filled gardens. The property is walled in. An oval driveway encloses a lawn richly bordered by rose bushes and other plants. Tall old trees provide shade. Built of large stone blocks, the front of the residence is covered by flowering vines whose scent in spring seeps inside, and whose green leaves in summer nestle it.

One enters a stone floored hall: the rectangular, polished Jerusalem stone of rose and yellow hue. A vaulted dining room is to the right and winding stone steps lead to the floor above. The ceilings everywhere are high, and freely moving air cools the house in summer. Plants on the steps bring in the garden. The stairs emerge into the center of a large foyer on the second floor, the main floor of the residence. To provide accent and orientation to this space, I painted one of its walls a flat red ochre found in the public rooms of Jerusalem's American Colony Hotel. To the right of the steps is the long living room with its large oriental rugs, fireplace at one end, and vaulted white ceilings above.

Alone in that room overlooking the garden through the vines, I had feelings of both possession and intrusion, an instinctive respect for the events that had taken place there, and the people involved in them for over a century of Jerusalem's life. The residence was permeated by echoes of its past. They made a pleasant sound, and I thought myself the custodian of this old house and a definer, for a brief time, of its future.

If I speak in the first person singular, it is because my wife and I separated before I went to Jerusalem for reasons of incompatibility. We had become distant people with different interests. Our younger sons, Paul and Mark, lived with me thereafter, and attended the Anglican School. Jack and Cathy, already in Washington schools, visited during the summer while Paul and Mark were with their mother. It was not easy, especially and sadly for the children, but we managed well in the end.

In the early 1980s, security in Jerusalem was not the problem it has become today. I walked freely without a bodyguard, avoided crowds, and told my children to do the same. My tour ended before the *intifada*, before fighting broke out on the West Bank, and before Palestinians armed themselves with more than rocks and stones.

I began a typical day with an informal staff meeting in my office, after reading the cables from Washington and our other posts and confirming that our reporting was on track. I might next meet with Palestinians who wanted to talk with me, and then have lunch with an American visitor, a journalist, or Sam Lewis if he was in town. There were daily phone calls to our embassy in Tel Aviv, sometimes on our secure phone which never seemed to work properly. Afternoons were often devoted to calls on mayors and prominent figures on the West Bank, and observations of settlements to note their relentless expansion. I would return and have dinner with my sons and Israeli friends, or with Father Godfrey, a close friend of our family, archeologist, and renowned tour guide to the holy places of all religions. Those of us at the consulate general became his personal flock, year after year. Throughout, I was assisted by one

of the best secretaries in the foreign service, Martha Hayward, with whom I had served in West and East Berlin, and as country director for Panama.

I did a considerable amount in media relations, although not publicly, meeting with American journalists in my office or over a meal. I also saw locally based reporters, whose families and mine became friends, and columnists and commentators who traveled through the area, people like Rowland Evans and Tom Brokaw of NBC. I have always liked journalists. They are wonderful sources of gossip, humor, and insights. The good ones live in a world of *realpolitik* and are not easily taken in. Only once was a confidence of mine betrayed, and that accidentally.

Rarely would an Israeli reporter ask to talk with me. I was friendly with people on the *Jerusalem Post*, but wanted to keep a low public profile. In general, the Israeli press and radio enjoyed criticizing the actions of our consulate. The Israeli press is always lively, sometimes vicious. Few escape its barbs. There was never any full-blown reporting on the consulate general, but we received occasional digs about our visits to Palestinians. We were denigrated as "Arabists" by the hardliners. I had even fewer contacts with the Arabic press; most Arab journalists tended to be leftist, shrill, and vehemently opposed to US policy, especially the Camp David Accords.

The ways the words "Arabists," as applied to Foreign Service officers, and "balanced," to characterize reporting or statements, are used by some Israelis and their American friends bothers me. Today, an Arabist is someone who has learned Arabic, studied the culture, and made the Middle East an area of professional specialization. This is a necessary component in our diplomatic skills, exemplified in the career of Ambassador Parker T. Hart. The word "balanced" is made pejorative, connoting a prejudiced favoring of the Arab side. Sometimes this happens, as does the reverse in Israel's direction, but we should all be able to agree that balance is an intellectual accomplishment worth striving for, especially in a diplomat.

That said, there has historically been a bias toward Arabs among many of the State Department's Middle East experts and vestiges of it remain. Some of this is romantically based, as in the views of generations of British travelers and explorers in the Arab/Muslim world, people like Charles Doughty and T.E. Lawrence. Some reflects opposition to Israel's post-1967 settlement policies, anger over its treatment of Palestinians, and resentment over the political influence of Israeli lobbying in the US. "Who are the Palestinians?" Prime Minister Golda Meir asked sarcastically at a press conference in the US in 1969. Some of the concern, also, is based on economic realities and the international politics of oil. It took Clark Clifford and President Truman's business partner Eddie Jacobson to overcome State Department resistance in 1948, from Secretary Marshall on down, to recognizing Israel. Until recently, few real Arabists jeopardized their State Department careers by learning Hebrew and serving in Israel. The personnel system took care that this did not happen.

In my own family, my Polish-born mother, a product of middle-class Warsaw in the early decades of this century, sometimes made anti-Semitic remarks. My father, who became a leading expert in the corporate world on Middle East oil, did not, but criticized Israel's frequent and evident disdain for Arabs. My summer paper in graduate studies at Princeton, written after I visited my family in Cairo, was entitled *Dimensions of the Arab Case*, because I thought, in 1951, that too little was understood about the concerns of moderate Arabs about Israel. In it I

concluded that Arabs should accept the fact of Israel's existence and begin to work out a way of life with her. I am not, however, an Arabist by anyone's definition. In 1983, my prospective assignment as ambassador to Kuwait foundered when the Kuwaitis turned me down as sympathetic to Israel on the basis of my service in Jerusalem.

Washington was greatly interested in Jewish settlements and their expansion, and it was up to us to decide how to observe and quantify the frantic housing construction around Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank. Palestinians saw the consulate as the eyes, and especially ears, of the US government. To many Israelis, however, we were diplomats whose activities were vaguely sinister. Likud partisans occasionally raised a fuss about the activities of the consulate general on the West Bank, usually in the media, where we were portrayed as PLO sympathizers. I was never made to feel uncomfortable by ordinary Israelis, however, who seemed to accept our presence and what we were doing as a matter of course.

With brutally repressive measures against Palestinians in force on the West Bank and an expanding war in Lebanon, these were wrenching times for most Israelis. A few of them refused invitations to our residence, seeing the consulate as a symbol of imagined support for the PLO by the US government and an impediment to Jerusalem's becoming the site for an American embassy. In fact, our firm policy toward the PLO was to avoid all contact with that organization and its representatives, and our views on the status of Jerusalem were equally public and clear. The PLO was banned on the West Bank and we never knowingly met with anyone from that organization, although its sympathizers were everywhere and growing in number.

There were also a few Americans, including visitors from our country, who would not come to the residence for the same reasons. Most of them expressed their opinions civilly; others felt less constrained. One of the most frustrating situations for a diplomat abroad is an emotional attack on his government's policies by fellow citizens who are biased or poorly informed, and want to stay that way. To complicate matters further, the consulate general was in good favor with elements of ultra-orthodox Jewry who believed Jerusalem should be an entirely spiritual place, and not a capital for the state of Israel. Our presence was viewed by them as desirable, and a constraint on the secular ambitions of the Israeli government. They regularly attended our Fourth of July celebrations.

The Camp David Accords

I arrived in Jerusalem 18 months after the Camp David Accords, which brought peace between Egypt and Israel, were signed in mid-1978. One of my responsibilities was to elicit support from Palestinians for those agreements and the "autonomy" process for the West Bank and Gaza they envisioned. It did not take me long to recognize we would not succeed. My colleagues at other consulates accurately viewed Camp David as a dead issue. Washington nevertheless remained committed to the Camp David "process." While I had general guidance from Washington, it was up to the consulate to be an advocate, devise a strategy to meet US objectives, and keep Washington informed of the prospects. Rarely, did we get specific instructions from Washington to do anything. In my three years, I was instructed only once to go to the foreign ministry, and that was on a consular matter.

Consulate personnel were closely monitored by the Israeli security apparatus. I was once introduced by Ambassador Lewis to Ariel Sharon, then defense minister, at a social function honoring the arts at Lewis' residence in Tel Aviv. Sam, in a burst of good will, hoped that by meeting me Sharon might become less hostile to the consulate. Instead, Sharon said gruffly that he already knew who I was and what I was doing. He was scathingly critical of me and my staff, whom he accused of coddling the PLO. In some heat, I replied that because Mr. Sharon was well informed he would know that no one at the consulate had any contacts with the PLO. He turned his back to me and we left it at that.

Sharon had difficult relationships with Americans who were not ardent supporters of his views on settlements, Arabs, and the war in Lebanon. I found him an extraordinarily complicated man, an amoral ideologue with a nasty agenda. To him, every Palestinian is a terrorist and something less than fully human. His unrelenting policy of paving the West Bank and Jerusalem's suburbs with settlements is intended to make serious land-for-peace compromises impossible. Over many years Sharon, in my view, has been inflicting great damage on the prospects for peace in the Middle East, and therefore on Israel's, and everyone else's, best interests.

In April 1981 during Secretary of State Al Haig's first visit to the Middle East, I briefed him over breakfast. I told him it was common knowledge among my Israeli friends that Sharon was looking for any excuse to invade Lebanon to settle the Palestinian issue once and for all by force. The invasion occurred on June 6 as "Operation Peace for Galilee," and its stated purpose was to remove PLO forces from a 40-kilometer area north of Israel's border with Lebanon, putting Israel out of range of PLO artillery. In fact, however, Sharon sought to destroy the PLO leadership and remove it from Lebanon entirely, arrange for the election of Bashir Gemayel as president of Lebanon, and then conclude a peace treaty with Lebanon. The goal of expelling the PLO was accomplished; the other objectives were not. Sharon was at this time still playing the dominant Israeli role in the Camp David autonomy talks, thus demonstrating that the Israelis had no intention of engaging in good-faith negotiations with Egypt and the US.

Sam Lewis had long been skeptical about Sharon, and became increasingly distressed as he saw what Sharon was up to in the invasion of Lebanon. I suspect Foreign Minister Shamir and Sharon knew more about plans for an Israeli push all the way to Beirut than Begin. Begin's subsequent depression, his withdrawal and isolation, in part, I believe, reflected his recognition of Israel's self-inflicted wound in Lebanon. He came to understand, as the coffins of young Israelis kept returning, and after the massacres at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, what his cabinet had wrought and how much blood was on their hands.

Sharon was a problem for everyone: for Sam, for Phil Habib, but especially for peace-minded Israelis. As the Lebanese negotiations unfolded, Sam and Phil would return to the consulate after having met with Sharon, often incredulous at his outrageousness. Habib was always wary of Sharon, who seemed to all of us to have an agenda of his own, no matter what his government's stated policy might be.

Israeli officials resented the consulate's reporting on their rapidly expanding settlements, and on Palestinian views critical of Israeli activities. We disciplined ourselves about what we said and wrote, and separated fact from analysis. We made it clear to Palestinians that the US government

had no sympathy for the expansion of settlements, collective punishment of Palestinian families, or acts of brutality by soldiers and settlers occurring with increasing frequency on the West Bank. We also deplored Palestinian terrorism and Arafat's role in it.

Most Palestinians I met were well educated mayors and "notables," university professors, journalists, students, businessmen, lawyers and doctors. Few were professional women. Most spoke English and had family or personal connections to Jordan, where Amman was the source of financial support, passports, and other amenities for the West Bank's Palestinians. The men drank coffee, smoked, and talked politics endlessly, it seemed. A tedious part of my responsibilities was to listen to the litany of complaints from Palestinians about US policy. Most were not interested in hearing our views, and endlessly repeated set speeches accusing us of being responsible for the West Bank's miseries because of our financial and political support of Israel. They held us accountable for the construction of settlements, claiming these were paid for by diversions of US financial aid to Israel and financial support from American Jewish organizations. After a while, these Palestinians would end their monologues and get to more open discussions, although one could usually feel their bitterness toward the US and resentment of the Camp David Accords, which were viewed as legitimizing the Israeli *status quo*.

Arabs of each village and city varied in temperament; at best, one did not sense more than a loose coordination of views among the mayors in the early 1980s. The more radical Palestinians, however, marched in lockstep. Elected officials, like the mayors, talked to us without reservation and in the easy-going manner of people whose lives are in politics. This was not always true for private Palestinians, who tended to be more cautious if their ties to Jordan were strong, or they were concerned about seeming too close to US officials promoting the Camp David Accords. There were only a few occasions when it was not "convenient" for a mayor to see me, and a suggestion was made that we meet the following week. In general, access to Palestinians was not a problem.

Palestinians were also bitter toward Egypt's President Sadat, co-signer of the Accords. I was in Jerusalem when he was assassinated by his military officers, and it wasn't long before Palestinians repeated the PLO line that his fate was deserved because he was a traitor. The moderates who made such comments surprised me. After Israel, Egypt was the strongest military power in the region. The Camp David Accords neutralized that power, which radical Palestinians saw as the only hope of one day regaining their territory and, in the case of the fanatics among them, pushing Israel into the sea. Palestinians resented President Carter as well, and were pleased when he lost his bid for re-election. They had higher hopes for the Reagan administration, believing it might repudiate Camp David. They particularly hoped the "autonomy" process would be abandoned, and that the US would become less supportive of Israel. Of course, none of this occurred.

This was still a period when Palestinians were unarmed, and violent confrontations with Israelis on the West Bank were not a daily occurrence. Demonstrations did break out in violence, but Palestinians used stones then, not guns. They burned tires, created black smoke, and blocked a few roads; they rioted in refugee camps, but this was pre-*intifada* and weapons were used only by Jewish settlers and military occupation authorities.

Acts of terrorism within Israel, organized abroad by the PLO, Hamas and other groups, were increasing in number and severity. Palestinians in general felt themselves impotent victims of an occupation that became increasingly callous toward their human rights and contemptuous of international standards defined in the Geneva Conventions. Their fellow Arabs in the Gulf States and elsewhere sent money but did not, in the eyes of Palestinians, appear seriously interested in what was happening to them.

A Palestinian I saw often was Mayor Elias Freij, of Bethlehem. He was an orthodox Christian, a moderate, even-tempered, intelligent and moral man, someone who did not whine, and who described the Palestinian dilemma in a larger perspective. As a Christian, he did not have much influence on Muslim Palestinians. I often brought visitors to him because he was eloquent, measured and credible in his soft and patient voice, and because he lived in Bethlehem, which many Americans wanted to visit in any case. Freij was effective in talking calmly and rationally about Palestinian concerns, one of a small number of Arabs who could do so. Yet he, too, strongly criticized the Camp David Accords as a sell-out to Israel. Freij was critical of Arafat in his private conversations with me, but never disavowed him as the legitimate leader of all Palestinians.

Most other Palestinians with whom I spoke would not have dreamed of criticizing Arafat. Freij had deeper insights and recognized that Arafat was not then acceptable to the West because of his endorsement of terrorism and ambition to destroy Israel, and his militant leadership of the PLO. Freij, always a sensitive man of purpose and conviction, read the mood on the West Bank well. He paid for his individuality by being something of a pariah on the Jordanian political scene, and on one occasion having his home occupied by Israeli soldiers for a number of days, for his "protection."

To get a different perspective, I saw, among many others, Karim Khalaf, the former mayor of Ramallah, who was one of two mayors to lose their legs in car bomb attacks perpetrated by a right-wing Israeli underground group. Khalaf lived in Jericho thereafter, but I knew him earlier in Ramallah. Khalaf was a radical, one of the most outspoken mayors on the West Bank, and a vocal critic of Camp David. Even after his amputations, he never lost his fire. When I talked with him in the shade of his garden of orange trees in Jericho, he was full of sparks and anger about the Israelis and ourselves. He, too, was not interested in hearing other views. But he was always, in the Arab way, a warm and welcoming host, unhappy if you did not share coffee and food, and take some oranges home.

Shortly after my arrival in Jerusalem, Israeli occupation authorities deported two West Bank mayors accused of being PLO-sympathizers across the river to Jordan. They were widely respected leaders among the Palestinians, thoughtful men of principle who were anything but demagogues. The world-wide publicity generated by their deportations was more than the Israelis had bargained for. Deportation left the families, who chose to stay on their land, in dire straits. Western governments, including our own, protested these measures taken at a time when we were clinging to the hope of implementing the Camp David Accords as part of a peace process. To do this, we would need the support of West Bank mayors, particularly those of stature.

I decided to visit the wives and children of these mayors to ask how they were faring, and repeated my calls when I returned to their cities. In Jerusalem, I was pleased when the women stopped by my office. From comments made to me since then, including those of one of the mayors visiting the United States some fifteen years later, I now recognize that this gesture, which became well known, probably was the most effective step I was able to take in three years to reach out to Palestinians as a credible American official.

A Visit to Batir

Mohammed Latif, our major-domo at the residence, lived in the village of Batir near Jerusalem. One day, he invited my sons and me to his home for dinner. We stopped to visit a friend of his in a village nearby, whose daughter had accidentally been killed two or three days earlier by gunfire from the Israeli military. Mohammed wanted us to meet her family. The girl's parents did not lash out at me. They spoke of their grief quietly and with dignity. They said they were unable to understand how the US could do nothing as violence increased on the West Bank and innocent people were killed. They could not believe--few Palestinians could--that we did not have the power to curb the Israelis if we chose to.

Sitting on their terrace in Batir at dusk, looking over the vineyards in the valley and hearing the father speak of this experience pulled my thoughts and feelings together. The mother had given me a photograph of her daughter, a smiling girl in her late teens with dark, braided hair. The immediacy of their loss was poignant, as were the composure and resignation with which it was accepted and conveyed to me. No angry mob could have had anything like this effect on my understanding of the human toll of the occupation. There was also, I realized, a price paid by the occupiers, young soldiers who, for the most part, found the brutal side of their orders repugnant. Violence during 1980-83 was spiraling. During one dreadful week, West Bank violence was the cover story in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The Economist*.

In Jerusalem that night, I wrote a cable, "The Dark Side of Israeli Occupation," drawing on the evening's conversation and its mood, trying to make a real person of this young victim of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Rarely had our reporting aroused so much comment. It struck a chord among colleagues in the Middle East and Washington.

The "Village Leagues" Proposal

There were problems beyond violence on the West Bank, among them Sharon's plan calling for the creation of "Village Leagues." These were to be made up of Palestinians imposed as unelected mayors and functionaries in cities that had lost their mayors through deportation. Later on, they were to become a cadre of Palestinians the Israelis intended to put in place under the "self-governing" provisions of the Camp David Accords. These Palestinians had been selected by military authorities because they were willing to cooperate. They were quislings, as people on the ground including foreign journalists called them, after the Norwegian collaborator with German occupation authorities in World War II. Some, if not all, were in the pay of the Israelis. They were a mediocre lot, whose experience had little to do with skills in governing, and whose backgrounds were often shady. One of them, a notorious Israeli agent, had for many months required open protection by Israeli soldiers at his home near Hebron.

Sad to say, there were people in Washington who insisted these quislings be taken seriously and that the proposed "Village Leagues" be given US support as part of the Camp David effort to achieve autonomy. They were officials outside the State Department whose Likud sympathies were apparent. Our reporting for a while focused on exposing the dubious credentials of these Palestinians, and the Israeli government's cynicism in this effort. On the West Bank, it was essential for us to distance ourselves from the "Village Leagues" proposal, which had touched a raw nerve, if we were to maintain credibility and access to the rest of the Palestinians. I became so disturbed about pressure from USIA, in particular, that I sent a short, personal cable to Secretary of State Shultz recommending that we avoid endorsing the "Leagues," and discourage their Israeli sponsors, if we wanted to retain what influence we had with the real Palestinian leadership. Had it been implemented, the "Village Leagues" proposal would have been the final coffin nail for the Camp David Accords. Eventually, this unworthy enterprise collapsed, although for a long time our willingness even to consider it left a bad taste.

Congressional Delegations

Israel is an important port of call for any member of congress--like going to Ireland or the Berlin wall--so we had many visitors either singly or as members of congressional delegations. These CODELS arrived in Tel Aviv and then left as soon as they could because the prime minister, religious sites, and photo-ops were in Jerusalem. Each one had an embassy and consulate "control officer" to organize their visits. Their arrivals and sojourns placed heavy demands on our time and resources. I escorted them to the West Bank whenever they showed interest in going there, and many did.

I am a great believer in the value of congressional visits. We welcomed them even in the overwhelming numbers that came to Jerusalem. Each visit provided an opportunity to present the situation as we saw it, and enter into a dialogue, sometimes profitable and always intense, with members of congress and their staffs. Our visitors were a captive audience and were interested in Palestinians, even those members of the House and Senate who favored Likud's policies. By and large CODELS are serious trips undertaken for the primary purpose of learning.

The CODELS I briefed rather endlessly came in the wake of the Camp David Accords. I often invited Palestinians to the residence to meet with American legislators directly, and tried to get Palestinians themselves to present their views to the CODELS. Occasionally, Palestinians refused to come in protest against the congress, which they considered the instrument of their misfortunes through its aid appropriations to Israel. I tried to expose visitors to a broad spectrum of Palestinian views, but because some of the most articulate among them would not come to my home, they threw away valuable opportunities to put their case to American legislators.

For example, Palestinians would not talk to Senator Howard Baker, then majority leader and a very sensible man, because he was seen by them as opposed to their cause. At the last minute, they balked at attending my reception for him and even persuaded the politically astute Mayor Freij to stay away in a show of solidarity. I usually had little idea whether Palestinians would show up at a reception before the event. Some I could invite for a small dinner, others would only attend a larger function. When Palestinians did not appear at our reception for Senator

Baker, I explained why the boycott had occurred, and how misplaced it was. Baker was disappointed, but understood. Palestinians were the losers every time in these childish games.

Two CODELS came often and stood out for their thoughtful approaches to the region's problems. Congressman Steve Solarz, Democrat of New York, was one of the hardest working members I have met. He ran us ragged on the West Bank every time he came to Jerusalem. He became well acquainted with key Palestinians. It was apparent to me, and to them, that he cared about their future. Steve told me that as a congressman from Brooklyn, these visits with Palestinians were not easy politically. I admired him for his intellectual curiosity and fairness, and for the political risks he was taking at home in talking with Palestinians.

The other exceptionally hard working visitor was Senator Paul Tsongas, a Democrat of Massachusetts, who was of Greek origin. We always arranged for him and his wife to meet the Greek Patriarch in Jerusalem and he, too, was intensely interested in the West Bank and its Palestinians. While Solarz and Tsongas remained exceptionally well informed on the West Bank, many other members and their staffs made serious efforts to understand the complexity of the issues symbolized by "unified" but divided Jerusalem.

Visit of Former President and Mrs. Carter

In March of 1983, former President Carter and his wife Rosalynn visited Jerusalem, and for most of two days traveled on the West Bank. The three of us sat in the back of his armored limousine, where Carter and Rosalynn usually held hands and she kicked off her shoes. An Israeli security officer rode in front, and a security car followed us. Carter, as the architect of the Camp David Accords, was intensely interested in Palestinians and their views. This was his first opportunity to see the West Bank. He called on some of the leaders, but not all would receive him, as we had determined beforehand. In Jerusalem, I gave a luncheon and a dinner attended by Palestinians, all moderates, who were eager to talk with him. Meron Benvenisti, a former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, had developed a statistical data base for the West Bank, including settlements and Israel's economic ties there. I arranged for him to give the Carters a briefing which had evident impact on the former president who was beginning to understand Palestinian life at first-hand.

I invited the Carters and our by then exhausted staff on the evening before they left to dinner at the Philadelphia Restaurant, our favorite place for Arab food in the heart of East Jerusalem. My sons Paul and Mark, and Martha Hayward, were there. To my surprise, Carter's security people were not unduly concerned. In that noisy and informal ambience, we were served a banquet at which plates of cold dishes covered the table before the arrival of lamb, and *arak* was followed by beer. Walid, the owner, buried any resentments about Camp David he may have harbored. We had a lively, almost rowdy, time.

In retirement, Carter seemed more relaxed and at peace with himself: not the man of inner torments which often broke through his usual reserve when he was president. His interest in the Palestinian-Israeli relationship was genuine, and he felt sympathy for the Palestinians. By the end of his hard-working visit to Jerusalem, Carter seemed to have no doubt that the benefits of Camp David were limited to the rapprochement between Israel and Egypt he had done so much to bring about. He could see for himself that formulas for Palestinian autonomy on the West

Bank and Gaza were unacceptable to the Palestinians. They were opposed by the Arab states. King Hussein of Jordan had not been invited to Camp David, and did not find himself in a position to provide the indispensable support their implementation would have required--even had he wished to do so.

Carter's lined face, with its muscles often tense, told much about his ability to concentrate. His questions reflected the pragmatic, fact-gathering and analytical bent of the engineer he had been. But he was also a man of emotions who quite easily sorted data into moral categories of right and wrong. At the Philadelphia Restaurant, his warmth, joviality and teasing nature came through when he joshed with my sons and our staff and enjoyed his glass of *arak*.

Carter's wife had great influence over him, and their devotion to each other was touching in its directness. As Carter prepared for a press conference at the King David Hotel on his last day, Mrs. Carter told me he would probably not ask me what to emphasize, but I should offer my thoughts to him anyway. I did so, even though his visit was a private one, and when he drew on my suggestions in his remarks, she turned to me and said, "See, he's taking your advice!"

Carter asked me to come to his hotel alone on the morning of his departure from Jerusalem to find out whether I thought our ambassador, Sam Lewis, too readily accepted the Israeli viewpoint on matters between us. At Camp David, he said, Sam seemed to be repeating what Begin had just told him. I replied that Sam recognized the complexities and nuances on all sides, but felt it was his particular responsibility as ambassador to interpret to our government what Israeli leaders were thinking, and why.

In briefing visitors, Sam's enthusiasm and admiration for Israel sometimes carried him away, as in his characterization of "tiny Israel" in the big Middle East. But I rarely heard criticism from him of our reporting on the West Bank, much of which, in its mere recounting, reflected discredit on Israel in ways Sam understood and, albeit reluctantly sometimes, accepted. Our two posts functioned independently of each other, an exceptional arrangement which through the years has proven itself to be sound, even when relations between them were as harmonious as Sam and I made them.

Other American Visitors

I briefed leaders of the American Jewish Community when they came to Jerusalem, and had good relationships with all of them. Sam Lewis gave me helpful advice before I left Washington. He suggested I call on the Jewish leaders whose headquarters were in New York. They should have an opportunity to meet me before I left for Jerusalem, and express their views before I took up my duties. From Tel Aviv, he helped make the appointments. I must have seen at least six heads of various Jewish organizations, asking their advice and inviting them to visit me.

They took me up on this invitation, which helped develop some rewarding relationships. When they visited Jerusalem, they listened to our briefings with concern. A few traveled on the West Bank, often using me as their guide. Sometimes I invited Palestinians to join us at the residence, if our visitors wished me to, which most did. I had no problem getting Palestinians to come to

these functions. They were more tolerant of Jewish leaders than US government officials. Their hostility was directed against US policy, not Americans or Jews as such.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig visited Jerusalem while I was there, as did George Shultz, frequently. American official VIPs stayed at the King David Hotel, near the consulate. They arrived at Lod Airport in Tel Aviv and headed quickly to Jerusalem in a roaring motorcade. If it was the secretary, I would meet him and his entourage at the hotel, along with the manager and additional Israeli security agents. We would then wend our way through the crowded lobby toward two small elevators.

The question of who would ride with the secretary in such intimacy arose early in my tour. Sam and I discussed the matter and Sam said I should do the honors. The procedure was always the same. The secretary, a security guard, and I got into the elevator and rode to the appropriate floor, usually in silence. Photographers snapped pictures of us entering and exiting this small conveyance, and that was the point. I always tried to look as if I had just learned something important. We called this ritual "elevator diplomacy." If only these vertical boxes could talk, what tales they would tell! Before my time, Secretary Kissinger and his little group once spent forty-five minutes together when the elevator got stuck while they were on their way to dinner.

For me, the most memorable elevator ride at the King David was on the way down from former President Carter's top floor suite to the lobby, one evening near the end of his visit in 1983. Mrs. Carter had felt slightly ill during the day with symptoms of flu, and a doctor had been sent for. She was able to go out, and the Carters, the doctor, a security agent and I filled the elevator as we started off. Carter asked the doctor what was troubling his wife. "Mrs. Carter," came the answer, "has herpes." The silence was awkward as we reflected on this, eyes respectfully lowered. I wished I were at the Dead Sea rather than a few inches from President Carter as he received this unsettling news. Herpes, the doctor explained, takes many forms, including minor aggravations in the mouth, and with the pills he prescribed all would be well in a day or two. Whew! Ground Floor. Everybody out to face the tourists and cameras!

The King David's VIP suites overlooked the old city, and the view was breath-taking, particularly at sunset. Early in a visit, Sam and I briefed the visitor or CODEL, often at the hotel, where we were mindful that we might have a larger audience than just those of us in the room. We of course did the same for Henry Kissinger when he came on a private visit. When the delegation was to pay a call on the prime minister or foreign minister, Sam would be the escort; it would have been inappropriate for me to go along, as my relations with the Israeli government were circumscribed.

Jerusalem's Mayor Kollek

Jerusalem's renowned mayor, Teddy Kollek, was in office during my tour, as he had been for many years before and was to be afterwards. When I arrived, I called on him. It was a cordial but tough meeting. He told me he was trying to make Jerusalem a united city, and the American consulate general was trying to divide it. He pointed to the fact that we had two 4th of July receptions--one in West Jerusalem, and the other in East Jerusalem for Palestinians. When June rolled around, I sent out invitations to two 4th of July parties, as had been the custom since 1948.

Teddy Kollek went through the roof. He wrote an unkind letter of protest to Sam Lewis, which Sam unhelpfully forwarded to me for reply.

We did not want to hold two 4th of July receptions, of course, and were not interested in exacerbating Israeli-Palestinian divisions. I believed, however, that there was no other choice, and that the problem had not been created by the US. If we had attempted to hold just one event, no Palestinians, in those days of resentment about the Camp David Accords and the worst of West Bank violence, would have come, creating a breach in our relations that would have been difficult to repair. All of the other consuls felt obliged to hold two events on their national days, something that seemed to trouble Kollek far less. I saw no way to satisfy Kollek and at the same time continue our open, if not fruitful, dialogue with Palestinians. I was able to bring Israelis and some Palestinians together socially at my home, but during 1980-83 that would not have worked at a public function.

So, we had the Israeli community in the shaded summer garden of the residence, along with many Americans living in Jerusalem and on the West Bank, journalists, a protocol person from Kollek's office (the mayor himself would not come), distinguished Israeli friends like the former chief justice and chancellor Harman of Hebrew University, and the religious leaders. Our consular colleagues also attended this pleasant, even elegant, garden party which, with women in hats, many men in blazers, had a 1930s feeling to it.

The second celebration was held the next evening in East Jerusalem, on the roof of the American Colony Hotel. This was a smoky feast of grilled foods and Arab dishes lit by strings of colored lights and noisily animated by sounds of Arab music. I invited as many Israelis as I could to both celebrations. Palestinians attended the party in East Jerusalem in great numbers, bringing their families and uninvited friends. Journalists and some Israelis came to both events, including Israeli reporters and columnists who enjoyed friendships with Palestinians. Our consular colleagues came, and we partied into the night with the Vester family who had so long been associated with the American colony.

These 4th of July celebrations bedeviled us for the three years I was in Jerusalem. I gritted my teeth and gave them anyway, and was finally able to pacify Teddy Kollek in the matter. At stake, I told him, were our contacts with even moderate Palestinians as conditions on the West Bank deteriorated, a situation he also deplored. The US was second to none, I told him, in its belief that Jerusalem was, and should remain, an undivided city. But we also had to face realities of the times.

Kollek and I became friends. He came to the residence often, where his preference was to sit on the floor with his legs crossed. Guests would talk with him about Jerusalem and his plans for its future. I took congressional delegations to see him or, if their stay was short, hosted a reception and invited Teddy. I also spent time with him planning visits of American officials, which brings up the Weinberger precedent.

During my time, when cabinet-level American officials visited Arab East Jerusalem they would be escorted by myself or a member of my staff, but not Kollek or one of his staff, although Teddy quite rightly considered himself mayor of the whole city. In 1983, when Cap Weinberger,

then secretary of defense, was scheduled to visit Jerusalem, I cabled the State Department arguing that the practice of having the consul general escort an American official within East Jerusalem, while Kollek did the honors in West Jerusalem, was an anachronism. Kollek justifiably resented this distinction, and Palestinians didn't care. I informed the Department that unless instructed otherwise, I would ask Mayor Kollek to escort Weinberger through East and West Jerusalem. Splitting the city in this way was unseemly, and ran counter to our own interests. We had maintained for years that Jerusalem was one city and yet, when it came to realities, we sometimes treated it as two.

I had called our desk officer in Washington, after having discussed my proposal with Sam Lewis first, to alert the Department to this message. Go ahead, they said, and see what happens. I called on Teddy to share the news. Before I could open my mouth, he said to me in his gravelly voice that he knew why I was there, and was sick and tired of the usual pitch about visitors. I told him to calm down and listen. I was there to discuss the Weinberger visit. He said he didn't want to hear about it. I then told him we were proposing that he escort the secretary of defense through East and West Jerusalem. Teddy looked at me, dumbfounded. He finally said: "God bless you!" Weinberger, Kollek, and I traveled around all of Jerusalem in a mini-van. When we alighted inside the old walls, Teddy turned to Weinberger and said: "You know, you are making history!" Of course, I had briefed Weinberger and he understood the reference. This is progress in the Middle East.

I had a heartwarming relationship with Teddy Kollek, and admired him greatly. He was held in esteem by most Palestinians who lived in Jerusalem, and did a lot for them. They trusted him. I don't remember ever hearing a Palestinian say something nasty about Kollek. He was what we would call a ward politician with street smarts, a big heart, and a great personal touch, a man of the people. He took enormous pride in the acres of flowers he planted in Jerusalem. There were many parks, and the boulevards were divided by flower beds. Driving around the city in his battered Volkswagen Beetle, Teddy occasionally spotted someone picking a flower. He would slam on the brakes and pounce on the unlucky individual. "What would happen to this city if *everybody* picked its flowers?" he bellowed. The subject of this tirade from the mayor would be mortified, but what can you do with a flower once you have picked it?

Teddy made a political error: he stayed in office too long. I think he could have become prime minister if the Labor Party had chosen him. No one had better ties to Americans. But he was not willing to abandon his first love, Jerusalem. It was already too late for Kollek on the national scene when I was there. He stayed as mayor until voted out. Time passed him by, and from his small, second-floor apartment he has lived to see his Likud successor restore the walls between people he did so much to break down.

Places on the West Bank and Gaza

Some Palestinian villages and cities remain sharply etched in memory. Bethlehem is not at all the "little town" of Christmas carols, but rather a sprawling, undistinguished even ugly place teeming with hawkers of religious souvenirs. Mark Twain caught its flavor in *Innocents Abroad*.

Hebron is a city that disturbs me in a visceral way. There is something dark and menacing about it. A great unholiness resides there. By 1980, a settlement flourished in the heart of Hebron, established by a small group of radical Jewish settlers, some of them from Brooklyn, in an old building next to a mosque. On the roof of this building, one could see a guard post manned by settlers conspicuously brandishing their Uzis, which gave it the look of a military fortress, a jarring in-your-face message to the Arab population. One sensed catastrophes waiting to happen. When a settler shot dozens of Arab worshippers in the Hebron mosque several years ago, I was not surprised.

Nablus is a distinctive city perched on its hills with a certain grandeur. In my time, it also was the most hostile and volatile place on the West Bank. It is geographically removed from the central cluster of West Bank communities, and Palestinians seem a bit different there. Violent demonstrations were frequent in Nablus; it was in Nablus that stones were thrown at my car by teenagers. The city was radicalized in a palpable way.

The Al-Masri family in Nablus were friends. One of the brightest young men in the family, Zafer, was exceptionally courageous in his political moderation as the city's mayor. He knew the US well; members of his family had been educated there. I became acquainted with him, his lovely and politically attuned wife, and their children, who visited me in Jerusalem. Zafer paid for his courage. He was assassinated by radical Palestinians after I left Jerusalem. It was in Nablus that one found Palestinians punishing their kin for the sin of political moderation. Zafer's death was a great and painful loss to the Palestinian cause.

Then there was Gaza with its refugee camps, a powder keg in search of a match. I had good friends in Gaza, and came to understand the dynamics of the area: its poverty and restlessness, feelings of confinement, its aura of being overwhelmed by history. Arafat, today, is having difficulty exerting his authority over the Gaza strip. He is not a good administrator to start with, but Gaza is an ungovernable entity. Gaza's refugee camps were densely crowded shacks lined up along the sea shore, littered with refuse, filthy. They were made of corrugated metal or anything else that would stand, one next to the other for miles. Children were everywhere and population growth was high. There was enough food to keep people alive at modest levels, but the area was seething with pent-up anger exacerbated by the lack of jobs--and hope. Some fished, for themselves and as a business; many of the men worked in Israel as day laborers or pickers in the orange groves. It was sobering to observe such squalor and misery and wonder what Gaza's future might be. I never walked through the camps, but passed through them with my Arab driver. I saw other camps on the West Bank, such as the large one outside Bethlehem, but none as spiritless as Gaza.

My Palestinian contacts had little to do with the refugee camps, although they mentioned these camps and their problems to me often. Mayor Freij of Bethlehem and other Palestinians were concerned about the camps, but did not consider themselves spokesmen for the refugees beyond deploring camp conditions and the reasons for there being refugees in the first place. They accepted the presence of refugees as facts of life under occupation.

The mayors were more concerned about the potential for violence stemming from conditions in the camps, and the presence of so many young men with nothing to do. In fact, the refugees were

not represented by anyone; they did not have a voice in the early 1980s. We would hear about them when problems arose, but they were successfully marginalized. We supported the valuable work of private voluntary agencies and UNRWA, efforts backed by many of the world's governments. But the refugees were not themselves a coherent political force; they simply existed in the West Bank and Gaza in large multiplying, unemployed numbers.

The Habib Negotiations

Israel's invasion of Lebanon on June 6, 1982 was the dominating event of my tour. As we watched the crisis mount, Israeli forces moved into Lebanon in an operation cynically called "Peace for Galilee." We thought, initially, that their forces would stop forty kilometers north of the border. But they kept moving, and it slowly became clear that Defense Minister Sharon intended to go all the way to Beirut to expel the PLO and arrange for the election of Bashir Gemayel as president of Lebanon. The Israelis suffered heavy casualties. As these mounted, and the purposes of the invasion became clear, the mood in Jerusalem changed.

The incursion polarized Israeli society as never before. Many Israeli friends asked: "What have we come to? What is this country about in Lebanon and on the West Bank?" Peace Now adherents were the most vocal in their opposition, followed by the Labor Party. A whole country was having an identity crisis. Many Israelis were morally outraged at Begin's government and its purported rationale for the invasion. There were demonstrations and vigils in front of the prime minister's residence, a few blocks from the consulate. When the Sabra and Shatila massacres occurred at Palestinian refugee camps in September, 1982 people viewed Sharon as responsible. Israelis and Palestinians alike were horrified.

Israeli anxiety was reinforced by the flow of soldiers returning from the front in coffins. Jerusalem's atmosphere is often tense and somber, but during the Lebanon crisis it was funereal. National schizophrenia took hold. As bad news from Lebanon flowed in day after day, the depression deepened. Jerusalem's universities, its scholars and religious leaders, provide the city moral authority and make it a repository for national values. Jerusalem cherishes its memories of the founding of the State of Israel and the collective conscience of its founders, and now the very meaning of Zionism was challenged.

Into this atmosphere came Philip C. Habib, assisted by Morris Draper, as leader of a US negotiating team seeking to dislodge Arafat and his fighters from Lebanon. Subsequently, Habib would broker a peace among Lebanese factions and attempt to end the war itself. I had no idea, nor did Phil at the outset, of what was in store for all of us.

I encountered Phil at my first post, Abidjan, in 1960, when he came through the region gathering material for his National War College paper on Africa. Ever buoyant, he and the consulate's American secretary, Marion Markle, had a memorable picnic trip by Volkswagen Beetle into the rain forest, where in village after village Phil sought out Lebanese shopkeepers to practice his Arabic. Marion reported that he received a hero's welcome. Phil had visited me in Jerusalem earlier, when he was trying to rekindle negotiations between Jordan and Israel on riparian issues involving the Jordan River. He had barely begun this work when President Reagan named him as his personal envoy for the larger issues of Lebanon.

Phil became a frequent guest at the residence. I insisted he stay with us rather than at a nearby hotel, because we had more comfortable quarters and he was better protected there. He could hold meetings at any time under secure conditions. Our offices and communications facilities were a floor above the living quarters and provided immediate support.

Phil loved staying at the residence for its spacious and cool comfort and the quality of the household staff, particularly the talents of Atta, our Arab cook. In typical Habib fashion, he complained that his shirts were ironed better at the ambassador's residence in Beirut. He gorged on the Lebanese pistachio nuts we put before him. He loved the rose garden. At my urging, after his death, a plaque was placed in the garden honoring him and his love of roses. Phil spent time with me, just musing and chatting. He found the residence a calming shelter from the world beyond its walls. There were days when he arrived worn out. Phil, at 63, had experienced two heart attacks, and the negotiating process was grueling. From time to time, I arranged for an Israeli cardiologist to show up at the residence. Phil grumbled a bit, but was pleased to have a check-up. His concern was that these calls would leak to the press, but they never did.

When his motorcade arrived, I met Phil at the front door and took him to the guest room, where he unpacked his bag and hung up his suits, which were always in plastic dry cleaning wrappers. An excellent way to keep the wrinkles out, he reminded me. He stripped to his boxer shorts and tee-shirt, stretched out on the bed, and started talking. Phil invariably asked about my children, and how the household staff was faring. We discussed the garden and agreed it needed his scrutiny, an issue of priority on his personal agenda. He shared his concerns about the work at hand. Then he dozed off.

For Phil, the negotiations were arduous, frustrating, and often disappointing. Phil instinctively understood the Lebanese and their Syrian masters lurking in the background. Washington had given him a near *carte blanche* to resolve the issues in PLO withdrawal and the larger peace effort. On the phone, he dealt with Near East assistant secretary Veliotes on day to day matters, and occasionally with Secretary Shultz, an old California friend. He also spoke frequently with NSC adviser Bud McFarlane. There were occasional bursts of shouting from Phil, but he generally found the Washington bureaucracy supportive. Ambassador Lewis shared fully in these matters. He and his committed staff, including Charlie Hill, Bill Brown, and Paul Hare, became nearly as worn down as Phil as they produced reams of reporting cables.

It was the Israeli government that troubled Phil most. He had direct access anytime to Prime Minister Begin, but sometimes found him removed from Phil's immediate concerns. While Phil encountered warmth and support in many government quarters, particularly the foreign ministry, he found these qualities lacking in Defense Minister Sharon, whom he distrusted and disliked. The massacres at the refugee camps in Lebanon upset Phil greatly. He was frustrated by infighting in Lebanon among the various factions and their inability to act together. His Lebanese origins seemed to have no influence on his views or emotions, but helped him understand the mindset and negotiating styles of his counterparts in Beirut. During each visit Phil asked me to brief him about the situation on the West Bank, which was always grim. He was careful to keep these matters separate from the concerns of his negotiations, but on a couple of

occasions agreed to pass along comments and advice about the West Bank where it was most likely to do some good in Begin's government.

One afternoon, Phil was in a good mood and looking for something to do. I suggested we visit the collection of Roman glass at the Israel Museum, one of the best collections, if not the foremost, in the world. The museum was close and he agreed to go. When we entered the rooms where the glass is exhibited, Phil lost himself. He became engrossed in shapes and colors, and for a long time walked from one beautifully lit display case to another, totally absorbed. It was one of the few times I lured him out of the residence. Arab feasts with family and staff at Walid's Philadelphia Restaurant constituted the others. Phil cherished the quiet solitude provided by the residence and its garden.

Phil was fond of my children, two of whom lived with me, and two others, Cathy and Jack, who visited from college in the summer. He would greet my youngest son Mark at the breakfast table with a hearty, "Good morning, smartass!" He was a warm and funny person, despite his often stern demeanor. Phil's daughter Phyllis spent some time with us, and we tried to make her feel part of the family. Occasionally, I would host small dinners for him to which I invited UNIFIL officers, journalists, and other interesting people in Jerusalem. Phil was a great dinner companion and raconteur. He liked good wine. "Dining is the soul of diplomacy," Lord Palmerston observed. Whenever Brian Urquhart of the UN was in Jerusalem, I asked him to dinner with Phil. It was fascinating to hear their assessments and reminiscences. Brian, as well, had a deep and intuitive understanding of Lebanon and the Middle East.

We were stretched thin in the consulate when Phil was in town. Martha Hayward, ever a tireless secretary, saved us time and again. These visits were a workload for which we were not prepared. My undaunted deputy, Jock Covey, took on this chore, having had invaluable staffing experience in the State Department's executive secretariat. We trained our junior officers to put together briefing books, sort cables, and staff the needs of a busy negotiator. They took to this work like bees to honey, and enjoyed their easy access to Phil. Phil in turn, took an interest in them. He asked about their careers, past and prospective, and why they had joined the Foreign Service, amplifying everything with his usual wisecracks. The junior officers loved it, and vied for the demanding responsibility of taking care of him. Many of them received quick promotions and were recognized by the State Department for their outstanding work in Jerusalem. The lesson in this is that foreign service professionals like to work with strong leaders engaged in important issues. They will give their all in response to wise leadership from someone whose understanding and management of matters at hand commands respect.

On one of his visits to Jerusalem, Phil was unhappy about his support from our embassy in Lebanon. He was about to return to Washington for a meeting with the president, and told me he intended to ask Reagan to appoint me ambassador to Lebanon forthwith. I thanked him for his confidence and said I needed to sleep on it, although I knew what my answer would have to be. At breakfast the next morning, I told Phil it would not be possible for me to go. I had a commitment to my sons living with me that I could not abandon when they were at an age at which a father's guidance is badly needed. The divorce had been hard on them. Phil made his disappointment clear--he was a great believer in "the Foreign Service first"--but accepted my decision, frowning at me from time to time later on, grumbling that I should have gone to Beirut.

Had I done as he wished, I would have been at our embassy when it was blown up in a terrorist attack.

Habib's temper was legendary, and his blow-ups were memorable though brief. Nick Veliotes, then assistant secretary for the Middle East, tells the story of one of Phil's quick visits to Washington during the Lebanese crisis. Phil asked Nick to draft a telegram on some complicated matter, which Veliotes and his associates promptly did. The draft was handed to Phil, who retreated into Nick's office and closed the door, while the others waited outside in trepidation. Sure enough, the outburst came: "GOD DAMN IT!" Phil yelled to their dismay. "Why can't the rest of the Department do work like this!"

Habib had a wise press policy. When he went to the foreign ministry at the outset of his negotiations, he was confronted after the initial discussions by a huge jumble of TV cameras and journalists. Phil, undaunted, went to the microphones, looked straight into the cameras and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is going to be a silent movie!" He surveyed the startled faces for a few seconds, and left. He would not speak to the press during the negotiations, except for an occasional formal statement. He believed that one cannot negotiate in public. The Israeli press, moreover, was notorious for its flights of fancy and tenacity.

In the early days of his negotiations, Phil received kudos by the gross. One week, he was on the covers of *Newsweek* and *Time*. After Arafat's exit from Beirut, he was increasingly mentioned as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. When Phil returned to Washington for consultation, President Reagan usually invited him to lunch. Habib was the star of US foreign policy. That reputation changed after a suicide truck bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut killed 241 Americans in October of 1983, the worst of times for Americans committed to peace in the Middle East by their presence, actions and cautious hopes.

Writ of Ne Exiat

One of my reasons for returning to Washington for consultations in the spring of 1983 was to be present in court for divorce proceedings. Our marriage could no longer be held together. Mary, living in Washington, had changed lawyers, and a new one was starting to work with her. One afternoon, as I briefed members of the policy planning staff in the State Department on Jerusalem and the Palestinians, two federal marshals appeared in the outer office with a warrant for my arrest under a writ of *ne exiat*, which a judge issues when someone is believed to be intending to flee the country to avoid the law. They ordered me to leave the building with them, and frisked me in a men's room. We drove to the District of Columbia Jail where I spent the next two hours in a private cell. With time to think, once I had overcome my shock, I recognized this legal tactic, intended to embarrass me and hurt my reputation, which it briefly did to some extent, was so off the wall it would probably help me in divorce proceedings, which it also did. My lawyer delivered a thousand dollars in cash to bail me out and I breathed free air again.

The next morning, an irritated judge vacated his own order and rebuked Mary's lawyer for employing this strategy. In its Washington gossip column a few days later, however, *The New York Times* alluded to the incident without mentioning my name, lightheartedly characterizing me as a foreign service officer involved in a divorce frantically trying to elude federal marshals

in the State Department's corridors. The writer seemed to find in this fantasy a characterization of the Foreign Service itself.

Middle East Peace

I left Jerusalem in early summer 1983, thoroughly discouraged about the future of the West Bank and Gaza. The Camp David process had run its brief course. I saw no prospect any time soon for the creation of a respectable entity Palestinians could call their own. They were at their most despairing, a mood that erupted four years later in the *intifada* uprising which introduced armed clashes, for the first time, into the occupied territories themselves. Moderates in Israel and among Palestinians hunkered down to wait for change.

And, finally, change did come at the Madrid Conference of October 30, 1991, an event that could not have happened during the Cold War. Presidents Bush and Gorbachev, the latter with only two months left in office, together brought to the table in Madrid representatives of Israel, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinians. Nothing comparable had occurred since the creation of Israel in 1948 at the Cold War's onset. Much of the credit belongs to Secretary of State James Baker.

The fact that the Soviet Union no longer existed, and Syria and the PLO had therefore lost its support, made the decisive difference. With Cold War competition over, Russia and the United States saw their interests beginning to converge and joined forces in the Middle East. The Madrid Conference broke the downward spiral in Arab-Israeli relations, although beyond its symbolism in post-Cold War realignments, it amounted to little more than a new format for old problems. In the Middle East, however, formats matter. The struggles between Israelis and Palestinians are not in the main religious, but secular. They are about land, water, security, dignity, and freedom in its many forms. Whose land, today, is the West Bank and Gaza, and whose city is Jerusalem? By what rights--biblical, historical, conquest, deed, use or occupation--do these lands belong to Arabs or Jews?

Progress toward peace was made under the 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles, signed on the White House lawn one hot September day by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, soon to be assassinated as Sadat had been, and PLO President Yasser Arafat. The accords had been reached without US participation or knowledge. At the White House ceremony on the lawn, I watched these former adversaries hesitate--and then shake hands, and I joined in the emotional ovation. With President Clinton standing in the middle, as Carter had stood with Begin and Sadat, the scene rekindled a fragile flame of hope.

Nevertheless, in a dangerous and inexplicable strategy, Prime Minister Netanyahu, abetted by Sharon as Minister of National Infrastructures, is creating new settlements in Jerusalem and on the West Bank, more facts on the ground, as his critics say. He adheres minimally, if at all, to the spirit of the Oslo Declaration. Arafat, on his part, is showing himself, so far, to be the weak leader and poor administrator of a corrupt Palestinian Authority, failing to control terrorism and rioters, or discipline Palestinian police in cities such as Gaza and Hebron.

Regarding Jerusalem, I suspect that a generous formula for religious sovereignty and Palestinian rights will eventually prove acceptable, one that guarantees access and control of holy places to the concerned parties in an open city that serves, by common consent, as Israel's capital, and perhaps even Palestine's. When that happens, the United States will move its embassy. The US role as peace broker in the Middle East remains indispensable and, like Phil Habib, we must not give up. The Cold War's outcome augments the diplomatic options. The lesson of Oslo is that Americans, Israelis, and Palestinians are not alone in these efforts.

My years in Jerusalem were difficult and painful for everyone. And yet, Val Vester, still at the American Colony Hotel, wrote to me fifteen years afterwards: "I think you would hate Jerusalem if you saw how it is now, so built up and surrounded by high-rise fortresses...I look back on the period that you were here as a very happy one."

DENNIS C. JETT
Science Attaché
Tel Aviv (1980-1983)

Ambassador Jett was born in Massachusetts and raised in New Mexico. He received degrees from the University of New Mexico and the University of Witwatersrand (South Africa). After a year at the US Naval Academy, he joined the Foreign Service in 1972 and was posted to Buenos Aires. Several assignments at the State Department in Washington DC and Miami were followed by tours of duty at Tel Aviv, Lilongwe and Monrovia. In 1993 Mr. Jett was named United States Ambassador to Mozambique, where he served until 1996, after which he served as US Ambassador to Peru from 1996 to 1999. Following retirement, the ambassador has pursued an academic career, as professor, at the Universities of Florida and Penn State. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

Q: '80, so then where?

JETT: Actually, I was supposed to stay on in the energy office for another year, but a friend of mine from the economic bureau, Richard Kauzlarich, came by one day and said, "I have a problem. I'm going out to be economic counselor in Tel Aviv and there was a guy who was supposed to be science attaché. At the last minute he decided he couldn't go overseas at this point so I've got this vacancy coming up in a matter of weeks. Who can I get to do it?" I thought about it for a couple of minutes and I said, "Maybe I'll do it." I then went out and I found another friend who was willing to replace me in the energy office so they would not object to my leaving on such short notice. So in a course of about four weeks I went from expecting to sit in the energy office for another year to being on my way to Tel Aviv. I was an 0-5 at the time and it was a 0-3 job so it was a two-grade stretch.

Q: Great. Well now you were there from 1980 until when?

JETT: It was about September 1980 until March '83.

Q: Oh that was an interesting time. What was happening in Israel when you went out?

JETT: Within my time there they bombed the reactor in Baghdad so that was a source of excitement. They also invaded Lebanon and pushed their way to Beirut; so you had the consequences of that. It's never is a dull time there. It's always of intense interest; there is always a steady stream of Congressional delegations and other prominent people. I got to be control officer for any number of Congressmen and Senators and other dignitaries; I was control office for Charlie Wilson a couple of times. He is just as much a character as Tom Hanks portrays him in the movie.

Q: Oh yes, there's a movie called "Charlie Wilson's War" in which he is shown to be a prime person in arming the Afghan Mujahedeen against the Soviets.

JETT: Exactly and Tom Hanks makes him seem more kind and benign than he really was. He had a mean streak in him and he was a big supporter of Israel so when he came to Israel they loved him and he loved them. I guess the only thing you could say about Charlie Wilson in his defense is that he was a scoundrel but freely admitted it. He had a drinking problem and a drug problem and a womanizing problem but he didn't attempt to hide it; he didn't say I'm a family values politician. He just said, "Yeah, I like to drink, I like women and I like..." and he kept getting elected; so apparently it didn't matter to his constituents. He was such an ardent anti-Communist that he saw arming the Mujahedeen as a crusade. Too bad we did that and then lost interest in Afghanistan as they morphed into Al Qaeda.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you arrived there?

JETT: Sam Lewis. He was ambassador for a total of eight years in Israel...

Q: Yeah.

JETT: ...my entire time there he was ambassador.

Q: How did you find the embassy? It must have been quite different from Buenos Aires?

JETT: It was a small embassy. It had this huge AID program but AID for Israel consisted of handing them a check every quarter so we didn't have this army of AID people to supervise projects and track the money. We had four people in the economic section; I was the science attaché. I would often encounter Israelis who would say, "If you have a couple degrees in economics why are you the science attaché? Aren't you really CIA?" I would just say, "Well believe what you want to believe" since trying to explain was probably a waste of time.

So there was the economic counselor, Rich Kauzlarich, and Harry Stein who was internal economics, then there was me and another guy who was the AID officer; he was a State Department officer and had other things to follow since, as I mentioned, the only AID work was handing over the quarterly check. Then they had four or five people in the political section, a pretty big consular section. I think it's still in the same building right there across the street from

the beach. It was a pretty small embassy, but it had all these Congressional delegations. It probably had if not one a week or at least every other week. The other thing about it that was different was you had this consulate in Jerusalem but they didn't report to the embassy. So you had to keep reminding yourself to consider the consulate in Jerusalem as if it were an embassy in a different country in terms of how you coordinated with them.

Q: What were the Congressional delegations? Were they coming out to have pictures taken and live off the largesse of the Israelis or were there real issues at stake?

JETT: Well there are always real issues and the biggest issue was, of course, the effort to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has been going on for years. Most of the Congressmen, I think, were coming out just to have their ticket punched to show that they cared about Israel so they could score points with their Jewish constituents or their evangelical Christian constituents and to go shopping. But there were some who really cared about the Middle East peace process. When I was there Reagan came out with his peace plan. I remember I was with a couple staffers of Stephen Solarz and the announcement gets made that this new plan is on the table and the staffers were incensed at me because I didn't have a copy of the plan in my pocket to hand them instantaneously as soon as it hit the news. So there were some people who really cared about the issues and then sometimes there were economic issues and trade issues between Israel and the United States that drew a little bit of attention.

Of course, some cared about the military relationship so it was like anything. You had a mix of some Congressmen there for tourism and ticket punching and others because they really wanted to learn about the issues and have an understanding of where they ought to come down. And the Israelis were masterful when it came to hosting congressmen and making their pitch.

Q: I talked to somebody, Sam I can't remember his last name; he went as ambassador to a place in Latin America later.

JETT: Hart.

Q: Yeah, he was disenchanted because he would draw up plans about what Israel should get and the Israelis would laugh at him and just go to Congress and get what they wanted. I mean this was very frustrating. Did this affect you at all that sort of thing?

JETT: That is clearly part and parcel of the relationship. They a tremendous influence, one of the most powerful lobby's in Washington is AIPAC, the American-Israel Political Action Committee. They are very skillful at getting things out of Congress. People sitting in an embassy, whether it's in Israel or anywhere else in the Middle East, can say based on our interests and our resources and everything else this is what the policy ought to be. And the policy gets determined in Washington by people who are worried about whether their Jewish voters are going to vote for them or not. Three quarters of Jewish voters vote Democratic. It dropped to two-thirds for Mr. Obama, but typically it is three-quarters. But even in Republican districts there is a significant group there that no Congressman can afford to ignore -- Evangelical Christians. Of course, they love Israel because they read about it in the Bible and not because they understand anything about the Middle East. It's a very politicized relationship and I think anybody who sits down and

makes a calculus of what they define as American interests is going to be disappointed in the sausage that come out of the Washington policy-making machine. I also think that AIPAC does not care about Israel or the United States as much as it cares about AIPAC's power. The worse thing that could happen to AIPAC would be for peace to break out in the Middle East. Then their empire and their influence would evaporate overnight.

Q: I mean this is a political and political-military issue but how did you view and maybe comment on how some of your fellow officers felt about the Israelis; it can only be described as a premeditated invasion of Lebanon. How did you view that?

JETT: Well I remember it was kind of triggered by there had been incidents along the border for a long time and then there was an assassination attempt on an Israeli diplomat.

Q: Yeah, on the ambassador to London.

JETT: Right.

Q: I'm told that everyone knew that Sharon had cocked the pistol...

JETT: Right.

Q: ...and waited for it to go off.

JETT: I think that's true. The assassination attempt happened on a Friday and then you had an exchange of artillery and rockets between both sides on Saturday. I had an Israeli-American friend who was in the army reserves and he got a call Saturday to mobilize. On Sunday morning, they were rushing past the UN peacekeepers and on into Lebanon. I guess you could say Sharon was looking for an excuse to invade and deal with the problem. It's in the same way that today they get rockets from Gaza; so they attempted to go in and deal with it in Gaza. Eventually they pull out after much loss of life and destruction and things calm down a little and now they are getting more rockets from Gaza. It's an unfortunate cycle that seems to be repeating itself.

Q: As this fighting progressed there were you developing a feel for this? I mean whether this a good thing, a bad thing or what?

JETT: Initially it was pretty easy as the Israelis had military successes and then, of course, when it got to the outskirts of Beirut where there were the two refugee camps Sabra and Shatila. Lebanese Christians went in and murdered hundreds of women and children while the Israelis did nothing to stop it. So that created a huge controversy. Then the whole operation bogged down and became a war of attrition and that's not a war that Israelis are willing and capable of fighting for very long. I remember talking to an Israeli, who was trying to explain to me the impact of the war on Israel. He said to me, "You know how many people died in Vietnam?" I said, "56-57 thousand" and he said, "How many did you know?" I said, "Well I knew a handful maybe a half a dozen." Then he said to me, "Well so far in this war in Lebanon we've lost 200 soldiers and I know the soldiers or the families of at least 180 of those."

Q: Good God.

JETT: One of the constant things you hear in Israel is “it’s a small country” and it’s very small in a lot of ways both geographically and in terms of the number of people. The number of people, of course, has grown fairly significantly with the influx of Russian Jews and others, but it is a very small country, which is one reason peace with the Palestinians is so difficult to achieve. They would have the names of the soldiers that died on television at night. There has been some controversy in this country when people like Nightline or some television program started putting the names of the dead on and conservatives were criticizing that because they never like to be reminded of the cost of the wars they are always pushing for. I remember back in the Vietnam War, I don’t know why I remember this, but I remember watching the nightly news on television. They were saying 343 American soldiers died in Vietnam this week. Then the next story was about a cheetah that had escaped from a zoo and they attempted to recapture it and shot it with a tranquilizing dart. It died and I remember hearing myself say, “Oh.” Then I thought instantaneously they just told me 343 Americans died and I had no reaction and yet this animal escaped from a zoo and I am sort of touched by it. I don’t know, but for some reason I’ve never forgotten that moment.

Q: No, no it is a sort of thing. It’s a very common reaction.

JETT: It’s like a Bulgarian student I was talking to a couple days ago. He quoted Stalin as saying, “One death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic.” So I think you lose the sensitivity when it gets to big numbers.

Q: You really do. Sabra and Shatila, the two refugee camps of Palestinian refugees where there was a slaughter by the Christian militia, how did that play in Israel at the time?

JETT: I can’t remember specifically but I think initially there was some confusion as to who was responsible and what the Israeli role was. It was the usual fog of war and perhaps some self-censorship and manipulation of the media. It was pretty clear that the Israelis didn’t do it from the get go, but exactly who did and why was a little bit unclear. And the extent of Israel’s involvement was not clear until months later. I think probably people on the political right in Israel said, “Well this is just the Lebanese killing Lebanese and it’s unfortunately but it’s not our problem.” I think the people on the left said, “Well we don’t know to what extent we are involved, but certainly it happened as a result of our invasion so we have some responsibility and so on.” I think almost anything in Israel has a wide range of reactions because you have an amazing range of political views and religious views and nationalist Zionist views; anything provokes a very diverse range of reaction.

Q: How was Sharon viewed after you’d been there a while? Did you have a feel for him?

JETT: No, it was Begin and Shamir who was the head of the government or maybe Shamir was foreign minister still.

Q: I think Begin during that time was the...well maybe they switched back and forth.

JETT: I can't remember when Begin left. I remember being at the airport once and seeing Begin walk out just a few feet away. I was in a meeting once with Shamir when he was foreign minister. I took some Congressmen in and he was always described as a Sabra. A Sabra is the Israeli cactus and it is also a native born Israeli or an Israeli born in Israel. Begin was described like a cactus, prickly on the outside and soft on the inside; Shamir was described as soft on the outside but prickly on the inside. But Sharon was defense minister and he was viewed as a tough guy and given his military experience and his political leadings he was a hardliner.

Q: Could we stop here or just one section. As the science attaché I assume that you did not report on nuclear developments in Israel?

JETT: I did to the extent that there were nuclear developments that were known. There was a guy named Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli who started talking about the nuclear program but that hadn't happened yet. There were people from the American nuclear power industry who were coming to Israel so I would talk to them and find out what they were trying to sell Israel and what they knew about the Israeli program. In terms of classified stuff I didn't engage in trying to collect that as it would have been unsuccessful and not well received. I remember Edward Teller, the so-called father of the H-bomb, came through for a visit and I met him and I said, "Oh let's have breakfast." He said, "Okay," so the next day he and I had breakfast and we talked a little bit about Israel and nuclear power and nuclear weapons. That kind of strange encounter was not unusual in Israel. The thing I remember most about it is he had about a third of a cup of coffee and took about five packets of sugar and stirred it into his coffee until it was almost like syrup; then he drank it. Anyhow, that is what I remembered more than I remember what he had to say about mutually assured destruction and nuclear weapons.

Q: What was personal life like in Israel? I've had people say you got much more involved there than anywhere else.

JETT: I think that depends on the individual obviously as in any country. Some people only shop at the commissary and they'll go home and a weekend for them is to get out their DVD or their video tape player and they'll watch five movies. If they can't get Diet Dr. Pepper in the commissary and watch five movie CDs in a weekend then they are depressed. Other people will get into the society in a really big way. One sport I took up in 1977 was running marathons. I continued doing that in Israel and found a small but friendly running community. I could go to a race, look around and tell you where I was going to finish. It was usually not in the first five, but usually in the next five. The first three years they ran the Tel Aviv marathon, I finished fifth twice and seventh once. I still have running friends from those days with whom I stay in touch. The degree to which people got involved also depended on things other than the sports. During the year I was in New York trading commodities I got divorced and so when I went to Israel I was single; that put me on the diplomatic dating circuit, which was new and different. That also gave me a different way to involve myself in the local culture.

Q: How did you find it? I assume that you were dating Israeli women; were they different compared to the American girls or not?

JETT: I would say so. Israelis in general have the same level of civility of New Yorkers during a transit strike. But once you got to know them, and getting to know them was basically getting introduced to them, then you became a member of the family virtually. I think the single women were also very brusque and abrupt. One reason that was offered for that attitude is that they lived for the moment because they lived in a county that could be invaded tomorrow and be overrun and destroyed. So they didn't mess around. They cut to the chase rather quickly; either they were interested or they weren't and they let you know pretty quickly which way it was.

I was not only dating Israelis, but women in other embassies as well. I had one interesting thing happen to me there in that regard. I was going out with a woman who was in the British embassy, a British Foreign Service officer. I just went out with her a couple times, and hadn't seen her in a while. Everybody listens to the radio news in Israel. They have the time signal on the hour, which also announces the beginning of the news. You could be almost anywhere in Israel and you can hear the beep, beep, beep of the time signal. You would see ten year old kids walking down the street listening to the news on the radio because people cared and it usually had the potential of affecting them directly and immediately for good or for ill. Anyhow, I'm listening to the news on my way home from the embassy and on the news it's reported that a British diplomat has been arrested as spy. She had gone on to date some guy from the Egyptian embassy and he had convinced her to share some documents that she should not have. So the Israelis arrested her, threw her out of the country and she was kicked out of the British Foreign Service; I don't think she was ever charged with anything, but there was quite a scandal. So it was kind of weird to hear her name on the radio and wonder if anyone was going to come question me.

Q: Oh God yes. I'm trying to think we had already gone through the Camp David process hadn't we?

JETT: Yes we had.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Egyptian embassy?

JETT: Not too much. I knew this guy she had gone out with. Another experience that I had was related to Camp David, which was signed the year before I arrived. There was an environmental conference on the Red Sea and it was the first time that the Israelis and Egyptian scientists were getting together to talk; the first contact of almost any kind. So I said, "Hey, maybe I should go to this conference." The embassy agreed even though it happened to be held at a Club Med in Egypt. It was an interesting experience. Both groups were scientists and had an interest in the ecology of the Red Sea so they had that in common. But they were from two countries that had this prolonged state of conflict, which had only just ended. The conference almost ended before it began because the packet of information handed out by the Egyptian organizers had a map of the Red Sea area and the map didn't include Israel; as maps often don't. You see Israeli maps that don't include Gaza and the West Bank and that upsets people. But this one had some sort of vague reference to Palestine where Israel was and so the Israelis basically said you hand out a new map or we'll leave. The Egyptians found a new map, but that was the sort of level of tension and concern. It was an interesting discussion nonetheless.

The other thing that happened while I was there is that Israel withdrew from the Sinai as part of the peace deal. I had gone to Sinai and started scuba diving when the peninsula was Israeli territory. I have an Israeli-American friend, whom I still maintain contact with, who ran a dive center in Sharm el Sheik. About a year after the Sinai was given back to Egypt, he and I took a trip to Sharm el Sheik to see what had changed. It was an amazing experience. We got hassled at the border and did not arrive there until well after dark. He wanted to immediately find a former employee who was a Bedouin, so we pulled off the highway and start driving into the desert in my Pontiac Firebird, a car that was about six inches off the ground because of all the diving gear we brought with us. We got stuck in the sand and I was beginning to wonder what they would say about me at my funeral assuming they ever found the body. Out of nowhere in the middle of the night in the middle of the desert six or eight Bedouin appear and pick up the car and put it on solid ground. They also gave us directions to find his friend's place. We got to his house, which consisted of some rugs for a floor, some plywood for walls and no roof. His friend greets us like family and we go in and sit down on the rugs and are served mint tea. As my friend and his former employee are talking over old times, I'm looking up at the stars and thinking this is why I joined the Foreign Service.

Q: You left there when?

JETT: It was March of '83. Again, I should have stayed a little bit longer, but I found out they wanted a desk officer for Argentina in the Department. There was a person in the job that had some difficulties shall we say and so they needed an emergency replacement quickly. Any desk is a good job and Argentina is a great job so again I found somebody who was willing to replace me on short notice so my boss couldn't object too much that I was leaving. I uprooted and went back to Washington in March of '83.

Q: What did you feel, as you left there in '83, about the future of Israel?

JETT: One of the people I talked to once while at a dinner was Moshe Arens who was a rightwing member of the Knesset.

Q: Wasn't he an ambassador to the U.S.?

JETT: Yes. He was pretty far right. But he was educated in America, had a PhD in aeronautical engineering and incredibly articulate. I just remember probing him on what's the sort of long-term plan here because the demographics are going against you in terms of population growth. His point of view was that's the long term, we need to worry about the short to medium term and we don't have a partner for peace and we can't trust them and therefore why negotiate. You see the same thing today, the same argument offered. I was reading a piece in the Weekly Standard by Elliot Abrams, a man charge with two felony counts for lying to Congress during the Iran-Contra scandal during the Reagan administration. For his crimes he got to be on the National Security Council for George W. Bush and in charge of Middle East Affairs and now he disgraces the Council on Foreign Relations thanks to the poor judgment of Richard Haass. Abrams was essentially writing this piece a couple days ago saying that the Palestinians should just go and be part of Jordan. So to this day you've got people like that and I think essentially that's where the rightwing Israelis, Likud, Netanyahu all are.

I don't see much prospect for peace because I don't think Netanyahu has the vision or the guts to be a Begin and sit down and do a deal and the only way he can stay in power is with a coalition of religious parties that are even more extreme than he is. They are continuing to build settlements on the West Bank and Gaza; this is something that both the Likud and Labor governments have done consistently throughout the decades, which allowed the settlements to continue to grow. Now you have 300 thousand settlers who think they have a Biblical right to cheap housing on somebody else's land. They are a powerful lobby and Israeli governments are always coalitions and generally pretty weak. In the same way the Tea Party today represent a minority of a minority and yet they are having this impact because they are fanatics and dictating policy for the Republicans. I think, in the same way the settlers essentially hijacked Israeli policy and have made serious negotiations impossible.

MAURICE E. LEE
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv (1981-1988)

Maurice E. Lee was born in Erie, Pennsylvania in 1925. He served with the European Theater during World War II. He received a master's degree from George Washington University and went to Paris, France to learn French. Mr. Lee's career with USIS included positions in Germany, Japan, Vietnam, South Asia, Washington, DC, the Philippines, Korea, and Israel. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt on February 9, 1989.

LEE: Well, they say from the frying pan into the fire. I got a call one night from the Agency, in the middle of the night, to go to a place I never dreamed I would serve. I visited there once as a tourist. That was to Israel. And I thought, my God, at this point I need a quiet post after the Philippines and Korea. But duty calls. I didn't realize what I was getting into. It was one of those cases where the Ambassador wanted you there yesterday type of thing. And I only got 20 days stateside, no time for preparing for such an important and volatile part of the world.

Q: Was that Sam Lewis?

LEE: Yes, Sam Lewis. By the time he left he had served there about eight years. As I mentioned, I had no time to prepare myself. I don't consider myself a Middle East expert by any means. And as I came to learn later just to understand Lebanon, which was so intertwined with Israel's political and military goals, and all of its intricacies you could study for a lifetime.

When I got there I found a terrific program, a very tough and hard working staff. I was preceded by one of our best officers, David Hitchcock who had built a very good program. The local staff was a multi-national type of staff, mostly Jews who had immigrated from all over the world, even one from China. In some of the countries I served I knew if I went on vacation nothing would get done until I returned. In Israel if I went on vacation the Israeli staff would take over the program.

They were very professional. I'm fond of all of them. I don't know. There is never a dull moment in Israel. There was some crisis every hour on the hour. You had a constant stream of visitors from the United States. Practically every Congressman had to show his face in Israel because of the power of the Jewish community in the States. You had this constant search for peace with Phil Habib popping in and out. And then McFarlane followed him. Then Secretary of State George Shultz would drop in every once in a while and he'd have a little shuttle diplomacy. And, of course, the PAO was expected assist these principals whenever they were in town. Habib wanted me around to make sure no newspaperman got near him. His mysterious goings and comings made for lots of speculation and publicity which I think he secretly enjoyed. We were located in Tel Aviv, and were constantly going up the hill to Jerusalem. As you know the capital is in Jerusalem, which we don't officially recognize, particularly East Jerusalem in which we will not do official business with the Israeli government. They tried to play a little trick by moving one of their ministries over to East Jerusalem. But we didn't bite. We said if the Minister wants to see the Ambassador he can meet him at the King David Hotel in West Jerusalem.

Going back to our excellent USIS program, the Agency serviced us I think the best I've ever been serviced at any post. We had top notch speakers. And, of course, there's a lot of interest in Israel. And then the Lebanon war, of course, complicated matters tremendously. At one time we had nearly 2,000 members of the media in and out of Tel Aviv covering the war in Lebanon. And they all wanted to see and talk to the Ambassador. All the senior officers had to share the briefing load although the Ambassador, the press attaché and the political counselor carried the burden.

One of the interesting things about being there was that I met a lot of very important and interesting people. And you got involved in everything. I remember once that Elizabeth Taylor was visiting Tel Aviv. I won't get into what the problem was. But she had a problem. And her staff came to me for help and somehow we got it solved. So you never know who you're going to meet in this kind of a job. Sometimes it seemed like sheer "show biz."

Sam Lewis was a very tough guy to work for, but I respected him immensely because he had one of the toughest jobs I've ever seen in the Foreign Service. He had to keep the White House happy. He had to keep the State Department happy. He had to keep the Pentagon happy, and members of Congress. He had to keep the Jewish lobby happy. His American colleagues in the Arab world were taking pot shots at him all the time. Obviously they weren't always on the same track in the approach to resolving the Middle East problem. And I must say today that I just don't see any solution to the problem until both sides make greater concessions toward each other.

Q: What was the main thrust of your program in Israel?

LEE: Well, it was largely media oriented. We did have cultural events, too. I'd say we had a pretty balanced program under the circumstances. But the press in Israel is very powerful and very aggressive. The political science faculties at Israeli Universities are very good and were constantly demanding the top Americans as speakers. Israelis love to argue, not debate issues. If you get two Israelis together and get them to agree on anything that's a major accomplishment. I recall that one day after I'd been there about four or five weeks one of my Israeli employees

came in and closed the door. He said, "Mr. Lee, I don't want to embarrass you. But you're going to have to be a lot tougher if you want to survive in this place." I took that message to heart. I remember my first victory. Several weeks later I was at a dinner party and the head of Israeli broadcasting was there.

Q: Head of Israeli what?

LEE: Broadcasting and television. And we were having a heated discussion with everyone else chiming in. I finally started pounding the table and screaming at him. All of a sudden everybody stopped talking. And one of the people said, congratulations Mauri, you've just passed the cultural barrier.

Q: From then on I knew I had to speak up loud and clear if I wanted to be heard.

LEE: Israel is a fabulous country to serve in. It is still a developing country. It's a crisis-ridden country. I've never seen so many travel agencies in one town as in Tel Aviv. When I mentioned this to an Israeli friend he said, "Well, my God, if you had to live here in this tension all the time you'd want to get out every chance you had." I also remember something my housekeeper told me. I used to take walks every once in a while in the evening when I just arrived. And I said to her, it's amazing that when the news comes on at nine o'clock on television, I could see that the television set was on in every house I went by and there wasn't a car moving on the street. And she replied, well, if you had two of your sons wounded in two wars, you'd listen to the news every night too.

Q: What was, for instance, the principal function of your press operation there?

LEE: Well, first of all we had the Wireless File which we had to get out to our key audience. We had that pretty well automated towards the end of my tour there. We had constant press inquiries night and day from both the Israeli and foreign press. Anything that happens in the United States of any significance, I don't care what it is, it's important, it has an effect in Israel. If somebody sneezes in the White House they catch cold in Israel. So we were constantly on the phone with the press and government types.

We also tried to place other types of stories that the Israelis were interested in. But the Israelis had one main concern. And that was the security of their country and its relationship to the United States. Next to the Prime Minister, the American Ambassador to Israel is considered the most powerful man in the country. I recall a funny thing that happened to illustrate this. The Lewises, who were very wonderful hosts, tried to have a cultural evening every two or three months. So a USIS Junior Officer Trainee got the bright idea of having a Mardi Gras evening. There were a lot of Israelis there and everybody came in costume. They elected a king and queen. Well, needless to say Sam and Sallie Lewis were selected king and queen, complete with robes and crowns. Lewis was considered so powerful that some people referred to him behind his back as the high commissioner because he represented the United States. He was very sensitive to that. You never called him that to his face. Pictures were taken. We had a rule about pictures involving the Lewises. But the JOT apparently wasn't aware of it. No pictures went out to the press of the Lewis' until they personally checked them out. Well, these pictures got out,

unfortunately. The next day's headline in one of the leading papers was Lewis promoted from high commissioner to king. Needless to say the cultural attaché who was in charge of the event was summoned into the front office and got a real dressing down and the JOT took a long time getting over it. This anecdote should not detract from the fact that Sam and Sallie Lewis were extremely popular in Israel.

Q: Did you put out any publications there? Did you place much information with the press?

LEE: Yes, we had a very good rate of placement. And we also had a very targeted list of people to receive not only Agency publications, but subscriptions to key American journals. One thing about Israel it's very easy to deal right up to the top. The President of Israel and the Prime Minister, at least then, were accessible. When we had a VIP in town who was going to see the Prime Minister I often accompanied with the Ambassador. I sat in on many meetings with Prime Minister Begin. Very relaxed atmosphere, but always intense discussion.

Q: Yes, I'm sure. I don't suppose the -- well, there were so few instances really in which there was any kind of a real controversy between Israel and the United States I almost feel --

LEE: Well, I can recall one that really created a lot of tension and that was over the AWACs to Saudi Arabia. Anytime anything was sold to the Arabs in the area of military hardware, they really got on top of us about it.

Q: And this was pretty unanimous among the entire population?

LEE: Oh, yes. Yes. I'll give you a case of what it was like. Sometimes an American officer would be assigned from a country in the Arab world to an assignment in Israel. He had to do a lot of selling before the Israeli staff and Israeli contacts would believe that he was neutral and represented only official U.S. positions on issues. They just didn't trust anybody who had anything to do with Arabs. You had to be there to feel it. It's unbelievable this intensity.

Q: Do you have any other comment on that?

LEE: Well, I might just say that it went the other way. I understand that anybody that served in Israel and then went to an Arab country had a similar problem. When I went to my first PAO conference in the region the Ambassador said to me, "Mauri, I want to warn you take your armor with you."

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "You don't know what it's like to be a Jew amongst all those Arab." Meaning all the other PAOs would be from Arab countries, frustrated by what they considered pro-Israel bias in our foreign policy. When I got to the conference, my colleagues bitched constantly about Israel.

Q: When we came to the end of the last tape you were just referring to the fact that every time you went to a PAO conference in your area your fellow PAOs were bitching because of the highly pro-Israel policy on the part of the U.S. government and how difficult it made it for them

to carry on any kind of a program in the Arab world. You want to pick up from there?

LEE: The only retort I could make to that was, hell. I only implement the policy. I don't make it. That was the best defense I could put up.

Q: Do you have anything else that you'd like to say about the Israeli program and what you thought the USIA program contributed to our standing in Israel?

LEE: Well, it was easy to program in Israel because of this intense connection and concern with everything the United States does. And again, I mention that there was easy accessibility to the top publishers, University presidents, I knew them all on a first name basis. It was not that I was so great; it's just that they were so interested in what we had to offer and could give them. We had a very good library servicing out of Washington. We had a documents element in our library. And if a scholar wanted certain basic documents that are only obtainable in Washington we would pay out of our program funds to have these sent to us. Sometimes by cable if they were that important. So they got serviced well.

So I think that in answer to the last part of your question that we served a very useful purpose. Generally, you didn't have to convince Israelis about the goodness of U.S. policy towards Israel. It's only when it diverted a little bit or did something favorable towards the Arabs that they'd get up and scream.

Q: I suppose the question I have is since Israeli technology is so far advanced and I'm sure that they subscribe to a lot of the major news services, what was it that you could give them in terms of information and coverage that they couldn't get from --

LEE: They wanted back up and documentation. Because they're great analysts. There's no such thing as a short newspaper column in Israeli. I mean, the words flow very freely both qualitatively and quantitatively. Of course, they were always looking for inside information.

Q: Well, what could USIA do or USIS do that was not available for the Ambassador and the political set up for the Embassy to do. Were you able to do things or get information that was not available to Israelis through their contacts with the rest of the Embassy?

LEE: To be certain that the correct word and a unified word got out, people who had access to the press were rather limited. Basically the press attaché, myself, the political counselor and the Ambassador, who had a few select people that he would deal with on a one-to-one basis.

Q: Do you think you got a faster and wider feed on important matters than they got through the Embassy itself?

LEE: Well, they didn't go to the Embassy.

Q: No, I mean, do you think -- what I'm saying is do you think that our mission out there that you as part of our mission, that you got a better feed and feel for media response and media output in the United States and in other things than the Embassy itself did?

LEE: Yes, but I was the Embassy outlet for information. Now, for instance, I'll give you a case in point.

Q: Well, how about incoming information?

LEE: You mean from Washington?

Q: Yes.

LEE: Well, that's what I'm talking about. For instance, the wireless file. The Ambassador wanted that on his breakfast table. And if it wasn't there I heard about it pronto. And he read that thing from beginning to end, as did senior members of the government and the media. The wireless file serves a useful purpose because it gives the documentation to the news of the day. You get an AP summary of a speech by the Secretary of Defense concerning Israel; the Israelis want the whole text. They don't rely on that news story. They want to see the substance, the whole story.

I remember one interesting thing. President Reagan gave a speech which had a portion of it devoted to the Middle East while Secretary Casper Weinberger was making his first official visit to Israel. I was traveling with him. The night of Reagan's speech night the Minister of Defense was giving a big party at the Hilton Hotel in honor of Weinberger at the same time the President's speech was coming through on the wireless file. I'd been instructed by Mr. Weinberger to get him a copy of that speech as soon as it came through. It had an embargo on it. In the meantime, we were comparing the advance text with the actual speech coming by VOA. It turns out that the President had made a last minute change in the text. I forget what the change was, but it was a very important one at the time. It affected the Israelis considerably. What if we had just handed out that wireless file without making sure every word was right -- ? I got on the phone to Washington right away and told them of their error. They didn't even know about it. They then sent out the correction immediately.

Abba Eban, who's a prolific writer, would call me up and say, you know, I need such and such a document. I can't get it here in Israel. Can you get it for me? And I got it for him. So much time was devoted to the dispensing of information. But we also had an active cultural program. I don't want to mislead you on that.

Q: No.

LEE: Now, the libraries were very popular because a lot of Israelis can read English. However, we do have an upcoming language problem, among younger Israelis. Young Israelis are not learning English to the extent one would expect. Their parents and forefathers, many of whom came from Europe, in many instances English was their second language. So I think the day is coming in Israel when we will have to start putting out all of our publications in Hebrew. We do put out press releases in Hebrew and English. But we'll have to start concerning ourselves with books, magazines and pamphlets in Hebrew.

Q: To what extent are there other languages used in Israel in view of the fact that you have such

a conglomerate of Jewish populations coming from so many different areas.

LEE: Well, a lot of them learned to speak Hebrew. The problem with Hebrew is it is very difficult to read. A number of Israelis on my staff could not read Hebrew well enough to give me a digest of a newspaper article.

Q: And yet the newspapers to a large extent --

LEE: Yes, all major newspapers are in Hebrew with the exception of the Jerusalem Post, which is in English. But all of your top leaders -- I think there was only one man in the cabinet who didn't speak English. That was the Deputy Prime Minister. He didn't speak any English at all. He spoke French though. So if you spoke French you could communicate with him. Shamir's English was weak when I first got there and improved as he made a real effort to learn it. So Hebrew wasn't a problem for me while I was there. It will be a problem later, I think. We tried to bring speakers who spoke Hebrew. At least a couple on my U.S. staff spoke Hebrew -- my Assistant Cultural Attaché and the Press Attaché. But they are Jewish. This is a rather delicate matter. You don't want an Embassy full of American Jews because they speak Hebrew. The Israelis will be the first to tell you that.

I remember the rumors going around that Ambassador Lewis was going to be reassigned. Every once in a while I had a luncheon for the publishers of the newspapers and Lewis would attend. After lunch he'd hold a give and take. The first question asked on that day was who's going to be your successor? And he said, I don't know that I'm leaving. But he said let's be hypothetical. If I was leaving, who would you like to replace me? The spokesman for the group said, I'll tell you one thing. We don't want a Jew.

Q: Who is the present Ambassador of Israel?

LEE: You've got me on that. I can't think of his name, very prominent guy. Anyhow he's leaving to become Ambassador to the UN. And the new one will be Bill Brown who was formerly the DCM during the first part of my tour there. He went to Thailand as Ambassador.

Q: He went to Thailand?

LEE: Yes, he's coming from Thailand to Tel Aviv.

RICHARD M. FAIRBANKS, III
Special Negotiator for the Middle East
Washington, DC (1982-1983)

Ambassador Richard M. Fairbanks, III was born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1941. He attended Yale on a Navy scholarship and graduated with a degree in history. After graduating, Ambassador Fairbanks served in the Navy for four years. In 1981, he was appointed by President Reagan as the Assistant Secretary

of State for Congressional Relations. In 1982, he was appointed Special Negotiator for the Middle East. He was interviewed on April 19, 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: When in 1982 were you given a new position?

FAIRBANKS: In December 1981, Congress went into recess for the Christmas holidays. At that time, we had gotten foreign aid authorization and appropriations through both Houses of Congress for the first time in four years. We got a Republican majority to vote for foreign aid. We hadn't lost a vote all year long. So I walked into the Secretary of State's office and I told him that I had given him "blood, sweat and tears " for a year and that I would be returning to the practice of law. I wished him luck for the future. He said "Fine. Find a good replacement". So I found a good replacement, Powell Moore, who had been in charge of Senate relations on the White House staff. He was known to Haig. I went off with a House Congressional delegation to Brussels for discussions with the Europeans. Before leaving, General Haig said: "I am going to make you an offer you can't refuse. I am going to make you the negotiator for the Law of the Sea". I told him that was a job I could refuse. He responded : " I thought you would. That is not really what I meant. I would like you to be the special negotiator for the Middle East peace process". He was right; I could not refuse that opportunity.

I went off with the Congressional delegation and the word began to leak out while I was in Brussels that Powell Moore would be appointed as Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations and that I was being fired. That got my attention. I went to the leader of the Congressional delegation and told him that I thought I'd better get home to save my reputation. He wished me good luck, and I flew back to the U.S. Then the word leaked out as to what I was going to do. I said that I didn't pretend to have a considerable amount of background on the issues. Secretary Haig said that it was a lawyer's job, that my predecessors in the Carter Administration had been lawyers -- Bob Strauss and Sol Linowitz. He said that I was a lawyer, that he had confidence in me and that he wanted me to do the job. I said "Fine".

I left H in December 1981 and the announcement of my new duties was made in January 1982. Before the public announcement was made, I joined General Haig and Nick Veliotis, who was the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs at that time and a couple of others on a trip to the Middle East. We went to Egypt, Israel and Jordan. We talked to the leaders about the peace process, where it stood -- autonomy under Camp David, what was needed, negotiations, etc. Basically, the purpose of that trip was both for the Secretary to take another look at the views of the leaders of the region and to introduce me to them as the negotiator. We arrived at the airport in Israel, just having come from Egypt and Haig held a press conference on the tarmac in Tel Aviv. The first question from an Israeli journalist was : "Mr. Secretary, we understand you have a new negotiator for the peace process and his name is Fairchild". Haig confirmed that we had a new negotiator, but his name was Fairbanks with an emphasis on the "Fair". We got back on the plane and Veliotis turned to the Secretary and said: "Mr. Secretary, you missed a great chance. You should have said that his name is Fairchild with the emphasis on the "Child". I was clearly known as someone who was very young and inexperienced in this job. I inherited the same staff that had been working on the peace process under the Carter Administration. So we didn't have to reinvent the wheel.

Q: Where did matters stand in January 1982?

FAIRBANKS: There hadn't been much progress on the Camp David peace process during 1981. Obviously, as the United States went into its presidential election, matters went into stasis on the Middle East negotiations while people waited to see what was going to happen. After the elections, there was going to be a change, and people felt that they had to wait for the new administration to get up to speed. The professional staff who had been working on the peace process stayed intact. They had a couple of meetings beginning in mid-fall 1981, resuscitating the conversations at the staff level on autonomy and about ideas to bridge differences among the parties, etc. But Middle East peace was just beginning to appear on our agenda. Haig had been out to the Middle East once or twice and talked about strategic consensus, pulling people together to look at the Soviet threat. But this was the first time we put the emphasis back on the peace process.

We did very clearly put the emphasis on it through the series of meetings he had in January. I immediately went out again after the Secretary's trip and started a negotiating train with the Foreign Ministers of the countries and of course I would also talk to the Chiefs of State as well in the negotiating sessions. We basically ran into a problem in the winter and early spring of 1982, which was that the meetings had been held alternatively in Israel, Egypt and the United States -- the three parties to the Camp David agreements. When it came to the Israeli's turn, they decided that the discussions would take place in Jerusalem. They had previously been held in Herzliyya. The Egyptians refused to go to Jerusalem because that city was part of the problem and symbolically the wrong place to go. The Israelis were insistent. Therefore we ran into a venue problem for the meeting. So, I had to go from one side to the other to gather ideas and put them together. Then we tried to bridge the venue problem, and I came up with some ideas on that. We went forward during the course of the spring of 1982 and made some progress in crystallizing the differences between the Egyptian and Israeli positions.

Q: Could you give us a little background for those who might not be familiar with the Camp David accords? What had been accomplished by the Carter Administration and where was the process to go?

FAIRBANKS: Of course, the Camp David meeting itself produced the accords which had basically two parts. One, was a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel which was basically being fulfilled by the time the Reagan Administration came in. That is, there was disengagement in the Sinai, there was an international peace-keeping force in the Sinai separating the two parties and Israel had agreed to return all of Sinai to Egypt. That was one-half of the Camp David accords. The other half, the forward looking part dealing with the occupied territories -- the West Bank and Gaza -- and providing a formula for the resolution of that part of the Middle East process and Israeli disengagement from their Arab neighbors and hopefully a long-lasting and formal peace regime between Israel and its Arab neighbors. We were working on the second half, although the first half was still being implemented. The final withdrawal from the Sinai occurred about the spring of 1982 when the Israelis pulled all the way back out of the Sinai and the Egyptians took it over as their jurisdiction.

The track I was really concerned with was the continuing peace process for the West Bank and Gaza. That was to be done in stages under the Camp David accords. The first stage of the process was to provide autonomy for the residents of the areas. There was to be elections in the territories for Palestinians to join an Egyptian delegation and hopefully also a Jordanian delegation, so that there would be a Jordanian-Palestinian-Egyptian-US-Israeli conference. So instead of the three parties then in the Camp David peace process, we were trying to draw in two additional parties -- the Palestinian residents and the Jordanians. Our attempt was to move the autonomy process forward and that is what we picked up. This was while the Sinai disengagement was going on.

Q: How did this relate to the continuing pressure from Israel to have the United States put its embassy in Jerusalem?

FAIRBANKS: From the Israeli point of view, they said that every country gets to choose its capital. They pointed out that the U.S. had its embassy in Tel Aviv while they claimed Jerusalem as its capital. They were not asking the Egyptians to recognize Jerusalem as the capital; the Egyptians had their embassy in Tel Aviv as well. All they were asking was for the Egyptians and the Americans to come to Jerusalem for a conversation and negotiations with a country with which they had diplomatic relations. They wanted to know what was wrong with that.

Q: That would appear to extend the agenda that you were working on.

FAIRBANKS: Jerusalem is probably the most difficult of all the difficult issues, which is why it is always put off to the end in all peace process conversations. It is a very emotional issue, both on the Israeli and the Arab sides. Certainly, there was no attempt to use this to diffuse the process, but once the question of the Jerusalem venue had been raised, it would have been a great loss of face for the Israeli body politic to back down. These things are always difficult. We did have ways of bridging that by bringing the foreign ministers to the United States. We were building up to convene a mini Camp David at the foreign minister level by having the Israeli and Egyptian foreign ministers join the Secretary of State on the Eastern shore of Maryland. We would bring them all together and present to them the American bridging ideas on the points of disagreement, get an autonomy agreement, have the elections and move forward. That was our game plan, which we were ready to put into effect in June 1982. My negotiating team in May 1982 was out in the area; they had just left Egypt and arrived in Jerusalem for conversations with the Israelis in preparation for the June meeting when the Israelis invaded Lebanon. So we pulled the negotiating team out of Jerusalem and told them to come home because we didn't want to have it appear that we were supporting the invasion. They came home and that really was the end of the autonomy process. The Egyptians withdrew their Ambassador and the whole peace process was put in stasis. At about the same time, in June 1982, Haig was relieved as Secretary of State by Reagan; George Shultz came in as Secretary of State in June 1982 and was told by the President to get a handle on the Middle East situation, have a thorough review and come up with some new policies. As many of the people who had been appointed by Haig, I submitted my resignation. Shultz decided he didn't want to accept and asked me to stay on. We spent the summer of 1982 relooking and revisiting the peace process, starting at ground zero. He spent over 50% of his time in the first three months as Secretary dealing with Middle East issues. As a result of that review and a series of conversations and meetings at Camp David, came a Reagan

speech on the Middle East on September 1, 1982. We launched our program with that speech and then Phil Habib and I were sent out by the President and the Secretary to go around the region and talk about the plan.

We spent the entire fall of 1982 in the region to see Prime Minister Begin, President Mubarak, King Hussein, King Fahd, President Assad and other leaders in the region. At the same time, the Israeli advance into Lebanon came to a stop and we were negotiating the withdrawal of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) from Beirut. So we really had two negotiations going on; Phil was doing that. He was also accompanying me on the peace process. When people asked what I did and what Habib did, I used to respond by saying that Habib was in charge of war and I was in charge of peace.

The peace process culminated in Washington with a meeting with King Hussein, who stayed for about a week. We had very long meetings with him and his staff. We were trying to draw in the missing partners -- the Jordanians and the Palestinians -- into the peace process. King Hussein returned to Jordan and had meetings with Arafat and tried to get what we then called the "green light" from the PLO to embark on the negotiations. It looked like he had obtained the "green light" from Arafat at one stage, but then Arafat met with the PLO Executive Committee in about February 1983 and instead of giving a "green light" or a "Yellow light", it gave a "red light". That ended that game.

Once again, at about the end of March, I went to the Secretary of State and said that I had done my best, that it had been a long fifteen months and that I was resigning. He said that I couldn't do that because he was about to go out to the Middle East, and he needed me as his lawyer because we had to complete a peace treaty. There was to be direct negotiations between the Lebanese and the Israelis to try to make an arrangement for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. I agreed, of course, to go with him on that trip. I became involved in drafting a number of the documents for what turned into the May 15, 1983 peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon. During that period, Habib, Maury Draper, who worked for Habib, Nick Veliotis and Shultz would go to Lebanon each day to negotiate with Gemayel and the Lebanese. I would stay in Israel and would have occasional conversations with the head of the peace process team, Yosef Burg, the Minister of Interior, but I spent most of my time writing documents and assisting in the Lebanon affair. We got the withdrawal/peace agreement and on the way back from the Middle East trip, I told Shultz that I could now resign in good conscience. He said "No; Habib had become persona-non-grata with the Syrians and would not talk to Assad anymore because Assad didn't like some of the things that happened in the negotiations to ending the fighting in Lebanon. He didn't want to deal with Habib anymore, he had said. So I got drawn into the Lebanon process and went there with Habib and Draper. They introduced me to all the Lebanese parties and so I then picked up that side of things. The Habib-Draper mission, as it was known, was replaced by the McFarlane-Fairbanks mission. Bud McFarlane, then the Deputy National Security Advisor, joined me, and we went out to Beirut to take over responsibility for the Lebanese process. We would travel from Israel to Syria and occasionally to Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, trying to put together Israeli withdrawal and the stabilization of the Lebanese situation. We thought we would go out for a week or two and then return to consider the problems. We never did get back because matters became dicier and dicier, and closer and closer. Finally, it blew up again into war when the Israelis withdrew from the Shuf which is the area south of Beirut. In late August 1983, the

shelling started and civil war broke out. The Syrians came in, the Druze came out, the Christians were fighting and it was the usual Lebanon morass. McFarlane and I would shuttle around on two different planes. We would go off in two different directions every day, trying to put the pieces together with the Saudis, the Syrians and the Israelis. Finally, we got a cease fire in Lebanon in about late September, 1983 and we came back and got a war-powers resolution through Congress, authorizing our continued presence in the international peace-keeping force in Lebanon, together with the British, the Italians and the French. It appeared that we might get the situation stabilized. McFarlane returned to Washington to become National Security Advisor, and I was left in the Middle East by myself again. Shortly after that, we had the bombing of the Marines at the airport in Beirut in October -- 242 killed. After that, we continued to try to get the Lebanese parties to talk to each other.

Finally, we succeeded in that. Again we had a venue problem because the Christians (the Maronites and the Greek Orthodox) and the Sunnis and the Shiites and the Druze couldn't even agree where to meet. They wouldn't meet in the Presidential Palace -- wouldn't meet here -- wouldn't meet there. Finally, we got them together, with the help of the Saudis, in Geneva in November, 1983. I went to Geneva and met with all the parties there -- the Syrians, the Saudis and all the Lebanese parties. I had accompanied Shultz in meetings with our European allies and briefed them on our game plan. We wanted the Europeans to support us. We finally got an agreement among the Lebanese parties in November, 1983 where upon I did really get myself extricated from the Middle East and turned it over to Don Rumsfeld, who then became the Middle East negotiator.

Q: Who were the Israelis and Egyptians you were dealing with? How would you characterize them?

FAIRBANKS: For the Israeli and Egyptians, nothing was more important than the peace process. We had therefore top level attention. On the Israeli side it was the Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, his nominal chief negotiator, Yosef Burg, who was the head of the National Religious Party and Minister of Interior, General Sharon, who was the Minister of Defense, and Moshe Arens, who had just left being the Ambassador to the United States and at that time was a cabinet advisor and later Minister of Defense. There were also other members of the Israeli cabinet -- they had an eight-nine man group of their cabinet which was their negotiating team. To support their team, the Israelis had a staff of lawyers and bright fellows from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including David Kimche and Hanon Bar-On from the Foreign Ministry.

On the Egyptian side, certainly every time I went to Cairo I would meet with President Hosni Mubarak, the Foreign Minister, a retired General, and their negotiating team.

Q: You didn't feel that either side was just keeping up a pretense? You felt that both were committed?

FAIRBANKS: That was absolutely true for the top level people in both places. When I first met with Begin as head of the U.S. delegation in early February 1982, I was accompanied by Sam Lewis, our Ambassador to Israel, and the eight people on my team. Begin had eight or nine members of his cabinet on his team. At the end of the formal meeting, Sam Lewis and I were

invited into Begin's private office, where we continued the discussions. About half way through that meeting, Begin turned to Lewis and said : "Sam, when you bring a Senator or Congressman to see me, I always ask if he is a freshman. With Fairbanks, I don't have to ask". At that time, we had "call signs" for the security people throughout the Middle East. Habib was called "Killer" or something like that. Mine of course became "Freshman" for the rest of my time in area.

Q: Did you or members of your delegation have any feelings about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the middle of a serious peace process? There had been some talk about Secretary Haig either giving the go-ahead to Israel or at least implying that we would be benevolent neutrals.

FAIRBANKS: I was in the meeting where that story originated. Sharon had come to the U.S. approximately ten days before the invasion and had meetings with Haig. I was in those meetings. Haig maintains to this day that he didn't give any private assurance to Sharon. I certainly never heard it. He had a couple of very brief private meetings with Sharon, but I don't believe that he intentionally gave anything like a green light or anything else. I think Sharon, for his own purposes, may have believed that Haig had done so or wanted to believe that he did. Haig rebutted this allegation in his book, but it continues to be bandied about. I do not believe that Haig either did or intended to give any assurance.

Q: What was our reaction when this happened? Did you see everything going down the tube?

FAIRBANKS: Sure. We were all prepared within a month to bring people to this country to sit down to resolve the issues once and for all and then move on to the next stage of autonomy. There are those of a cynical bent who believe that the Israelis knew that their actions would bring the process to a halt and used the excuse of the attack on their Ambassador in London to kick off the invasion, even though there had not been any rockets from Lebanon into Israel for the prior five or six months. History will be the judge.

Q: Were you privy to the resignation of Secretary Haig?

FAIRBANKS: No, it happened in Europe. The President and Haig were over there for the summit of the industrialized nations in -- I think in France that year -- but I was not on that trip.

Q: As far as the Middle East was concerned, did you find that there was a difference between the attitudes of Haig and Shultz?

FAIRBANKS: Both thought it was in the U.S. national interest to make progress on the peace process. Both had the goal of achieving a formal peace treaty between Israel and its Arab neighbors. As far as tactics were concerned, the September 1, 1982 peace initiative bore a striking resemblance to our previous policies. There was no break in policy. In the articulation of that policy, we said some things publicly that we had always believed privately. That was really the only difference.

Q: Then you didn't feel any real change in the leadership in what you were trying to accomplish?

FAIRBANKS: No. The personal styles of Haig and Shultz were certainly different, but as far as the substance is concerned, there was no radical difference.

Q: What about the decision to keep our Marines in Lebanon? First, they were put there to assist with the PLO departure; then they were brought back in as a small military force with no particular mission.

FAIRBANKS: That is again an allegation that was made. I was not in the negotiations that put them there. That was when Habib and Draper were in charge of that part of our efforts. What they were doing was trying to stabilize the situation in Lebanon. The President of Lebanon said that he needed a period of time to bring the various Lebanese factions together to get the situation stabilized. He felt that couldn't be done without international assistance. It wasn't just American assistance: there was also a French military force, an Italian force, and a British force. All the flags were flying. They were all running around. Then we had the UNIFIL in the South and the United States was part of that. So it wasn't a unilateral move by the United States. It was something the international community, particularly our Europeans allies, felt was worthwhile and would make a contribution.

Q: There were obviously very strict prohibitions on dealing with the PLO at this time. Yet it is a factor and today we are having conversations with them. Did you have any indirect way to communicate with it? Did you feel that at some point we had to bite the bullet and had to talk to the PLO?

FAIRBANKS: We maintained the position from the mid-1970's, when Kissinger first laid it down, that we wouldn't deal with PLO and certainly not recognize it until it had met certain minimal conditions. We maintained that policy all during this period and throughout the Reagan Administration until the PLO met the requirements. There wasn't ever a feeling of having to deal with them. The feeling was that they had to change their position in order to deal with us. Basically, they had to recognize the existence of Israel and renounce terrorism.

ARTHUR S. BERGER
Embassy Spokesman
Tel Aviv (1982-1986)

Mr. Berger was born and raised in Rhode Island and educated at Yeshiva and Howard Universities. He joined the Foreign Service (USIA) in 1970. Serving primarily in Cultural and Public Affairs, Mr. Berger served abroad in Kampala, Addis Ababa, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Tel Aviv and the Hague, where he was Public Affairs Officer. In his Washington assignments Mr. Berger served at USIA Headquarters as Director of Publications and at the Department of State as Spokesman for the Near East South Asia Bureau. Following retirement Mr. Berger worked with the American Jewish Committee before becoming Director of Communications of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Mr. Berger was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

BERGER: I got a call from the director's office that said they wanted me to go out and meet the ambassador to Israel and meet the ambassador, a week's TDY out there. So I did, and it was the beginning of '82. Or December of '81. It was around that time-frame. So I went out there and spent about a week at the embassy meeting a lot of people, being briefed by the political officer, the DCM. And I spent several hours with the ambassador one-on-one. And he was tough. I mean, he grilled me. He had my bio and, you know, I had some background on the Middle East. I had done quite a bit of reading on it. I had taken a number of courses in college. I had done a sub-specialization in graduate school and in my Ph.D. courses I was really focusing on political leadership in Africa and the Middle East. So I had spent a lot of reading and spent a lot of time in graduate seminars on the Middle East, especially at George Washington and American universities.

Well, I guess I passed muster because word got back that I was acceptable, but the ambassador said, "I want him to work in the State Department for the next six months before he comes here. I want him to be in the desk office; I want him to work with the head of public affairs for NEA (Bureau of Near East Affairs). Because when he comes to Israel, we were bound to have a crisis. So, from day one, he has to know all the issues, how the State Department handles it, how the White House deals with things. He has to know the personalities and everything about the policies."

So, two weeks later I was working in NEA. I spent part of my time on the Israel desk with Charlie Hill, who was the head of it and who later became executive secretary of the department, and who had just out as political officer in Israel. And half the time with Chris Ross, who was the head of NEA public affairs. And that really made a difference. I have to say that Sam Lewis was right on target. I thought it was not the best idea to do that. But at the same time, when I arrived out there it was the sixth day of the Lebanon War. And there were hundreds of American journalists – I'm not exaggerating – hundreds. And every single one of them wanted to know what is the U.S. policy about this; and what are you saying about this; and what are you doing about this; and they wanted to talk to the Ambassador. And for my first fifteen months in Israel I think I may have had one or two days off and that was about it. It was crisis after crisis after crisis. And I loved it.

Q: Was there any concern on anybody's part about having a Jewish public affairs officer in Israel because of a perceived conflicts of interest?

BERGER: No, there wasn't any at all. I think that back when I first came into the Foreign Service there was this stereotype that if you sent a Jewish officer to Israel he or she may get into a situation where they have to make a tough decision and question where their loyalty lies. I think that by the time of the late 1970s, that had really been thrown out the window. I thought it was a ridiculous thing. An American Jew who was in the Foreign Service has loyalty only to the United States. And in going out there, I knew it. And I got to meet a lot of people and get to know some very, very well. From the editors of every newspaper, the major journalists on radio and television, the American journalists who were there, the European journalists who were there. I had a rolodex of literally hundreds of top journalists from all over the world. And never was there any question that I was not representing U.S. policy. It was U.S. policy that I was

explaining. In fact, it was because of that that after I left Israel Dick Murphy asked me to be his spokesman for NEA.

Q: So we move to Israel. When you arrived, what was the situation?

BERGER: As I say, it was the tenth day of the Lebanon War. Life was seemed normal though. It was a very strange thing. The war was going on. You could see helicopters buzzing by the embassy, along the beachfront, going north from the Mediterranean to Lebanon. The news on radio and television was consumed by the war. It was all anybody was talking about, certainly at the embassy. That was the main preoccupation. And my job from day one – I came into the office and I remember immediately that the phone was ringing off the hook, from people like John Chancellor on down.

Q: John Chancellor being . . . ?

BERGER: He was a major NBC [National Broadcasting Company in USA] commentator. Marvin Kalb, writers from the New York Times, Tom Friedman became the correspondent in Israel. He replaced David Shipley, who was out there first. The top American journalists for radio, television, wires, daily newspapers, news magazines, they were all stationed there because this was the front page news story. It wasn't just the war but the whole U.S.-Israeli relationship. And the search for peace. This was a theme that ran through American policy since the founding of the state of Israel since 1948. Every American president thought that he could do something to bring about peace in the Middle East.

Q: Somebody once told me that there were over forty plans.

BERGER: Oh, that is probably an underestimation. There was the Rogers Plan, Weinberger came out with the Reagan Plan while I was there. This was on September 26, 1982. I remember it because I began to smoking again on that day. I had stopped smoking for some time. Weinberger was there, and he was defense secretary, and Sharon was defense minister of Israel. The two of them together. And on that day Reagan announced his plan to bring peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. And I was up all night. We were transcribing things. We were meeting with journalists. It was one of those all-nighters that we frequently find in those kinds of an environment. And a lot of Israelis smoked. I think that they still do. I think that half of our staff in the embassy were smoking around me. And the Israeli journalists were smoking. And people from Sharon's office that we were meeting with, they were smoking. And it smelled good and I started smoking again. So that was my downfall for another seven years until 1989 when I stopped for good.

Q: Were you on the Israeli desk when the Israelis went into Lebanon?

BERGER: No. In fact, I was on vacation in Europe. *En route* to Israel, we stopped in Europe. We stopped in Paris and I remember buying a car and driving it to Rome.

Q: I've had interviews with Bob Dillon, who was our ambassador in Lebanon (June 1981-October 1983), who has a very – to put it mildly – jaundiced view of what was happening and

felt that our embassy in Tel Aviv was not giving them an accurate account of what was happening. What was the Embassy's understanding of this event?

BERGER: I think there was thought that the initial attack was understandable. And that wasn't just the embassy, but the administration as well. There were cross-border incursions, rockets going into Israel, the shooting of the Israeli Ambassador in London, Ambassador (Shlomo) Argov, was kind of the straw that triggered – that was a bad mixed metaphor – that was the incident that more than anything else triggered the invasion. Remember, of course, that Sharon had his master plan of what he was going to do. But those first couple of weeks we had the same kind of information that just about everybody else did, that I think that probably Prime Minister Begin had. Began – as everybody else – believed that this was to go in there to clean out these PLO nests, to kill the cross-border Fedayeen, to disrupt their whole operation, and basically let the Lebanese be back in charge in Lebanon.

Most people, I think, felt that they would come back to the Litani River. Because they had gone in, in '78, up to the Litani. They would go up maybe a little bit beyond that and then come back in. When I got to Israel though – this was the tenth day of the war – they were basically in Beirut at that point. And nobody seemed to understand what the hell was going on. Very quickly though – Sam Lewis is not an easy person, I don't know if you have interviewed him yet – Sam was very tough. And when he was given instructions and also when he made up his own instructions to go in to find out what was going on - he wasn't the kind of shy person who would stand back and wait for somebody – the assistant secretary or the director of the desk - to send him instructions to go in and meet with the prime minister or the foreign minister. He would stimulate that to try and find out what was going on.

Tough, tough ambassador, but really good. He understood a lot of the nuances more than most people. I think that to be ambassador in Israel is probably one of the hardest jobs in the world. Not just the crises, but you are dealing with people who not only know your history but think they know your history better than you do to.

Q: When you got there, was there a concern that Alexander Haig had given Sharon a wink and nudge, basically to say that "if you go in, we won't be upset."

BERGER: I think some people have called that the blinking orange light. There have been so many rumors about that. In fact, there were a number of Israeli journalists who wrote about that as well and believed that he had. But there has never been any evidence that he actually did that. And I've never seen a memcon (memorandum of conversation) or any other document that said that. Or anybody who was present in any conversation between the two of them that leads me to believe that there was ever that wink. I think that he did not really know what Sharon was going to do. Sharon didn't tell anybody.

Q: I would have thought that because of this so-called wink on the part of Haig, even the rumor that it was, makes one feel that you are not quite on firm ground.

BERGER: A lot of people believe that Israel will never go into a war situation, especially a pre-emptive war like it did in Lebanon – it was not a defensive war. It wasn't like '73, when they

were attacked, or '67, when they were encircled and about to be attacked. This was really very, very different. This was pre-emptive and the Israelis learned that hard way that sometimes a pre-emptive war doesn't work out to the grandest plans.

Q: Yes. As we speak, on October 1, 2004, the war in Iraq is not getting better. And there are certain overtones from this earlier Israeli experience.

BERGER: There are. I don't think there are any parallels to it because the situations are so different. But at the same time, the sense of being bogged down and not thinking through what happens after you win the war. Surely, the Israeli military is so powerful that it can beat any Arab country. Certainly, Lebanon is not a problem. And the Syrian Air Force was destroyed in the first or second day of the Lebanon War. I don't think anybody questions their capabilities whatsoever.

But, as we are learning in Iraq, what happens after you get in there and after you are an occupying power – then what are you going to do? I think that the Israelis were welcomed far more by the Lebanese, by the Shia in South Lebanon, than we were in Iraq. There literally were thousands and thousands of Lebanese that come out of their homes, gave flowers or brought food to Israeli soldiers, because they were really occupied by the PLO. They were fed up with it. They wanted their country back.

Now, had the Israelis gone in and then very quickly given it back to these Lebanese, I think the Israelis would not have had the kind of problems that they had for so many years in Lebanon. But, of course, it's easy in hindsight. But I know that there are many Israeli political and political-military thinkers who have said that same thing. But Sharon made an alliance with some of the Christian leaders in Lebanon. The Christian leaders were the Gamal family and others also saw this as an opportunity to preserve their community, the hegemony they had over a good part of the government and the economy. And they had had a relationship with Sharon and a lot of Israelis for years before that, and a good relationship. So they saw this as an opportunity to recapture what they saw as their rightful place on Mount Lebanon, back in the days when the French formed that little enclave over there in the early '20s.

That was, I think, part of the whole thing. But clearly the U.S. did not orchestrate this. And I don't think the U.S. even gave a wink and a nod. It's just that there are a lot of people in the world who cannot believe that the Israelis would go into a preemptive war – especially anything as brash and extensive as they did in Lebanon – without the United States knowing beforehand and, not saying “yes, go do it,” but turning their head away and saying “gee, we don't see anything going on.” The Israelis don't share a lot of things with the United States. And this was one of the things I found in my four years there.

Q: They talk about being close allies.

BERGER: Well, there is a close alliance on a lot of things. And that's very true. There is no question about that. But even in the closest alliance that the United States has with Britain, with Canada, with Australia – what other country has gone to war with the United States as much as Australia? – I don't think that we share everything in our decision making process with them, or

they with us. Nor should they. Even though your values may be the same, your interests may the same, your goal may be the same, not everything is the same. You are different cultures and because you live in different parts of the world, your interests are going to be different in some way. And this is true with the United States and Israel. No question about that.

Q: You arrived right in the middle of this. What were you doing, sort of from the get-go?

BERGER: I don't even remember being home on the day that the movers came to deliver our stuff. It was intense. I would say the average day probably extended twelve to fourteen, sixteen hours sometimes. Six, sometimes seven, days a week. Surely every week was a six day week. That was without question. And sometimes seven day weeks. It wasn't just the war. It was the crisis. It was the visitors that came, the high level U.S. visitors that came. I was there when Rumsfeld was the special envoy, when (National Security Advisor Bud) McFarland came through, this one came through and that one. And half the U.S. Congress of course, who all had their own ideas on how to resolve things. And (Secretary of State) George Shultz. It was one right after the other of high level visitors, of special envoys on peace process issues, of staff delegations.

And I was the spokesman for the embassy so I was the first line when it came to journalists who wanted some information. Now, anybody who called the ambassador's office, the ambassador's secretary would transfer that call immediately to me. I would filter those calls. And make certain, number one, was this somebody that the ambassador really should talk to? And he did talk to a lot of journalists. Also, was this somebody that I could handle? Or somebody else in the embassy? Or, was this somebody we weren't going to work with.

One of the first things I learned was that the best way to have a credible relationship with journalists – and it didn't make a difference if it was American, Israeli or a third country – you had to be honest with them. You had to give them as much information as you could legitimately give them. But at the same time never mislead them. Once you mislead them you lose your credibility. If you are honest with them and open with them and when you know that there is something you cannot reveal, just tell them: "Sorry, I can't go there. You've got to understand that there is some information that I cannot discuss." They understand. And I think that's what I learned. Those four years in Israel – probably the most intense years of my life except for the three that I followed up in Washington as head of NEA/P – were a tremendous learning experience.

Q: You must have been hit square in the face by that 2x4, Shatila and Sabra and the questionable Israeli questionable collusion in the massacre of Palestinians?

BERGER: Oh yeah. That was an awful night. I can remember exactly where I was, in fact. I was at the DCM's house for a dinner. This was in September of 1982. I had arrived in mid-June. In the middle of this dinner the DCM - who was charge' because Sam Lewis was out of the country on vacation – took this phone call and I could see right away on his face that there was some crisis. And then he took several of us from the embassy staff – a political officer, myself and a few others – and we sat down in a private room and he briefed us what had happened. And from then it was almost non-stop.

There was some misinformation at first as to what was happening. And once we found out – which was within a couple of hours – they immediately demarched the Israeli government. I think he went to Began, the foreign minister, and said: “You’ve got a responsibility. You’ve got to stop what is going on there.” I will give the Israelis credit for one thing. Surely, they should not have allowed the Lebanese Christian militia to go into Sabra and Shatila because they could know what was going to happen. The hatreds were so awful. This was right after Amin Gamal was killed in the bombing. There was no question that the tempers, the seeking of revenge, were going to be.

The Israelis, who were working with the Christian militia, had to know that any Christian militia men who were going into Sabra and Shatila were going to go after them and would kill as many people as possible. They should have stopped them. And the Israeli commission of inquiry that took place was very clear about that. They said: “The Israelis certainly didn’t take the guns to these people, but Sharon, as minister of defense, had this personal responsibility of not stopping something like this from happening.” And they forced him to resign. And he was out of government for a long time because of that. I thought the commission of inquire one of the high points of Israeli democracy.

[Editor’s Note: A book on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon which was researched in part from ADST interviews is Cursed in the Peacemaker: The American Diplomat versus the Israeli General, Beirut 1982 by John Boykin, Applegate Press 2002.]

Q: There had been this point where the Israelis had beaten off this series of wars – ‘48, ‘56, ‘67, ‘73 – and was seen as the tough Westernized country. But I think that after the invasion of Lebanon, there became a change in American perception. Until then, Israel could absolutely do no wrong, practically, within the public affairs context. Was that perceptible?

BERGER: Yes it was. It was very perceptible. A lot of Israelis felt it too. Until that war the Israelis felt very strongly that they were in a war for survival. That it was really important for them to be able to maintain that qualitative edge. Until ‘67 their military alliance was really with the French. The French were the main supplier of weaponry. And it was after the ‘67 war when the French put a boycott that the United States started selling weaponry to Israel.

‘48, clearly, I mean, that was clearly an existential war. Had they lost it there would not be a state of Israel. And this was probably true in ‘67 as well. ‘56 was different because that was another mix up and there were British and French interests. That was more, I think, British and French interests.

Q: Israel was sort of the third hanger-on.

BERGER: It was. I still haven’t read enough about some of the discussions between the British and the French in ‘56. I know they wanted to get to Suez Canal back. They wanted to denationalize. But I think the Israelis saw this as an opportunity to get back at Egypt. Because in the period ‘53 to ‘56 there were a lot of cross-border incursions from Gaza and from Sinai into Israeli settlements nearby.

But Lebanon was different. Lebanon changed the perception, as I said, for a lot of Israelis, but especially I think in the West, the United States and Europe. Here was a country that really did not have to go to war. That took upon itself to be the shaper of the future of the Middle East. Or at least they thought they were going to be the re-shaper of the Middle East. Start a new relationship, a peace treaty, with a new government in Lebanon. And I think that Sharon and a few others in the Israeli government thought that they were really going to change the Arab perception of Israel. That they were really going to have from that a series of peace treaties with all of the Arab countries.

Well, of course, we know that didn't happen and the whole thing backfired badly on the Israelis. And part of it was that the United States got so ticked off at the Israelis not only being in Lebanon up to Beirut, but also bombing the city. I remember some of the messages that went from the United States, from the president and the secretary of state to the prime minister and foreign minister of Israel, they were some tough messages. Let me tell you, the language in there was extraordinarily severe. There was that special bilateral relationship and sure there was a lot of tension over there, but once the bombing of Beirut started, and then Sabra and Shatila, the language got harsh. And in fact U.S.-Israeli relations went to a low point that really caused an incredible strain. I think that it was probably – except for the '56 war when Eisenhower forced the Israelis and the British and the French to back out of Egypt – I don't think there was any time in the history of U.S.-Israeli relations where the language was so tough and the pressure was so severe. Extraordinary pressure and threat.

I remember reading this year the diary of James Grover McDonald, who was the first U.S. ambassador to Israel [Editor's Note: McDonald served from March 1949 to December 1950]. His family presented them to the museum. His twelve-thousand pages of his typed personal diaries of his years in service to the United States. And there were some things in there, some of the language in some of the demarches that he had during the Israeli war of independence, where the language was just like that. But from that time until '56 and then to the bombing of Beirut, I don't think I've ever seen anything like that.

Q: Did you feel that the embassy, the officers and all, were changing their attitudes towards Israel? Looking at this as no longer our nice friendly country but another country whose interests are not necessarily America's?

BERGER: It was true that on every level, that the tension pervaded the relationship. In the military relationship, in the intelligence sharing, in the economic relationship and in the people-to-people relationship. The friendship among people didn't change, among individuals, that didn't change at all. That became strong and deeper, as would happen in any country where American FSOs were stationed. You make friends, I know a number of my local friends there were more critical of the Israelis than even the U.S. government was.

But then I think that there was a real change. The Israelis had several elections, first of all. They changed their leadership. There was a national unity government. And there was a realization by the top Israeli leadership that the United States-Israeli relationship had come to a period of great strain and it could harm the long term relationship and the future strength of Israel if the Israelis

didn't change certain aspects of their policy. It wasn't that we were no longer allies. We were allies; but we were allies that were going through a really rough patch.

And at that point it was really up to the Israelis to change things. And they did. They recognized how serious that breach was and that the reason for it was their policies, not anything that the United States did. So at a certain point, they moved very quickly – I don't remember the exact time. During 1983 there was the bombing of the American embassy in Beirut, there was the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut. Those were two things that helped to bring the U.S. and Israel together because of a sense of there being a common enemy, the terrorists. The second part of it – I think even more important – was that if we work together, perhaps we can find a way to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict that would leave Israel more secure, that would give the Palestinians a sense of a real future, and that would ensure that the Arab neighbors of Israel would have a real rationalization for going to peace with Israel instead of going to war with Israel. So that I think helped turn around the whole thing. And the Israelis tended to have some good intelligence on terrorism as well and they tended to share more and more of it during that period of time.

Also, in the spring of 1983, the U.S. got the Israelis and the Lebanese together in the negotiations for a peace treaty. I was the spokesman for the U.S. delegation. Each week we would fly up and go to the negotiations. I got to know some of the Lebanese who were there. I remember, Shultz came right at the end of the negotiations of that and he felt very strongly that this was an important agreement. We made a very big mistake: We didn't bring Syria in on this. And Syria made sure that the agreement was going to go anywhere. And that's a lesson that we learned very quickly: You cannot bring about comprehensive peace between Israel and its neighbors without Syria.

Q: Well our ambassador to Damascus (November 1981-June 1984), Bob Paganelli, was saying that Assad would not be on board when this so-called Shultz Plan came out and Shultz got very mad at him.

BERGER: There were a number of people. Not just Bob, but others, both within NEA and other places that felt very strongly – I think there were a couple of our political officers in the embassy in Tel Aviv as well – that felt that we were making an error by not bringing the Syrians in right at the beginning. The more that you had them in, the more chance they would buy into it and you would be able to work something out. The Syrians were very weak at that point. Remember, their military had been crushed. They didn't see any real benefit from their relationship with the Soviet Union. That was a great relationship. All these great things, including Mid-23s at that point. And it didn't do a damn bit of good against the Israeli pilots.

Q: Yeah. They just kept getting shot down.

BERGER: So there was an opportunity over there that we missed by not bringing them in. Whether they would have said yes or no, we don't know. They may have turned down the opportunity and scuttled the whole thing anyway. But there was an opportunity that we missed by not trying.

Q: Now you came in sort of at the end of the Began government, didn't you?

BERGER: He came into power in '77 and was in power until 1984. So it was about the first year-and-a-half, two years. then they had an election and Shamir and Perez, the Likud and Labor . . . pretty much, they didn't tie things up, but at the same time neither one could form an absolute majority. They had a coalition government. Neither one wanted to go with a lot of small parties. And they recognized that Israel was in a very difficult situation both militarily – the occupation of Lebanon was beginning to bog down.

There were all kinds of roadside bombs, sort of like the IEDs we are getting in Iraq today. The Hezbollah and other groups in Lebanon were staging them against the Israelis. They were really beginning to get bad casualties. There is one similarity with Iraq. The war was one pretty quickly, but what do you do after that? And the longer you remain an occupier, the more you are hated. And that's exactly what happened.

So they realized they had to do something about Lebanon. They also realized the relationship with the United States had to be repaired and had to be repaired very quickly. And they both understood that very well. And so they formed this national unity government. And it was a weird unity government. One was prime minister the other foreign minister, then after a year they switched. It didn't work very well.

Q: Was there any warmth between the Began government and our mission in Tel Aviv?

BERGER: There was on a couple of levels. The first was that Began would never lie to you, unless of course he had been misinformed by his defense minister, which was the case with the Lebanon War. But he was a very truthful person, and a very ethical person. He didn't move into a grand mansion. He was very ethical on a personal level too. I remember when he died, the eulogies that we heard from political opposition – they had opposed him all his life, everything that he stood for – and they said “but I respected him. He was an ethical person.” And the more and more we learned about him we began to recognize that maybe he was not a great political leader, but when it came down to political leaders that were ethical, there were few that could equal him. Anywhere. He didn't believe in doing things for politics' sake.

Q: What about Sharon? I might say in Sam Lewis' oral history, there is thirty pages in which is put on reserve until Sharon really passes from the scene. And this was put in a couple years before Sharon returned as prime minister.

BERGER: I'm not surprised. Sam had some very difficult dealings with Sharon. Sharon was not an easy person. Not only that, but I think there was a sense by a lot of people that Sharon was really trying to undercut a lot of what the United States was trying to do. He had his own goals in mind and come hell or high water he was going to get them. That's why he was nicknamed by the Israelis as the Bulldozer. He could make your life very, very difficult.

Sharon was looked at by a lot of people both in and out of government as somebody who was a political opportunist. I think he has changed. When I take a look and I compare the 1980s to the last couple of years with him as prime minister, I see a very different person running the

government. First, in the 1980s I never thought that he would come back and do government at all, let alone be prime minister. I never thought that he would get that large number of people to vote for him because I thought that vast majority of Israelis really hated him.

Today in Israel I think that the extreme right wing Israelis do hate him. And some of the language that they use against him is very similar to the language that they used against Rabin before he was assassinated. Sharon – I know you don't want to get into contemporary things right now and that's not my field – but I think there is a useful comparison, even though I haven't been in the foreign service for over ten years now, but I think that he has done really a lot to turn Israel around in two ways. One, deepening its relationship with the United States. I think part of it is that I think he really is committed to pulling Israel out of Gaza and I don't know how much of the West Bank, but certainly part of the West Bank. Not as much as Rabin or certainly Perez would have been willing to do. Second, he recognizes that there is a very strong Palestinian nationalism that must be given respect and must be allowed to develop its own state that it can govern by itself. He's not going to allow that to happen as long as he feels that the State of Israel is threatened.

So you see that he's ready to withdraw today, but at the same time, when he thinks it's necessary he'll have a major incursion into Gaza. The first rule of political leadership is you have got to protect your people. And you cannot allow kids in a small town to be killed by rockets coming over the border from Gaza. He would be booted out on his ass. And I think that if our president ever allowed that to happen in the United States, he would probably be impeached.

Q: What was your impression of the foreign press corps? All of a sudden you were exposed to the crème de la crème.

BERGER: I wouldn't say exposed to. I was badgered by them. But also some of them became good friends. In fact, even today, almost twenty years after I left Israel, I continue a relationship with a number of them. Because Israel was such an important assignment many of them came back to the State Department to be the chief diplomatic correspondent for their newspaper or wire service. So my three years there I also deepened that relationship. And a number of them and I keep in very close touch. I don't give them inside information because I don't have any inside information right now. I don't see any classified documents.

(Begin Tape 4, Side 1)

BERGER: Dealing with the press...the American press in Israel were incredible. There were a few exceptions, but of the most part the newspapers and magazines, TV and radio sent their best correspondents there. Not only because it was a front page news story, but because it was a most difficult story to understand. It wasn't just covering a bombing and incursion, or this or that event or political crises. It was trying to keep track of the nuances of it and who the players were and the games that they were playing. The leaks that took place in the Israeli government – a lot of leaking of information. You really had to be on top of things.

One of the things that I found very important for me to be able to do my job properly was that – and Sam did this, Tom Pickering, who was the ambassador after that, and Dick Murphy as well –

they brought me into their inner councils on everything. There may have been some things that I still don't know about, but I really don't know of any major issue that they didn't make sure that their spokesman knew about. Now there were things that they would say: "We'll tell you about this, but you really cannot discuss this on any terms with any journalist. But you have to know that this is happening because it can help you put into a framework for journalists everything else that is going on."

I remember one time when Shimon Perez went to Morocco. We know about that in advance. And I couldn't reveal that to anybody. I do remember, though, that I got a phone call from an Israeli journalist – and there were a number of Israeli journalists that had been taken on his plane with him, and they were sworn to secrecy. I found that Israelis could keep secrets when they were really sworn to secrecy by a government official. They knew how to keep ground rules. They also knew how to leak better than any American journalist that I have come across. So, I got a phone call from somebody and he said that he had gotten wind of something that was going on in Morocco. He said: "Is there an Israeli minister, Perez or somebody else, that is having secret talks in Morocco right now?" I said: "Well, I'll have to get back to you." I didn't say I didn't know. I hung up and I called Sam, at that point. And he had just gotten word that Perez's plan had landed. And he said: "It's going to be public in a few minutes. You can confirm it now."

Otherwise you would get on the phone with somebody and they either ask me a question and I would say: "What? What are you talking about?" There was one time a little bit later in my career – in 1986 – when that happened. And that was in Wiesbaden, Germany and I was with Terry Waite. We were out in Wiesbaden for the release of hostages. He and I were watching the news at breakfast and found out about Iran Contra together. That was one thing that was kept from me and I'm glad it was.

Q: Iran-Contra was when we were trading arms for hostages and using the Israeli as a middle-man. There was an Israeli connection, right?

BERGER: There were several people. One was an Israeli arms merchant. There was an Iranian arms merchant, Ghorbanifar. There was Bud McFarland and there was, of course, our good friend Ollie North, who was orchestrating this whole thing. It was a stain on American diplomacy.

Q: As time went on, were you dealing with the West Bank matters? And what were the Israelis doing there? Or was this handled out of our USIA man in Jerusalem?

BERGER: Both. You could not divorce what was happening in the West Bank and Gaza from the embassy, even though the prime responsibility for dealing with the West Bank and East Jerusalem was with the consulate in Jerusalem. There was a lot of coordination and consultation between the embassy and the consulate. As much as you might hear that people did not speak to each other, there was a lot of talking together. But on a day-to-day basis, of course, each had different responsibilities. I spoke to my counterpart in the consulate in Jerusalem.

I was the prime spokesman for everybody, though. And part of it was that I think I had a stronger

background. I understood a lot of the history on both sides. And I had developed this relationship with these journalists and, you know, say David Shipley or Tom Friedman from the New York Times is going to call you up and talk to you about a story that they are working on, and part of it deals with the West Bank. You are not going to say that you can't answer that question and he had better call your colleague in Jerusalem and he will fill you in on that part of the story. You can't do that. You would lose your credibility.

Q: What about the Israeli press? How did you interact with them?

BERGER: On a daily basis. Their diplomatic correspondents, who covered the prime minister's and foreign minister's offices and the U.S.-Israeli relationship, were the best of the Israeli correspondents as well. But they didn't always have the same kind of standards. And I was always a little more careful if I went on to background with them than I would with an American correspondent. But they were professional. They were really professional. And I would tend to learn a lot from them because Israeli government officials would be very open with Israeli journalists. Far more than, say, a desk officer at the State Department would be with somebody who is covering the State Department. So they were really knowledgeable. And I became good friends with some of them. Some I keep in contact with still today.

They were tough though. Every one of the Israeli journalists wanted to get a scoop. They really weren't that concerned with the nuances of things. They wanted a headline that could scream out sensationalism. And that's not what I was about. I wanted people to understand why we came to decision that we had. And so sometimes it took a lot of conversation. "Tell me, are you going to do this and that?" "Well, Shimon, I can't get to that right now, but let me just put it into perspective."

Q: What about the American Congress? What role did they play and how well did they play it?

BERGER: Members of Congress had an important role to play. The biggest problem in Israel, though, was that you had so many coming. It was almost on a weekly basis there was another member of Congress coming. Certainly during the recess periods you would get large groups, CODELs, coming through. Christmas, Easter, summer recess, before elections, you name it. It was almost, as you said, a pilgrimage that they had to make.

Some of them were extraordinarily helpful, though. Because whenever a member of Congress came, they wanted to meet with the prime minister, the foreign minister, the defense minister. Not together, but individually. And so this would be an opportunity to hear again how they were briefing them to see if there were any nuances we could get out of it. Of course, the ambassador, whether it was Lewis or Pickering, would go along. And I would go along because we had a rule in the embassy that any time there was a high level visitor and there was a meeting of any of those three people and their spokesperson was going to be sitting in the room in the meeting, I was there too. So I went to Jerusalem three or four times a week, frequently, because of these meetings.

Their spokespeople would brief immediately after. And it was very important for me to know what was happening. I couldn't wait for a memcon to be written five or six hours later or the next

day. There wasn't time for something like that. Because frequently, riding back to Jerusalem, whether it be driving myself or riding in the car with the ambassador, we would listen to the radio. I understand Hebrew very well and we would listen to the next news broadcast. And frequently we would hear on the news broadcast a rundown of what had happened in that meeting. So you had to be very quick on your feet with something like that. This was before the cell phone days.

Q: What about AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and other American Jews, separately and organization-wise?

BERGER: Most of the Jewish organizations or leaders came out with their organization. In some cases there were a couple of leaders of different organizations together. They would come out on a regular basis. You have to figure that the leadership of AIPAC, the American-Jewish Committee, ADL (Anti-Defamation League), other organizations, the President's Conference, other American Jewish organizations would come out at least once a year, sometimes more often, depending on what was happening in the relationship. Of course, they would always get a briefing from the embassy before they would begin their meetings with the local government.

Frequently – and I found this out when I got back to Washington and worked for Dick Murphy – they would come over to the State Department before they would go out to the Middle East. And by that time, the '86 to '89 time-frame, more and more of them were going to Egypt and Jordan and other countries in the Arab world. So we would give them a broad NEA briefing before they went out. If the assistant secretary could do it, he would do it. Or the desk person. More often than not, I would do these Washington briefings.

Q: One last question before we end this discussion. It sounds like you didn't have much real life outside of your job, but how about your family and all of that?

BERGER: My family loved it. It was very comfortable, very pleasant. It's a very informal life in Israel. At that time, rarely did people wear ties and jackets. Certainly from April to November it was shirt sleeves, open neck, very informal, even when you went to meet the prime minister. That part was really nice. Even though life was really intense, we tried – even if I only had half a day off on a weekend – we tried as a family to get outside of Tel Aviv and see another part of Israel. The history of western civilization really began there. And there was so much – even though my training was more as a political scientists, I'm a history buff as well – it is just amazing to go walking in the footsteps of the people you read about who lived three or four thousand years ago, or go sit in an amphitheater somewhere where the Romans had come; go to Caesarea, the old port, now under water; go to an archeological dig; go to Capernaum; to Mount of Beatitudes; swim in Galilee. You name it. Walking in the old city of Jerusalem. That was always my favorite thing, to walk in the old city of Jerusalem any time of day, early morning, afternoon, late at night. It was just such an incredible city. I feel badly for my colleagues who are there now and just can't do that. Life in the Foreign Service has changed.

Q: Okay. Well Art, we'll take this opportunity to say farewell to Israel and we'll pick this up in '86 when you come back and you are what?

BERGER: I became the director of NEA/P at the State Department. It was the NEA public affairs office and I was the spokesman for Near East and South Asia.

Q: *And you did that for. . . ?*

BERGER: For three years. From 1986 to August of 1989.

Q: *Today is October 22, 2004. Art, you were just starting a new position as the Public Affairs Officer for the Bureau of Near East Affairs (NEA/P).*

BERGER: For the Near East and South Asia. At that time it covered everything from Mauritania eastward though India and Pakistan.

Q: *Refresh my memory, had you served in the Department before that?*

BERGER: Just before I went out to Israel I was there for about six months working with NEA/P, with Chris Ross and with Charlie Hill on the Israel desk. This was part of what Sam Lewis wanted me to do before I came out to my job as spokesman in Israel. He felt I needed to have a taste of fire because there would always be a crisis in Israel, and he was right.

Q: *When you got there in '86, what was the atmosphere and what was the focus of the Near East bureau?*

BERGER: Well the focus in NEA at that time, as it was before then and I think since then, was on peace-making. Trying to find some way to broker a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. That was always the highest priority. Dick Murphy was the assistant secretary and this was a particular interest of his as well.

Q: *At this time, was the Iraq-Iran war still going on?*

BERGER: The Iraq-Iran was still going on. That was also a major focus because...even though the United States had a – I wouldn't call it a "normal" relationship with Iraq, but it was a relationship with Iraq that sought to balance some of the extremism from Iran. I think today we read a lot more about what their relationship was during the 80s.

Q: *Did you find yourself completely consumed by the Arab-Israeli issue?*

BERGER: There were three things that really consumed my time when I think back to that time. Certainly in the first year, 1986, it was Arab-Israeli peace-making. We were trying to find some way to get Arabs and Israelis to talk to each other. There were a number of false starts during that period. The Iran-Iraq war. But I think that most importantly, and especially in the fall of '86, was Iran-Contra and the hostages.

Q: *The hostages were in . . . ?*

BERGER: In Lebanon. What happened was the because of my position as the spokesman for

NEA, I was on what was called the “hostage release team.” And whenever a hostage was about to be released from Lebanon and then was being transported to the American military hospital in Wiesbaden, Germany, I would go along with a number of other people on that flight to Germany to receive the hostage, to help them understand some of the issues they were going to face, some of the public trauma. They had been kept in captivity, in many cases in the dark, shackled to walls, under really brutal conditions. And then suddenly they were going to come out before the TV cameras. And what were they going to face? What kind of questions? How they were able to deal with this, to help them draft their statements, things like that. So I went along on that to try and help them.

I think it was the second hostage release that I was involved in, in the fall of ‘86, when I was with Terry Waite, whom we all recognize. He was the representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury and he was the person who did some negotiations with the hostage takers in Lebanon to try and get the Americans free. Unknown to either of us and I think anybody else in the States, certainly, there was another channel going on. And this was the arms for hostages deal that was run out of Ollie North’s office. And in fact, I remember going on this trip to Wiesbaden. We had gotten some inkling that there might be a release over the weekend and just to be prepared because, if there was, I would get a phone call probably very early in the morning to get over to Andrews Air Force Base and get on a C-140 to Wiesbaden.

Sunday morning – I still remember this because it was five o’clock in the morning or so – I get this phone call. I am immediately told by somebody that they are from Ollie North’s office and this was about a hostage release that would probably take place very quickly and I needed to get over to Andrews Air Force Base. I would be told a little bit more about it when I got over to the airport. Well, I got over there. Here was Jacobson of the American University Hospital in Beirut or was it Sutherland, I’m not certain which, anyway, I do remember the trip because the hostage or hostages come back. We accompanied them through the various procedures. Go into the hospital. They spend the first day basically with the doctors to make sure they are physically okay. Go through a battery of tests, psychiatrists and others.

And I think it was the second morning that we were there in that trip and Terry Waite and I are having breakfast. And we are looking at armed forces TV and suddenly there is this thing about a German newspaper that had broken this news about arms for hostages. And he looked at the screen and you could see his jaw drop. And I said: “What are they talking about?” And he said: “I don’t know, but I cannot believe they would have done this.” It was such an incredible thing. Here was a man who thought he was negotiating in good faith and then suddenly he’s being undercut by this secret operation. Of course, we didn’t know if this was true or not. This was the first inking of this.

I was the main person together with the spokesperson for the U.S. military at Wiesbaden. We worked out a statement. We tried to keep protect the former hostage, not so that they wouldn’t talk about their experiences, but to help them understand that whatever they say could also impact on those people who were still being held hostage. And they knew the kinds of conditions, so they were very careful with their words. And then they came back and they were told – in fact I think there was a radio report on the plane coming back to Washington – that they were going to be received at the White House by President Reagan. And we all went there to the

White House. There was a reception in the Rose Garden. The press was all there. They gave their statement. Did not take any questions. But I remember hearing some journalists screaming out to the president: “What is this about arms for hostages?” And just a couple of days later the president, Ed Meese and who else, went out there and talked about this operation and that was not authorized.

Q: As you were the spokesperson on this, did somebody tell you what was going on before?

BERGER: Nobody at State, myself included, knew *anything* about this. At least nobody I talked to from State, which went from the assistant secretary on down. We were all blindsided by this whole thing. I remember going into meetings with Dick Murphy and he couldn’t believe this thing. Nobody knew anything about this.

Q: During this interim period, between when it was first disclosed and when the President fessed up, how did you deal with it?

BERGER: It was with great difficulty because, first of all, I didn’t know anything about it. I always prided myself on being honest with the press. And whenever they asked me a question that didn’t require me to give out any national security information – I was privy to a lot of things because I had a fairly high security clearance including codeword, but nothing on this subject was in anything I read - I would try to accommodate. And it was clear that any of the people that I worked with in NEA didn’t know anything about it as well. And I got a lot of phone calls. And I would say: “I’m sorry, I really don’t know anything about it and I don’t think I’m going to be able to get you anything about it. This is not something that I or anybody I know has been privy to, so I don’t know the truth of it, the details of it. There’s nothing I can say.”

And then over the next couple of months the requests for speakers to go out around the country and talk about American policy in the Middle East multiplied tremendously. And of course nobody wanted to go out there. Nobody from the White House wanted to go out there certainly. Nobody from the top level in the State Department wanted to go. And Dick Murphy, Chuck Redman and I talked about all of these requests. Redman said: “Do you want to go out and speak on behalf of the department?” I said: “Yeah, I’d love to, but I’m not going to talk about this subject. I’ll talk about what U.S. policy really is supposed to be. What our guidelines are. The kinds of things we are trying to accomplish. The broader areas. I’ll talk about Arab-Israeli peace. I’ll talk about the Iran-Iraq war. I’ll talk about the hostage thing and I’ll say that this is something that really goes against everything we are trying to do in the Middle East. I’ll have to talk honestly about it, but without any knowledge, because I don’t know anything. I think that all of us understand that this is not something that helped the United States in the Middle East or anywhere in the world.”

Chuck agreed and I went out. In fact, I got that meritorious honor award about a year later for public affairs activities around the country. I went to twenty-four cities around the country in a very short period of time, within eight or nine months. Chuck got (Secretary) Schultz to give me the award. It was the special speaker of the year award, which I shared with somebody else from the Department. And it was really great.

I went out to all of these cities and one of the things that I found running through everywhere - And they appreciated my coming out there - they said: "We just appreciate that there was somebody from the Department who was willing to come out and just talk to us. Tell us what you are doing. Tell what the policy is going to be from here on in." And that's what I found. I went to world affairs councils, I went to universities, I went to Rotary clubs, the real rubber chicken circuit. And if I went into a city I would do six or seven things. It would be world affairs council, university, student groups, panel discussions, radio, television, editorial boards on newspapers. For me it was great. I had never done this before in the United States. I had done this overseas, but I had never done this in the United States. And to see people, whether it was Kansas City or Portland, Oregon - the need for people to be in touch with the foreign affairs establishment was so great, they just wanted to know that people in Washington wanted to hear their opinions.

Q: While you were on these public speaking tours, there must have been rumors. Ollie North had sort of made a name for himself in Lebanon as being a cowboy. He was not an unknown.

BERGER: No. He was not an unknown quantity. I had never met him. But I did hear people talking about him, basically that his mandate was to try to coordinate - and this is what I think a lot of people at State thought before the story broke - that he was being allowed to coordinate a lot of things that could get things done regarding hostages, that he had other channels. Nobody really knew what it was. But I don't think anybody knew that it was illegal, either. At least at that time before the story broke, I certainly didn't. Any people I talked with, you know, there was some chatter about these things but he gets the phone call. He coordinates everything about hostage release. So, you get the phone call from his office. And I may have gotten a phone call for one of the releases, either the first or the second, from him himself. I don't remember, but I know it was from his office, saying, "Get out to Andrews Air Force Base."

And Jerry Bremer was coordinator for counterterrorism at that time at State. And he was involved. And have a number of conversations that he had with the assistant secretary and others, meetings that I participated in. I remember talking with Jerry about a number of things because we had to coordinate our statements on a many things, including terrorism, counterterrorism, and hostage release. Certainly it did not appear to me that Jerry knew anything about what Ollie North was doing. I don't think Ollie trusted anybody from the State Department, to be frank.

Q: Well there had been the dispute over what George Schultz knew and didn't know. He was at meetings with Weinberger, how involved was he?

BERGER: Well, I don't know because that never came to me. Certainly I was in some meetings with Schultz when he came out to Israel, and a couple in Washington as well. You know, sitting in the back of the room like a fly on the wall. But never did I hear anything in any of those meetings that would lead me to believe that he knew anything.

There was one interesting thing that I would say. And this is something that refers to George H.W. Bush, the vice president. And this goes back to my last week in Israel, because it ended there with his trip there and the beginning of what we called strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel. He came there and there were several off the record meetings that he had with Israeli counter-terrorism experts, one of whom later died in an accident. And nobody

ever knew what was going on in those meetings; they were not in the official schedule. But they related to counter-terrorism.

Q: When you were going around the country talking, were people focused on the arms for hostages or were they focused on the Arab-Israeli dispute? What was the interest?

BERGER: Arms for hostages was not the major focus, although people wanted to know something. What I tried to do was be a little bit on the offensive and say: "I know that you are all curious as to who knew what and when did they know it. I'm happy to tell you that I didn't know anything, but also that what happened really goes against American tradition and American law. People who were involved with this broke the law, and that is being reviewed by another part of the government. I would like to tell you about U.S. policy and what it is related to negotiating on hostages." And I laid out what the policy was. And after that they may be one or two questions, but most of them really dealt with the Arab-Israeli issue. There was a lot of interest in that.

Q: You had been in the hot house in Tel Aviv with American Jewish groups practically on a conveyer belt coming in to town. When you got away from that, did you find a different focus?

BERGER: It was really interesting. I think it's a good question to bring up. A lot of the requests were from world affairs councils and universities. But also, whenever I went into a community, the State Department public affairs office arranged meetings with major community Jewish groups. And if there were large Arab-American populations in those towns – Detroit; Ann Arbor; Uniontown, Pennsylvania, there were a number of other places – I would speak to Arab-American groups as well.

I would tell everybody the exact same thing. I don't try to change the story of the policy depending on who I'm speaking to. But I tried to be straight with them, to help them understand that the interests that they have as an interest group or ethnic group, the Department of State wants to hear their concerns. We want to know what they feel about our policies. And I think it's an important thing. I don't know if we do enough of that anymore, but it's something that we surely should do. It's important. They were taxpayers. I said: "You are taxpayers. You pay my salary. You pay the budget of the State Department," and I would try to get something in there that the budget for foreign affairs wasn't enough. And I would help them understand that point. I think it was less than one-percent of federal budget went to pay for the whole foreign affairs establishment, and that included all the aid that we give. I think most people didn't understand that. They didn't know that. It may make big headlines, but it doesn't make the biggest budget impact.

What we tried to help people understand why we do what we do and how their money is being spent on foreign policy. And to help people understand that we really have a number of considerations. First of all, that the United States does not support one side over the other. We try to be an honest broker. I think that was a theme that I gave for everybody.

There were lots of groups that came through the Department during the three years that I was spokesman for NEA – They wanted to talk to the Secretary of State, even if he had agreed, he wasn't always able to do it. There would be sudden meetings, foreign travel, so it would trickle

down: the Deputy Secretary, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, or the NEA Assistant Secretary. And there were hundreds of requests for the NEA assistant secretary, for Dick Murphy. Frequently he was unable to meet those requests and he would just pass them on to me. And I loved to do these things. And many of them were either Arab-American or Jewish-American groups that were coming to Washington to lobby members of congress, to go the circuit, and the State Department, of course, would be one of the stops. So it was a good opportunity to tell them what our policy was, what the United States has done in the past, how we look at ourselves as an honest broker, what our goals are and how we are trying to work them out. Such encounters helped me understand their concerns.

Also, on the other side, with the journalists that covered foreign policy. A lot of people in Washington know this, but I'm not sure that many people outside the beltway understand this. Every major newspaper, magazine, wire service, television, radio assigns their best foreign correspondents to cover the State Department. And there are a lot of journalists who cover the State Department who have been following foreign policy for many years longer than I have. They were smart. I would talk to them on a daily basis. They would go to the State Department noon briefing, which usually started at one o'clock. I was usually very busy in the morning getting approved press guidance through the bureau, NEA has a very small press office, maybe three or four of us at any one time. Frequently, especially if it was something on Arab-Israeli issues, which I knew very well from my time in Israel, and travel around the States, or participation in meetings with Dick Murphy, with Ed Djerejian, with Arne Raphel when he was senior Deputy Assistant Secretary covering the Israeli Desk, with Charley Hill – I knew what the policy was and would just draft it myself. This was something I learned from Chris Ross. He said: "If you know what the policy is, why would you farm it out to the desk? You have to get their clearance, but draft it yourself. It'll save you an hour or more." And it did. It was very good advice that he gave me.

Q: You say you went out and met these groups that wanted a chance to give their input. How did you act as an implementer of their input into the State Department?

BERGER: What I tried to do at that time – we didn't have email - when I came back from a trip – and every trip was two or three days, and two or three cities – I would try and give a little bit of a sense of the feedback that I was getting. If there were major threads of concern. I thought it was important to be able to get that back. I sent it to both the spokesman's office as well as to the NEA assistant secretary and the desks. People didn't always agree with our policy, but they really appreciated that they had an opportunity...for so long, no one had been out there to many of these cities. And, especially when Iran-Contra broke, there was a sense in the Department that public affairs and getting out was the lowest priority. And I really wanted to do it and I offered myself as the guinea pig to go out.

Q: Correct me if I'm wrong, but there may have been a folk memory of those who had gone out during the Vietnam War. We sent people all over the place and essentially they got verbally beaten up by students. It was a very unpleasant experience.

BERGER: I found in some places, you get radical students, especially at universities, and especially Palestinian students would come up to you and say "We disagree with your policy"

and all of that. But I thought for the most part people were quite rational and willing to listen and willing to engage. One of the things that I found most important for somebody who is speaking on behalf of our establishment. Number one: never lose your cool. Once you lose your cool and get into an argument with someone. Somebody doesn't like your policy, doesn't like what you are doing, it not a personal sort of things; they may raise your voice, they may scream at you. I would very calmly try to explain what it was we were doing. I have this here now at the Holocaust Museum sometimes for the last couple of weeks we have been running a speaker's program. In fact the program we had last night, one of our speakers turned out to be a bit controversial. You don't lose your cool. You calmly try to get your point across.

Q: Did you run across this organization the Jewish Defense League? Can you explain what it was at that time?

BERGER: The Jewish Defense League was set up by a firebrand rabbi named Meir Kahane. I don't remember when he set it up, but it was originally to try to protect mainly elderly Jews in certain neighborhoods in New York who were getting beaten up by some of their neighbors who were not Jewish. He thought that this was a feeling of powerlessness, that these elderly people had, that they were being attacked because they were Jewish, that this was a form of anti-Semitism, and I think he was right. But then he expanded this thing...

(Start Tape 4, Side B)

He talked about Arab actions and policies and attacks on Israel and he said that this Jewish Defense League was the organization that was going to defend Jews everywhere and was going to help to protect the Jewish state. I remember that when I was in Israel, back in '82 to '86, he became quite active with what they call the Jewish underground, which provoked attacks against Arabs whether in the West Bank and Gaza or other parts. But especially West Bank and Gaza. And then in the United States also it took a very aggressive role. And as time went on, late '80s, became even more aggressive.

We had a policy in the State Department that we would not engage with them. They would always try to get us to get on a radio program with them, go on TV, join them for a panel discussion. We said: "We do not sit down with fringe groups that believe in violence as a method of operation. Period." We wanted to marginalize them. It is very much the same way as here in the museum we deal with Holocaust deniers. We don't engage them because it gives them a platform, gives them credibility, gives them news. Why should we do that? So we try to marginalize them.

They [the Jewish Defense League] were as bad as – in some cases –the terrorist groups. They attacked Arab-American installations, organizations, people. And we were not going to have anything to do with them. If any American cabinet-level department was going to have anything to do with them, it would be the Office of the Attorney General, the Justice Department.

Q: Well they were also attacking Soviet installations. The Embassy. And every time they did that, something would happen to us in Moscow.

BERGER: There were other Jewish organizations that demonstrated, had vigils, petitions against Soviet policy towards Jews. And this goes on and on and on. This is before the collapse of the Soviet Union, where Jewish immigration was highly restricted. And in many cases, if somebody tried to apply for emigration from the Soviet Union and they were Jewish, they would lose their job before anything else. If they were a student, they would be kicked out of school. So it was a very different kind of thing. But there were some very responsible organizations that were working on that. It was Senator Scoop Jackson who I think was one of the leaders of the responsible offered the Jackson-Vanik Amendment

Q: What was your impression, on the public affairs side, of the Israeli Embassy in Washington?

BERGER: It depended on who was serving there. And I had a lot of dealings with their spokesman. And there was one in particular who really stood out as a first class professional. Years later we became close friends, but the name escapes me. He later became spokesman for the Israeli foreign ministry and then, after he became Israeli ambassador in the Netherlands. Now I think he is their MFA director general for Western Europe and business affairs. Quite a sharp, sharp person. When I was in Israel I also became friends with and also worked closely with Avi Pashayan, who was the spokesman for the foreign ministry. I found them for the most part to be first class professionals. There were exceptions, of course. And there was a big difference, I think, between those who were spokesperson for the foreign minister or for the Israeli embassy. Generally foreign affairs professionals, just like ourselves. And those who were the spokesmen for the prime minister. Just as the spokesman for the president tends to be a political appointee. Very different kinds of roles that they play.

Q: What about AIPAC – America-Israel Public Affairs Committee?

BERGER: They are a well run operation, a first class lobbying organization. Probably have more impact than their size. They are nowhere near the size of, for example, the NRA (National Rifle Association) or AARP (American Association of Retired People). But very powerful, very influential. I would call them a streamlined operation. When they saw an issue that concerned the U.S.-Israeli relationship and it was of a priority nature to them, they would get out the troops. They would get out hundreds, if not thousands, sometimes, of letter writers, people who would come to members of congress' offices. First class operation.

They would frequently bring to the State Department groups of their supporters to get a briefing. And we gave them as good a briefing as we would give any other group. I found them really professional. One of the things that I found about them was that their goal appeared to me to be to do what they could to strengthen the U.S.-Israeli relationship. And they focused mainly on Congress, at that time. They have since expanded and focused more on executive branch. But their biggest focus has always been on Congress. For example, they would invite probably every new member to go on a trip to Israel. And they would get them meetings with every top leader in Israel. They were, as I said, a very well run operation.

Q: Did you ever find that they were going in one direction and you, representing the State Department, were going another?

BERGER: Oh yes. Very much so. And it concerned a couple of things. One was on U.S. aid beyond the green line. This was something that we would not tolerate.

Q: *Can you explain what that means?*

BERGER: The green line is the armistice line of 1949, which ended Arab-Israeli hostilities after the 1948-49 war which resulted in the independence of Israel. This goes back to the 1947 United Nations partition of the western part of the Palestinian mandate – because the original Palestinian mandate included both east of the Jordan and west of the Jordan river. East of the Jordan river through the various agreements, especially Sykes-Picot and a private agreement that the British Government had with Sharif Hussein of Mecca resulted in taking the eastern part out of the original Palestinian mandate of the League of Nations and creating the Kingdom of Trans-Jordan. Sharif Hussein was King Hussein's great-grandfather. Then the western side became the mandate of Palestine. The 1947 United Nations partition agreement said that that territory would be divided up into what would become a Jewish state and an Arab state and an internationalized city and surrounding area of Jerusalem. The British finally gave up in the spring of '48, said they were pulling out their forces, too many attacks. The Jewish were attacking them. The Arabs were attacking them. And they had to get out, and they did.

And the Jewish Agency for Palestine which became the precursor of the Israeli state declared independence May 14, 1948. The coordinated with the British withdrawal. And at the same time the Palestinians, together with Arab armies from a number of states surrounding, including as far as Iraq, invaded. The nascent Jewish state was divided, there were several different enclaves. At the end of fighting in 1949 an armistice agreement resulted in a State of Israel with undemarcated, or rather temporary boundaries, which was referred to as “the green line.” Mainly, I think, somebody used a green magic marker. It had nothing to do with one side having more grass than the other, or better agricultural property. It had to do only with how they put the line on the map.

And that became the temporary boundary. But it wasn't referred to as a boundary. It was referred to as an armistice line. And there was still, according to the United States Government, a feeling that Jerusalem still could be an international city. So the U.S. Government put its embassy in the city of Tel Aviv, which is on the Mediterranean coast. Yet, whenever a U.S. ambassador presented his credentials to the president of Israel, he did it in the president's residence, which was in West Jerusalem.

This is one of the contradictions of American policy. We tried to deal with it in as logical a way as we could. On a *de facto* basis we recognize Israeli sovereignty over West Jerusalem. With the ambassador presenting credentials, with the ambassador and other members of the U.S. Government coming to Jerusalem for all kinds of government meetings, we did that. What we did not do, on two levels: One was – as I started to say - a dispute on the issue of aid. We forbade any U.S. assistant to Israel from being expended beyond that green line, which meant in East Jerusalem or in the territories that were occupied by Israel at the end of the 1967 war: the West Bank and Gaza, principally. So that's one of the areas we disagreed with AIPAC on.

Another area that we disagreed with AIPAC on was on American officials going to Jerusalem.

For example, Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, Agriculture, Energy, you name it, because we have a lot of them. Or even a member of Congress. We would not facilitate – and this was really very much of a fiction in real terms, but this was our policy principle – the visit of any American official to East Jerusalem or to any of the territories. And the way that we did this was, we handed over the visitor to our colleagues in the U.S. consulate general in Jerusalem, which had two offices yet under one consul general.

And this was another area where we got into disputes with groups like AIPAC and other Jewish groups. They would frequently talk about: “You’ve got two U.S. consulates, one in West Jerusalem to deal with Israelis, another in East Jerusalem to deal with the Palestinians.” And we would say: “No. You’ve got it wrong. There is only one consulate in Jerusalem and that consulate was opened in the 1860s in the building that we still have in West Jerusalem.” Beautiful old building, by the way. We have one consulate under the authority of the consulate general who predated the Palestinian mandate of the League of Nations. And the reason why we had two buildings really originated in 1948-49 because after the armistice agreement it was so difficult to get through the Mandelbaum Gate, not only for Jews or Arabs, but also for American diplomats. Although we had free passage, it wasn’t always so free. It was very difficult. Whether the Jordanians occupied east Jerusalem and the west bank or the Israelis in West Jerusalem, it wasn’t easy because there were hostilities between the two. Even though – as we know now – there were so many behind the scenes contacts between the Israelis and the Jordanians, more than anybody ever knew, there was this difficulty in getting back and forth while there was this division of Jerusalem. And so that was another area on which we disagreed with AIPAC.

Secondly, we believed that the fate of the city of Jerusalem remained to be determined by negotiations among the parties. And we kept to that line. And Jewish groups, especially AIPAC and others further to the right of AIPAC, disagreed with us. There were very few Jewish groups, in fact, that agreed with us.

Q: On the other side, what about the various Arab embassies and their ability to make their points?

BERGER: They were able to make their points. They had great access within the Department of State. I cannot speak for the whole administration, but certainly the Saudis, the Syrians, the Iraqis – when Tariq Aziz was ambassador to Washington he had frequent contact at the assistant secretary or higher level. And of course the Egyptians were our allies and still are, and had very close and frequent contact.

Q: Did they weigh-in on Arab-Israeli relations?

BERGER: All the time. There was some disagreement. Although I found that during those years that I was in NEA, ’86 to ’89, there was a pretty good agreement that the United States Government was taking the right track. The difficulty that we had frequently with the Arab governments – with the exception of Jordan and Egypt – is that they were not helpful in two ways. One, in bringing the Palestinians along and trying to convince the Palestinian leadership, and especially Arafat. If you remember how from ’86 to ’89, with the exception of after ’88 when Arafat said the magic words about recognizing Israel’s right to exist, we did not have any

direct communication with the PLO. So we depended on the Egyptians and the Jordanians principally. And there were times when the Jordanians got fed up with the Palestinians and didn't want to have anything to do with passing messages or trying to bring them to any kind of negotiations, or negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians. I don't remember the exact time, but I remember that they were throwing their hands up in frustration.

The Saudis were never helpful. And other Arab governments were for the most part away from the center of the conflict. I went on a number of trips when I was in NEA to Arab countries, from Mauritania to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE and then to South Asia, India and Pakistan. And invariably in the Arab countries you would talk about bilateral relations. We talked about U.S. relations with the Arab world. We talked about terrorism issues and we also talked, inevitably, about the Arab-Israeli issues. And there were a couple of anecdotes that if you don't mind I'll just go into while we are here. One concerns a lunch that I had at the DCM's house in Riyadh. And the other a meeting I had with the head of Middle East affairs at the Kuwaiti foreign ministry. This is way before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

In 1988 in Saudi Arabia. The DCM had a small group of Saudis who had studied in the United States. Several I think were with the foreign ministry and a couple of them were American affairs experts from one of the universities. First thing that they did when they came in – and this struck me because I had done a lot of studying about Saudi Arabia over the years and some of my colleagues at NEA said: “Don't bring any liquor with you. Be careful of any books you bring with you. However, recognize that as soon as you meet a Saudi in a private home, they will start drinking liquor.” I had forgotten about this. And the first thing that happened when they walked in the door was they said: “Where's the scotch?” It just took me aback. I really had forgotten about this. And we had a nice conversation. As I said, it was a very small group sitting around a table.

Inevitably the conversation gets to the Arab-Israeli dispute. Now, the embassy passed around my bio before I came. I was spokesman for NEA, but I had just spent the preceding four years as the spokesman for the U.S. embassy in Israel. And I never kept secret the fact that I was Jewish. But I was representing the State Department and the U.S. Government. So we got into a conversation. I asked them: “You all studied in the United States?” This was after a couple hours of eating and drinking. And I said: “When you were there, did you ever meet any Israelis?” And they looked at each other. And then one of them said: “Yes, I did.” And I asked him what was his reaction.

He said: “Well, let me tell you a story.” And this guy was at USC. This really stuck in my mind, because it was the first time I had ever asked a Saudi such a question. He said: “I was at USC and I was with a number of friends of mine. He said there were a couple of other Saudis and some Americans and they were sitting at an outdoor café. The weather was beautiful in Los Angeles. Some other graduate students in the university came by and they were friends with somebody else who was sitting in this group. And they sat down, got a drink, and were talking. And he said: “I asked this guy ‘Where are you from? Your accent is very familiar.’” And the guy says “Israel.” And the Saudi says: “Oh my God” and looked around him to see who was listening. He said his first reaction was to look and see who was watching him meeting with an Israeli. His first reaction is fear. “Oh my God, there goes my scholarship. The embassy is going

to find out about this.” And then he looked around and said, okay, and they started talking about things. I said: “What was your reaction?” He said: “He was a nice guy. And we didn’t just talk about the Middle East. We talked about school, other issues, our friends.” “Eventually we got to discuss Arab-Israeli issues, but that wasn’t the first thing we talked about. We met several other times and had some nice conversations. And I came back to Saudi Arabia and I really couldn’t tell anybody about that.” I thought that was too bad. It was too bad that there couldn’t be this open conversation that you really began to have after 1993. But this was in the late ‘80s.

The second anecdote was in Kuwait. And we were talking and finally got to the subject of the Arab-Israeli issues. And this guy was head of Middle Eastern affairs at the Kuwaiti foreign ministry. And I said something like, “You know, there is something about Kuwait. A gorgeous country. The building that has been done and the prosperity was amazing.” I told him that I had heard about it but never realized how much they had built up in such a short period of time. I said: “You know, there is something about Kuwait that reminds me of Israel” and told him that I had lived in Israel for four years. The guy said: “What do you mean?” He was shocked by this whole thing. And I said: “I’ll give you a couple of examples. Number one, the tank traps coming into the foreign ministry. You are afraid of terrorists. Same thing in Israel. Also, a very small country. Your main resource is oil. Their main resource is agriculture and hi-tech. They don’t have any oil. But it’s also a concentrated amount of resource. People who really want to be left alone to develop on their own. And you are surrounded by enemies. To your north you have Iraq, to your east you’ve got Iran.” This was the time when the U.S. was beginning the reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers because the Iranians were targeting them. And I said: “There are these similarities. It’s not the same thing, of course. But there are these similarities.” And this guy said: “You may be right, but don’t ever tell that to anybody else.”

Q: When you were with NEA, did you ever get the feeling that while the Arab countries profess great support for Palestine, they don’t really do much for it?

BERGER: Oh, there’s no question about it. They had to make a ritualistic conversation about the Arab-Israeli dispute, about their strong support, undying support for the Palestinians. But you could tell that they couldn’t care less about the Palestinians. First of all, they didn’t want any more Palestinians in their country. Secondly, they were jealous of the Palestinians because generally the Palestinians were better educated, had greater technical skills. Especially in the oil countries, they had to depend on the Palestinians to run the oil industries. They became the second-level technocrats in the ministries. And they really disliked them. There was this jealousy. And they also used them. And the Palestinians knew this. I talked to a lot of Palestinians over the years and they distrusted the Arabs. This is a stereotype, of course. Because there were some Arabs in some countries who really believed in and really wanted to help the Palestinians. But for the most part, and especially at the governmental levels, they were just using the Palestinians for whatever end they had.

They could have resolved the dispute years and years before. I remember one time at a thing called Philadelphia Camp, in Gaza. This was a refugee camp that the United States, Israel and Egypt agreed on to build new housing for the Palestinians. And the Egyptians had some hesitation about it, but they could not get agreement from any other Arab country. They said “We can’t do it on our own.” There were a lot of Palestinians ready to move in. The U.S. was

funding most of it, like the U.S. funds most of the UNRA (United Nations Relief Agency). What they could not get was any Arab country to agree to resettle – and this was resettling within the Gaza strip – into new housing. They said “No, we can’t do this because this will defuse the issue of the refugees.”

So many Palestinians on their own built their own housing. UNRA gave them bricks, cinderblocks, tin roofs, whatever. So if you go into a refugee camp, whether it is in Gaza or West Bank or in some of the other countries, people are not living in tents. A lot of people finally recognized that they could build something more permanent.

Q: Were there any major developments in Arab-Israeli relations while you were there from '86 to '89?

BERGER: There were a couple of things and it was principally on the Jordanian side. The Jordanians kept coming up very, very close to doing something. We had a lot of talks, especially with the Saudis. And it was generally kind of one-way talking. We would keep asking them for help and they would say “yes, yes, yes.” And of course they didn’t do anything. The Jordanians really did try to help. And there were a number of instances where they really tried to move things forward. The Jordanians were ready to sign a peace agreement with the Israelis for years and years, including the period '86 to '89. But they said they could not do anything unless there was progress on the Palestinian side.

And we went through a lot of conversations. I don’t remember how many meetings we had with the Israelis, with the Egyptians, with the Jordanians, with other Arabs, about how we can move things incrementally, one step at a time. And of course nothing really happened until the Israeli and the Palestinians on their own brokered the Oslo accord.

Q: Was there a feeling of frustration of our inability to talk directly to the PLO?

BERGER: Yes. There was a lot of frustration because, I think, everybody recognized – especially at that time, in the late '80s – that you were not going to get anything moving forward unless you got the Palestinians to come across on this stuff. And the only way to do that would be to get Arafat to be part of any kind of a conversation. But the United States was restricted by an agreement that we had made with Israel a long time before that, because of, this goes back to Khartoum, the “three no’s” that the Palestinian Liberation Organization enunciated years before that; that we made a commitment with Israel that we would not get into direct negotiations with the Palestinians. There were a couple of times on security issues where there were exceptions when it related to the safety and security of American diplomats, in Beirut especially, and other points in Lebanon. But on the whole the United States Government really kept to its promise to the Israelis. But we really wanted to get beyond that because we knew that nothing would move ahead. And it was in Israel’s interest to have things move ahead. So we kept trying through the Egyptians and the Jordanians to find ways of getting something going on with the Palestinians.

When Arafat was in Sweden in 1988 there was that whole movement forward on “Can we get him to say that Israel has a right to exist?” There were some private Jewish groups that were in Stockholm trying to work with him on that as well. The Swedish Government, of course. There

were other Arab governments as well. Our embassy in Stockholm. We here at the State Department. And I remember a number of conversations that went back and forth with NEA, with the Front Office, trying to work on formulations.

We were really tough. I have to say that. We stood on the principal that we were not going to shortcut this. And Dick Murphy was one of those who led this and George Shultz as well. That if it really didn't mean something, in substance, then we were not going to go along with it. So it wasn't just: "Yeah, Israel has a right to exist, consistent with this resolution and that resolution." We wanted a clear statement. A statement from Arafat in English and in Arabic that said Israel had a right to exist behind secure and recognized boundaries. Otherwise we would not begin a dialogue.

And I remember the days leading up to the statement. There were things that went back and forth. "And this was not enough, this was not enough. No! This does not have any meaning." And I'm sure it stuck in Arafat's craw to say those words, finally. And because it was so tough for him, we felt that it really had meaning.

I remember working on the statement with Dan Kurtzer, who was working for the secretary as a speechwriter to do the statement that Schultz would issue on the news, live at six-thirty that evening. Chuck Redmond and I and one or two others made phone calls, very careful phone calls to producers to tell them that there would be a major statement that the Secretary of State would give exactly at six-thirty. They wanted it before because they didn't want to lead off their newscast live. They didn't know what this was about. All we could tell them was that it had to do with the Middle East. And of course it was earth shaking and was worthy of leading the news. And Schultz did do it live on television. And Bob Pelletreau, who was our ambassador in Tunis, it was announced was going to begin the dialog with Chairman Arafat.

Q: What about the Israelis? Had they been carrying on conversations with the PLO? I find it almost incredible that they wouldn't.

BERGER: No doubt. I do not know for a fact that they did. They certainly had conversations with Palestinians. Did they have with the PLO? I really don't know. I've never been able to find that out. Someday, I'm sure, we'll have something declassified or somebody will write a book where it'll come out. But I have no doubt that there were conversations.

Q: Did we ever talk to the Israelis and say, "Come on fellas, let's get this thing going. Let us talk to the Palestinians."

BERGER: Oh, there were lots of conversations like that. The Israelis were adamant that unless there was a clear recognition of Israel's right to exist in peace and security in the Middle East, behind recognized boundaries, that they couldn't accept it. They thought it would just be a formula for a continuation of the conflict.

Q: When you were back in the NEA bureau, what were you getting of evaluations of Arafat?

BERGER: Nobody trusted him. No one. They all thought he was sleazy. I don't mind saying

that. And this is no state secret. They thought he was sleazy. They thought he was a crook. They thought he controlled all of the finances. They thought that he squirreled away money that probably found its way into not only Swiss bank accounts, but graft. I don't think people really questioned his honesty when it came to money. Although I think since that time more and more people have done that. But certainly, we felt, that everybody around him was corrupt. And they would do anything, not necessarily for the Palestinian people, but for their own bank accounts, for their own stature. There were a lot of corrupt people who didn't give a damn about the refugees. All they cared about was how they lived in Tunis and how they were going to travel.

Arafat himself looked at his own stature. When he was in exile, he could get everybody and his uncle to give him a private plane to take him as a head of state to this country and that country, all around the world. Once he became head of Gaza and the West Bank, who wanted to hear him? He had to worry about the garbage pick-up.

Q: What about the Arab-Israeli press? One always hears about the questions that Americans ask, but how did you find the press?

BERGER: I loved it. I loved dealing with them. I dealt with the American press on a daily basis. As I said, the top correspondents at the State Department, immediately after the noon briefing, sometimes early in the morning, we would get an inkling from one of them who would call and say there was a particular question that they are looking at for broadcast today or for a story they were writing for tomorrow. It wasn't like today with the internet when they are looking for stories for the next two hours. It was a little more relaxed. I would say that every day I got phone calls from at least some of the Israeli and some of the Arab journalists. They understood where the line was or sometimes I would tell them there were some things I could not get into. They may be sensitive; I may not know about them, or I didn't feel it was appropriate for me to get into this issue.

When I started as head of NEA/P, every month I would go over to the foreign press center, the national press club, and this was run by USIA at the time. Once a month they would organize for me an open press forum. It was principally for the Arab and Israeli press. Anybody could come, any kind of question, but it was almost totally dominated by Arabs and Israelis. And it was a great place to have a discussion. It was also a great place to get Arabs and Israelis together. They did. The journalists got together on their own and exchanged ideas. Many of them are still active today, fifteen or twenty years later.

DAVID M. EVANS

**Political Advisor to Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe
London, England (1982-1986)**

Adviser Evans was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and educated at Harvard University where he studied Russian and University of Fribourg. He was London advisor to the Commander in Chief from 1982-1986. He was interviewed in 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: During this 1982 to 1986-period, the early-Reagan and mid-Reagan period. You had John Lehman as Secretary of the Navy. It was probably the most aggressive period we had with the Navy, wasn't it? Could you talk about what our posture was in those days, Navy wise, and the politics thereof that you dealt with?

EVANS: You're right. The Navy was without question, the most prominent of the four services, depending on how you consider the Marines. This was partly due to the Reagan force projection and partly due to John Lehman's particular emphasis on Naval expansion to contain the perceived Soviet threat. The Navy was, without question, the most interesting and active in long-range force projection of the three services. It was also the one in which there were the most political military questions that came to the attention of the Political Advisor or POLAD. I think we all know that many of these POLAD jobs are sleepy, quasi-academic jobs.

The job in London was extremely active, very hands-on, and very policy oriented. When I'm talking about policy, I'm talking about major policy initiatives throughout the whole area that the Naval Command in Europe encompassed, which was from the Northern area of Norway, right down through all of Europe, to the Mediterranean. It enhanced all of the Mediterranean, including the Sixth Fleet -- which was under my Admiral's command -- and the northern rim of Africa, namely Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, for what that was worth, Egypt, Israel, the Middle-East, right up to the Persian Gulf, which was under the relatively new Central Command, headquartered in Tampa. We dealt with all the European issues, all of the East-West issues because the European Command encompassed the Soviet Union fully. Anything to do with the Soviet Union and the Soviet threat and Soviet force projections, other than the Soviet fleet in the Pacific area, but anything dealing with the Soviet Union in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Soviet Union, on the ground, I would say, to the extent that the Navy had interest in that, came under our purview. It also included base-related problems, local problems and particularly the Arab-Israeli problems. Those were all within our purview. What was not within our purview was the Iran/Iraq situation, although our intelligence outfit located in London, which was probably one of the best military intelligence outfits in the world, actively followed all U.S. Naval force activities on a daily basis. Because of what I had been dealing with in my previous position as Director of International Security Operations and the State Department's Political-Military Affairs Bureau, many of these problems came to my attention as well, even though they were slightly outside our geographic confines. Technically, our purview went all the way down to South Africa, although during my tenure, we didn't go down there. I did travel extensively throughout Northern Africa. The major problem though, and the one that I dealt with immediately upon arrival and immediately before departure, was in the Middle-East. It was the Lebanon situation. As you may recall, the Israeli forces, in early 1982, had moved into Southern Lebanon and Palestinians had fled back either to Tunisia or to other places, and a war, initially a slow war, of political and military attrition began between Israel and Lebanon/the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization). That heated up considerably. But during the four and one-half years I was there, the underlying motif and the major activity, constant activity, was the Lebanon engagement, both in and out of Lebanon.

Q: Let's take the Lebanese crisis first. From your perspective, could you say how that developed, when you arrived? Also, how did the Navy get involved?

EVANS: The Navy got involved because, for one reason, to protect the American citizens that were in Lebanon, to protect those forces in Lebanon that were judged to be on our side, to provide military support and security for Ambassador Phil Habib, who was shuttling back and forth as the Middle East negotiator. I'm trying to work this thing out between the Israelis, the PLO, and the Lebanese. The situation gradually got much more dangerous on the ground which lead to an increase buildup of our offshore naval forces. Then, it involved other countries including Cyprus, where we used the port of Larnaca as our forward operation base. Also, the desire to use Turkish facilities led me to be in the missions flying out to Turkey to try to negotiate that which did not work out. It involved closer cooperation with the Israelis in naval activities that I had not realized before. We did not particularly acknowledge the fact that we had a very active and substantive cooperation program with the Israeli military and navy in anti-submarine warfare, in particular. Our forces were increased offshore and the Marines, as you recall, were placed in Lebanon. We worked with the Israelis in trying to make sure that the Libyans and others hostile to our interests did not come up and attack us under water.

Q: Were you there when the Sabra and Shatila massacres took place?

EVANS: Yes.

Q: And the bombardment of Beirut, prior to that?

EVANS: That's right.

Q: Could you give me a bit of feeling about the attitude of our military, particularly toward the Israeli armed forces and the Israeli policy during that particular time? What were you getting?

EVANS: Well, as far as I could see, our military had nothing but great respect for the Israeli military. Our military realized what the State Department did not realize: that there was a major threat looming from the other side, the Arab side. We had good intelligence sharing with the Israelis. I was very impressed with the amount of intelligence and good intelligence that their navy had about Iranian, Syrian, hostile Lebanese and PLO activities, that were very threatening to our forces and to our interests in the area. You had a dichotomy growing that lead to the split, just before the bombing of the Marine headquarters, which I guess was in March or April of 1984. The Defense Department had a better assessment than the State Department. The State Department was terribly naive about our presence. They were talking about having our military build basketball courts. They were trying to have it both ways. They were trying to go into a hostile environment from the anti-Israeli forces' point of view, and yet, act as though we were there merely as benevolent peacekeepers. Therefore, we should be opening dental clinics and building them basketball courts, and playing basketball. At the time that George Shultz was telling Casper Weinberger that we should be building basketball courts and opening dental clinics, Weinberger was being told by his people that the Syrians were building facilities in the Bekaa Valley with Iranian money, and planning to send trucks loaded with bombs to bomb our forces. This was days, if not weeks, before the horrendous bombing that took place. I happened to be back in Washington at that time for briefings in the Political-Military Affairs Bureau, so, I know whereof I speak on that issue. I at least feel I do.

Q: In the first place, it was a complicated business. First, we put our troops in to help get the Palestinians out after the Israelis colluded with some right wing Christian militia, and went in and slaughtered Palestinian families. We had already used our troops to help pull out the Palestinian armed forces. Almost by reflex, we let our Marines back in, along with the French and Italians, I think. At that time, was there questioning at your admiral's headquarters about . . . "fine, but what is this about?" Later, this became a major issue . . . "What are we up to?"

EVANS: Yes, I think it is fair to say as we have seen in the past, and we are seeing in the present day, that policy makers decided to use U.S. military forces to carry out activities that are not those directly related to what the military thinks it should be doing: some sort of peacekeeping or separation of forces, or presence, or whatever you want to call it. You are right, with that mission, there was no tangible enemy to kill or beat. There was a great deal of frustration about being in an increasingly hostile environment where we could only take limited measures to protect our own forces. The purpose seemed to be just to hang on, while this nebulous process dragged on. This began with your question about what the military thought of Israel. I think the military perception was, and it certainly was my perception, based on all the evidence that I saw, that the PLO started the darn thing. The amount of hostile terrorist activity that came directly from Iran and Syria, as far as I know, is still going on. The creation and support of the training camps in Bekaa Valley were clearly supported financially by this Syrian/Iranian connection. This happened in the last few days of this stupid assassination attempt the Israelis did in Jordan. They occasionally bungle things and occasionally on a big scale. I think the perception that we were working under militarily was that this was a situation that had been brought on, as it normally is, by the Arabs' failure to adhere to proper behavior. Then, when you try to do something about it as police forces do sometimes in an urban riot, excessive force gets used and then all hell breaks loose. People forget the reason for the use of excessive force in the first place. That is the point I am trying to make. The PLO started it and certain things happened. But the given was that we were on the Israeli side. Whether they acted correctly or not the whole time was almost beside the point from the military point of view because they were our allies. They were and still are our NATO anchors. They are not in NATO, but they might just as well be.

ROBERT B. PETERSEN
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv (1982-1986)

Mr. Petersen was born and raised in Ohio and educated at Oberlin College. He entered the USIA Foreign Service in 1965 and served as Public and Cultural Affairs Office in Embassies or Consulates in Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Mauritius, Israel, Morocco and Cote d'Ivoire. He also served in several senior USIA positions in Washington, DC. Mr. Peterson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001

Q: Today is January 18, 2003. We're back in business again. Israel. You were in Israel from when to when?

PETERSEN: I got to Israel in June of '82 and left in June or July of '86. It was a four year tour.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?

PETERSEN: Sam Lewis. He had been appointed ambassador under President Carter and was currently serving as ambassador under President Reagan, a Democratic and then a Republican administration. He was there for seven years, quite a tenure for anyone.

Q: What was the state of American-Israeli relations in '82 and how would you describe Israel at the time?

PETERSEN: The key thing to remember is that this was the Israeli move into southern Lebanon.

I had left Mauritius in January of '82. The intent was that I was going to study Hebrew until late in '82 before being assigned as CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer) to Tel Aviv. I had begun my Hebrew language training in Washington. I think I was at about chapter 12 or 13 of the FSI book. I think there were 24 chapters. Suddenly, I got a call on a Wednesday morning in June telling me that I had to get to post that coming weekend. I really hadn't been planning to go for another five or six months. My wife and I were in the midst of house hunting to buy our first house. I politely said, "This is quite a change. I'm not prepared to go. This isn't what the plan was. No thank you." I got another call shortly thereafter, an hour or so later, from someone higher up the food chain who said, "You ought to get there this weekend." I again politely declined. By midday, I got another call from the deputy area director at USIA. He said, "Remember, you're in the Foreign Service. You either go where you're told when you're told or you resign and get out. That's your choice. We want you there this weekend." I got there that Sunday. From Wednesday to Sunday, I shifted gears. This was June of '82.

The reason for that was that the CAO in Tel Aviv, Sally Grooms, had been suddenly selected to do something for USIA, to take charge of a new youth exchange program.

Q: I was interviewing her yesterday. She is now Sally Grooms Cowl.

PETERSEN: I don't know if she described that part. I was just tangentially connected to it. As I was told before I got to Tel Aviv, the USIA director wanted her immediately for this position to start up a new project. This was Charlie Wick. The ambassador in Israel had said he wasn't going to release his CAO until the new CAO was there to replace her. Thus, they told me to get out there that weekend, and arrive by Sunday to go to work the following morning. To make a long story short, I arrived that following Sunday. There was about a week where we were both there. Then Sally left to rush back to Washington to head up this new youth exchange project for Mr. Wick. I was in the position that I had wanted and been tapped for from late the previous year but I had to forego the balance of the language training.

In June of '82, there I was, the new CAO in Israel. What was it like? What was our relationship like? The Likud had just recently come to power. Menachem Begin was the prime minister. This was a tectonic shift for the Israelis. The Labor government was out after so many years in power.

The new Likud and everything that it represented in political thinking and in sociological/cultural outlook was quite a shift for the Israelis and our government, which had an excellent, close relationship with the Labor government and politicians and was hard at work maintaining that type of relationship with the Likud government. At the time I arrived, the job of the embassy was to make sure that there was good understanding, that they understood us, that we interpreted properly and correctly what the Israeli government was doing. That to a large extent was exactly what was happening, although both Israelis and we Americans were perhaps concerned and at times baffled by the efforts in Lebanon.

Q: When did they go into Lebanon?

PETERSEN: I forget the exact date. It was that spring.

Q: The Israeli army was in Lebanon in force.

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: Was the siege of Beirut going on?

PETERSEN: Yes. The duties I had were such that - every officer in the embassy was aware of and following events in Lebanon - but my focus was on the relationship with our counterparts, our contacts, in Israel proper both in the government and outside the government. We had a fantastic, well established, excellent cultural affairs program at the time I arrived. It was a joy to step into it. I use the old cliché that it was vibrant and exciting. We had a cultural center inside the embassy in Tel Aviv with an excellent library/research facility. There was a separate USIS officer in the consulate in Jerusalem, but the embassy in Tel Aviv maintained a cultural center in Jerusalem that was separate.

Q: This was the peculiar thing where our consulate general in Jerusalem reported straight to Washington.

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: There was a certain rivalry.

PETERSEN: From what I observed under Ambassador Lewis and then later under Ambassador Pickering, I wouldn't use the word "rivalry." There was a certain recognition of the importance of maintaining a sense of independence, but rather close cooperation, not rivalry. But I know that is an issue and a lot of people might want to depict it as rivalry and have good explanations as to why, but from my point of view, it was really cooperation.

Q: It also depends on the personalities, particularly of the consul general and the ambassador.

PETERSEN: Yes. Wat Cluverius and Brandon Grove were the CGs (Consul Generals). They attended the weekly country team meeting in Tel Aviv. They would sit next to the ambassador. There was a sense of emphasizing both their independence and their importance and their

relationship with the embassy. No effort was ever made to trample on that independence.

Anyway, in June, I got launched on that assignment.

Q: Tell me about the invasion of Lebanon. How was this viewed in the embassy as you arrived?

PETERSEN: The concern was how to resolve the situation. Very early on, we had shuttle diplomacy with Phil Habib. I had actually met him in Saigon. He was head of the political section there. He played a key role in trying to establish the negotiations for an Israeli withdrawal. Much of the embassy support went into that. My colleague, Arthur Berger, the press attaché, must have spent 95 percent of his time on that, speaking to the press every day at the sites of various talks and negotiations.

I, on the other hand, was spending 99 percent of my time, if not 100 percent, on other things. The cultural program that I was responsible for was not a part of the embassy resources being applied to helping resolve the Lebanon issue.

Q: When somebody arrives and is new on the block, often they can sense the mood clearer than somebody who has been there. There is a difference. Did you find any disquiet among the officers over what the Israelis were doing?

PETERSEN: Yes. In general, yes. A great deal. First of all, in the largest sense, there was concern about U.S. interests in the area and concern about stability in the Middle East. But also concern that the Israelis weren't doing something that was in their own interest. A great deal of disquiet.

Q: In your cultural activities, what were you getting from your contacts? I am told that in Israel, it's vibrant and if nothing else, everybody is articulate as all hell.

PETERSEN: The same sort of disquiet. Articulate, very vocal expressions of concern from some of the contacts. Others expressed general frustration and determination and a sense of being absolutely pushed to the limit, that something needed to be done, that they couldn't put up with the constant threats, that terrorist activity, the bombardments, the harassment in the form of shells landing in their kibbutz and so forth up in the north. A real anger, determination to accomplish something, but perhaps also a recognition of how hard it would be to target the right enemy. It was the entire gamut of feeling.

Q: What were we doing on the cultural program?

PETERSEN: The two libraries had excellent research facilities and were in great use at providing material for scholars and journalists and people in the arts and so forth. We were busy - the word "showcasing" comes to mind - providing insights into American thinking and developments, individual arts and the performing arts. When I arrived, one of the very first programs - I hadn't set it up, but Sally left and I got to manage it and take whatever managerial bows - there was a major dance company that came over. We were involved in bringing theater people. At the Tel Aviv Museum, we had a Gottlieb exhibit, a major effort to showcase an aspect of the American

visual arts. We had the dance company I mentioned. We got involved in everything over the course of the four years in the realm of the arts. Opera. We brought over Sarah Caldwell. We had a variety of street theater companies. I used to work with a number of the Israeli dance troupes, theater groups, to facilitate their efforts to show the development of the arts in Israel to the American audiences in the U.S.

We had the IV program. The program we had was a major resource for the embassy. We had great involvement from the political section, the economic section, the DCM, Bill Brown, and then Bob Flatin, who later was ambassador in Rwanda. The DCM was involved in our IV selection committee. In some embassies, it becomes a stepchild of the CAO. USIS may jealously guard the IV program, and give lip service to making it nationwide. But in Tel Aviv, it was absolutely mission-wide and there was great participation not just in the selection of grantees but in the prepping of them for their visits to the U.S. and their debriefings and the follow-up activities with them. We had quite a number traveling.

We had a fantastically adept FSN, Helena Michelle, who administered the IV program and relieved me of a great deal of the administrative burden and allowed me to focus more on the substantive issues of searching out and evaluating good grantees.

We had a very important academic scholarly exchange program. We had the Fulbright effort, the USIEF, the U.S.-Israel Educational Foundation. The executive director was Dan Krauskopf, who had been there for decades. It was a marvelously administered program under Dan's leadership. We had a six-person board with three Americans and three Israelis. The DCM was one of the board members. There was a professor who had come from Columbia University who was in Jerusalem at Hebrew University. And I was the third American board member. We had three Israeli counterparts. We had a vast array of scholars who made a real difference in scholarly exchange between the two countries. I'll mention that the Fulbright program there really was a significant force in academic exchanges. Every year, we would go through the roster of applications for grants for Americans to come to Israel. I remember instances of American scholars explaining that it was essential for their careers, not because they were scholars of Israeli history, but people in scientific fields, and theoretical mathematics. They would say, "It's essential that I spend time at this or that institution in Israel for the development of my own career, my institution's development, and so forth." There were good and close ties.

I suppose I could sum up my life there as CAO. Kioko and I look back on that as one of the most hectic times of our lives, one of the most intellectually stimulating assignments I had in the Foreign Service. Every evening it seemed, I was out at some event or other mixing, meeting people, either at the theater, at a performing arts event, gallery openings, whatever, out mixing and hearing, talking to intellectual/cultural leaders of Israel. It was very exciting. We used to treasure our Friday evenings, the beginning of Shabbat would be the one quiet evening of the week. After dinner, sometimes we'd go and have dinner outside the house, but more often than not, after dinner, we would then go out and sit around over coffee and fruit with personal friends and have a relaxing evening. But it seemed as if the other six evenings of the week were all business, out working. But I loved it. When I left Israel after four years there and had to come back to Washington, it was such a downer. After the intense life that we lived there, returning to the routines of Washington was such a contrast and such a disappointment.

Q: Because of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent activities there, was it hard to get American cultural types to come to Israel?

PETERSEN: No. I suspect now it's much more difficult.

I think it's difficult now because of the security concerns, the danger. Yes, there were people who would express concern about the danger of visiting Israel under some sponsored program. That did happen occasionally, but it doesn't stand out as anything significant. I remember much more clearly a couple of cases of Mauritians in my previous assignment who had expressed misgivings about visiting the U.S. because of the danger in the U.S., the danger of violence in our society. I remember that more than I remember the Americans expressing concern about visiting Israel. Both Kioko and I noted when we first got to Israel that in the first few weeks, we were very conscious of security issues – having bags checked when we'd go into a supermarket or a mall or things like that, the sight of the reservists on weekends going home, traveling with their weapons. You'd see kindergarten groups always accompanied by an armed guard. But after a few weeks, that became so routine that you didn't pay attention to it. But at first, I was certainly aware and took notice of it.

Q: Was there any feeling that you were getting either from the embassy or Israeli contacts about the settlement policy?

PETERSEN: The wonderful thing about Israel is that, unlike some countries where people are somewhat reticent to talk about things, in Israel, I don't recall anybody ever saying, "Oh, I don't want to discuss this or that." Not only were people willing to discuss it, they were willing to proselytize you with their view and try to win you over. From Israelis, I heard expressions of deep anguish and despair about the settlement policy in the West Bank and how it would inhibit any eventual accommodation with Arab states or with Palestinian nationhood. Then I heard others who said, "It's our land and we certainly should be entitled to live anywhere in our land." In between those two extremes, every expression you could imagine. After all these years have passed, I don't recall one or the other of those two diametrically opposed viewpoints being more predominant than the other.

Q: It seems to me the society is quite divided.

PETERSEN: Quite. In the election results of certainly the last three decades have shown that even when there was a shift in power. When I was there, there were calls for power sharing, national unity governments, which are a recognition by any political system that you have gridlock or near gridlock and that there's not going to be one side or the other gaining sway.

Q: How about visitors? Were you deluged with them?

PETERSEN: Yes. You've heard the jokes that for an American politician to have the "three I" visits: Iowa, Italy, and Israel. Yes, we had CODELs constantly. It seemed that Israel was setting a world record for CODELs. This was one of the things that made working in our embassy there as a CAO so delightful, the fact that Washington paid attention, that it cared. I use the IV

program as an example. There was great interest in who traveled on that IV program not just from within the embassy or within USIA but other parts of the U.S. government where they were very interested in who some of the IV grantees were and where they would travel in the U.S. and appearances they would make and so forth. I had the opportunity as CAO to be involved in some of the CODELS, taking groups around, traveling with them. It added a great deal of spice to the work. It was important. The situation there is so nuanced and difficult to understand and appreciate. I think it was really important for members of Congress to visit, to see for themselves, and for as many Americans as possible to visit. It's one thing to look at the maps and read about the issues. It's quite another to see for yourself what the West Bank consists of, the topography of Jerusalem. It helps your understanding to stand there on the hillside and look at it and begin to grasp what it is and certainly to visit places like Gaza and elsewhere.

One of the things that really was important while I was there... I worked for two different PAOs. For the first two years, it was Maurie Wee. The last two years was for Howard Lane. Particularly under Howie, we were able to use our program, make an effort to reach out to more of the Arabs living in Israel to get them more involved in our programming, going up to Nazareth, a city preponderantly Arab, and doing more of our programming up in Nazareth, trying to reach out to Arab-Israelis, and involve them, get them involved in our programs, get them into the IV program. In the Fulbright program we looked for opportunities, sought ways to support Arab scholars. I'm not referring now to the non-Israeli Palestinians. I'm referring to the around 17-18 percent of the population of Israel that was Arab. We tried to make sure that the program was inclusive and reached out so that the same things we were communicating to the Jewish people of Israel we were trying to communicate to the Arabs of Israel and to get them involved in traveling to the U.S. in the same way and participating in programs and learning about us.

Q: Did you have any problem with the Israeli government with this particular thrust?

PETERSEN: No.

I recall another thing that was significant the last year or two I was there. Based on some research that we were able to do and get access to, we determined that the generation growing up in Israel, the generation in school, was less open to democratic ideals than the previous generation. We consulted the ministry of education about this, talked about it among ourselves, got involved with some American think tanks and others, and developed a project in USIS to try to help revise the educational curriculum by including more material on multiculturalism, on the ideas of democracy and so forth.

I don't want to give the wrong impression that the work of the CAO was all going to the theater and dabbling in music and dance. We were trying to bring about changes that were in the interest of the United States and that were for the betterment or in the interest of Israel, trying to support efforts where we had the cooperation of the Israeli government in trying to bring about some changes using soft power.

Q: You mentioned that the next generation was not as attuned to democracy. Was it just that Israel was becoming more Middle Eastern?

PETERSEN: I would approach it a different way. A few minutes ago I described it as the young generation being less open to democratic ideals. I suppose I should just say "less tolerant" of differences. What we sensed from our focus groups, polling, and other research was that the coming-of-age generation was just not as open and as tolerant, rather, they showed an inclination to be less tolerant than the preceding generation. They were drifting away perhaps from the founding ideals of Israel. I don't want to over-dramatize that, but there was a sense, a concern, and we tried to address that.

Q: The great exodus from the Soviet Union, had that taken place?

PETERSEN: No, the great exodus hadn't yet begun. During my time there, we were still hard at work lobbying, cajoling, using whatever means we could with the Soviet Union to get the release of Soviet Jews, so that they would have the opportunity to emigrate if they so wished whether to Israel or to some other country. The floodgates hadn't opened, far from it.

Q: You left in '86.

PETERSEN: Yes.

WAT T. CLUVERIUS, IV
Consul General
Jerusalem (1983-1985)

Wat T. Cluverius, IV was born in Massachusetts on December 4, 1934. He obtained a B.A. from North-Western University. He obtained an M.A. from Indiana University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1967. He served in Jeddah, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem. He also served in Washington, DC in the Near Eastern Bureau. He retired in 1988. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 31, 1990.

Q: What was the situation? Could you, for the record, explain what does the Consul General do in Jerusalem? It stands by itself, it's unique.

CLUVERIUS: Yeah it stands by itself because the original UN resolution of November '47 which partitioned Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state called for the "Internationalization of Jerusalem." Then of course that partition never took place according to the UN mandate because the Jew,.; of Palestine accepted it very reluctantly but accepted it. But the Arabs didn't. They went to war against the new Israeli state. Just hours after the British left in middle of May 1948. In fact the Western world maintained its position that Jerusalem should have a special status and therefore never recognized Israeli sovereignty in West Jerusalem or Jordanian sovereignty in East Jerusalem, as it was divided from '48 to '67. And therefore the Consuls General in Jerusalem were independent. I think there are 7 in the Consular corps and they do not report through the Embassies in Tel Aviv and prior to '67 they didn't report through Amman, Jordan either.

They were independent missions of their own. And there's the British, the French, the Americans, the Belgians, I believe there's a Swedish guy but he may be Honorary, the Vatican representative there and a Greek and maybe one other. As far as the Americans go, the mandate is basically the West Bank and Jerusalem. After '67 it became the West Bank and Jerusalem. Before '67 it was just Jerusalem, both sides of Jerusalem, East and West. There was an office on both sides.

Q: You've been a real Near Eastern hand by this point, so it wasn't somebody coming up and saying--Wat we want you to do such and so--you knew what you were supposed (to do). What were sort of your instructions to yourself. What did -you put as your goal or what did you want to do while going out to Jerusalem.

CLUVERIUS: The Peace Process in a wider meaningful sense was still largely on hold, and was going to stay that way. They were still wrestling around with this vain attempt to make it a Treaty with Lebanon. And of course things were getting, by the time I was going out to Jerusalem, we'd had the explosion of the Embassy, we'd had all this nasty business with the marines, all of that. We had this nonsense of putting the battleship, New Jersey, off the coast of Lebanon lobbing 16-inch shells....

Q: 16-inch shells.

CLUVERIUS: Unbelievable stuff. You know I use to be a naval officer I know what 16 guns can do, you know. In fact my grandfather commanded 2 different battleships, the West Virginia and the Texas. I thought my job really was to talk turkey to the Palestinians so that they'd understand. I mean they're full of illusions and missed opportunities. As Abba Eban used to say--The Palestinians never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity. A lot of truth in that. I think that's really what I wanted to do for the Palestinians. To tell them, you know, they've got to exert themselves, no one is going to do this for them. And basically they're going to have to pay some prices. That was really what it was all about.

Q: Well, tell me now, the very, important thing is that you are a self-sustained unit, at the head of a major mission in Jerusalem which had its own clients, you might say, the Israelis. Very politically sensitive. You were also in a very politically sensitive position dealing with the Palestinians. If most American politicians had their way, they would just go away. They don't want to hear from them because there ain't no Palestinian vote and there certainly is a Jewish vote. What were your relations like with the Embassy, who was the Ambassador there?

CLUVERIUS: First it was Sam Lewis for my first year I guess. Then Sam retired and it was Tom Pickering. And of course I was also the first Consul General in Jerusalem that the Israelis knew from some other life--in the negotiations and I'd served in Israel years earlier. So I had pretty good credentials. I had a lot of Israeli friends and that kind of thing. So that made it different for the Israelis. They had a harder time being nasty to the Consul General because they knew him.

Q: Usually part of the modus operandi is to portray the Consul General as anti-Semitic, unfriendly to Israel, the whole thing.

CLUVERIUS: They couldn't really do that with me, they didn't try and of course the only Israeli officials of any kind that the Consuls General were accredited to is the Mayor of Jerusalem. Which is Teddy Kollek who is a wonderful man. And I had a lot of Israeli friends. I knew Israel well, I'd served there for 3 years prior. Sam, I got along with very well. There were times when Sam probably didn't like it that I had an independent input into things. But in fact we worked it out all very well and it was the same thing with Tom Pickering. He's one of the smoothest professionals, easy professional to work with that ever was. And I hope the rumors of his elevation are true, if there's a Clinton victory. But there's some very good rumors. So that worked out pretty well. We did use my house a lot in Jerusalem because the Israeli government is in Jerusalem, so Sam Lewis was up there all the time. And the guy was tired. I use to just tell him, anytime you come to the house, someone will get you a sandwich and you can flake out on the bed or the sofa which Sam would do. He was very tired of running up and down the hill all the time. I remember we had Bud McFarlane in the living room with Fairbanks, myself, Morris Draper, all these people. Phil Habib would be through. Lots of arguing about what they were doing in Lebanon. I just said, I told McFarlane, the dumbest thing I ever heard was to put the New Jersey out there. That would not impress Hafez Al-Assad, he doesn't care. And all we did of course was rearrange some hilltops out there and some villages. But Assad wouldn't care if your targeting was perfect and you destroyed all the division of his troops. He didn't give a damn. I said, but if you wanted to impress him that you know the rules of- the game you're in, you'd clean out all those markings on one of those attack helicopters and go in and strafe the hell out of the Franjeh palace up in the hills behind Beirut. Because Franjeh is Assad's agent in Lebanon, the former President of Lebanon.

Q: Was he the Druze? He was the Maronite.

CLUVERIUS: He was one of the Maronite leaders. But he had long been a client of Assad's really. I said that would make Assad take notice, you'd be going after something he cares about. You strafe that little castle compound up there in the hills and it didn't matter if you hit anybody or not. Assad would know that you're in the same game he's in. But all this other nonsense. But there were a lot of arguments like that. So in that sense the Consul General's living room was a very good place to get messages, to sit down and have a drink, to get a sandwich. So there was a lot going on there that had nothing to do with being Consul General in Jerusalem. But it's also a marvelous job if you can stand the schizophrenia. Because you might spend lunch with a bunch of Israeli journalists and politicians, and in the evening talking over the same issues with Palestinians around your own dinner table. And you'd think you'd been on 2 different planets all day long. So you could really go to bed feeling schizophrenic.

Q: The Palestinians, it must be very difficult to get across what we're after with them. One, in a way particularly in the West Bank, they have to rely on us being the sort of the major person to maybe do something. Yet at the same time, every time they looked around we were in bed with the Israelis.

CLUVERIUS: It's hard for them. It's also they were very much in the mode of the Lebanese, the Greeks, the Cypriots and some others that everything bad that happens to them, it's somebody else's fault. They're very given to that syndrome. And if anything good is going to happen to them it'll be by someone else's efforts, not their own. Because they're not responsible. There's a lot of that syndrome there. I think it's obviously changed in recent years a bit. But then again there were a few brave souls out there. Mayor Freij, Elias Freij of Bethlehem, very outspoken. The Israelis were always trying to shut him up. The Palestinians were always trying to shut him up. But basically he was saying, almost 10 years ago, what the Palestinians now take as conventional wisdom. But in those days he was under some threat for speaking out very very candidly and honestly about what it was going to take. In other words, what kind of sacrifices are going to be necessary. And he's still in the game and he's one of the delegates on the Palestinian side. There were some others. But of course you also had the bombing of the Palestinian mayors in '81 I think.

Q: 3 or 4 had their legs blown off.

CLUVERIUS: Karim Khalaf later died of a heart attack, but Karim was quite a guy and after he had his legs mangled, not blown off, there was another one up in Neblus who had his legs blown off, he wouldn't deal with anybody. But Karim had been badly hurt and had to use two canes, his legs were badly damaged. Most of the Consulates give 2 National Day parties, one for the Israeli side of town and one for the Arab side of town. And I didn't do that. I started to just give one. Hardly anybody came from the Arab side. But the next year I talked to Karim Khalaf who was basically under house arrest down in Jericho, whether he would come. He said, "No, no, I'm too embarrassed." I said, don't be silly, it's some Israelis who blew your legs off. You know, who blew you up. You come to the party, if anybody is going to be embarrassed it'll be the Israelis. And he didn't quite understand my thinking on that but he came. And hobbled around my garden with his two canes. Some of the Israelis present were embarrassed. Because by that time, this is now 2 years later, they had pretty well broken it and they knew it was done by Israelis. In fact it was done by Israeli fanatics who had also let one of their own Druze sappers, who was killed or badly hurt, approach the bomb. They didn't tell the guy that he was about to get blown. So there was a lot of challenge in Jerusalem. It was a very interesting place. And it's one of the nicest houses in the Foreign Service.

Q: Did you feel bugged or under threat or anything like that?

CLUVERIUS: There were times when it was pretty nasty, I think. There were times when people felt there was a threat. And certainly that was the case just after I left that job. When the Intifada started in '87, I think there was a lot of security concern.

Q: I would have thought, I mean after all, you're talking about religious emotions and you have these, I don't come from the area, but you have these Israelis who were well into the settlement process. Many who came from a very right-wing and almost fanatical religious side and here the Consul General of Jerusalem is sort of the source of saying

you're being nasty people and all. I would have thought this would have made you a target of religious fanaticism.

CLUVERIUS: I thought that you're probably in more danger from Jewish terrorists than an Arab one in that job. One, they're harder for the authorities to detect. And they are armed. The Israelis have had a hard time breaking into their own fanatical groups. They're very tight knit and all of that. So, yeah, I think it's probably a more serious danger.

Q: Today after a long pause this is the 25th of March 1994. Let's talk about, as we mentioned in this last tape, reporting. Obviously the human rights reports but there are other reports. Could you talk about what you were after, how you went about it and how these reports, your concerns, how they played at our Embassy in Tel Aviv, how they played back in Washington?

CLUVERIUS: Well you have to remember that Jerusalem is an independent post. So you didn't have to send things through the Embassy in Tel Aviv. But of course you were often reporting on the same trends or singular events that the Embassy in Tel Aviv might be reporting one perspective and you might be reporting as a different kind of event. Because the Embassy in Tel Aviv was going to have their own interpretation but also the Israeli interpretation. And the Consulate General in Jerusalem might have its own interpretation and of course a Palestinian interpretation. So it could be difficult I should think if you didn't work closely with the Embassy. And we tended to do that, And there really wasn't that much occasion for conflict and conflicting views. Because in fact the turf is reasonably, recognizably separate. There is an awkwardness in a sense that the Embassy, traditionally since the '67 war, covered the Gaza Strip. Which of course is Palestinian in its political life and it's Palestinian in most of its human life. Although there are some native Gazans, maybe 100-150,000 out of 850,000. That was a little awkwardness because one, the Gazans didn't really like that the US Embassy in Tel Aviv was their American contact so to speak. They preferred to deal with the Consulate in Jerusalem, for example, to get visas. They didn't want to show that they had visas issued in the US Embassy in Tel Aviv, they were much happier to show that they had visas issued in the American Consulate General in Jerusalem. When they went across the bridges to Jordan and elsewhere in the Arab world that was a less problematic point of issue for a visa than Tel Aviv. But in fact of course what we were trying to do in Jerusalem, we were trying to report on what was happening in the West Bank in Jerusalem itself. Because in fact, this has always been a problem, I think, that in fact you were suppose to have, Jerusalem is suppose to be your turf, Jerusalem and the West Bank. But in fact of course the seat of the Israeli government is in Jerusalem and that's the Embassy's turf. So there was a certain amount of schizophrenia in that situation. The Consulate General is not accredited to any government except perhaps to the Mayor of Jerusalem. Teddy Kollek was my principal Israeli point of reference, he was a pleasant man and a joy to work with. And I'm sorry he's not still the Mayor but of course it's a bit frustrating because you're dealing with the Palestinians who are intensely concerned with what the US is doing and thinking. Some of that syndrome that, well example Tom Friedman described in his book From Beirut to Jerusalem, about the Lebanese, that they

really thought that some morning the Americans would wake up and make a new president of Lebanon. You know, this kind of omnipotence kind of feeling they had. So they were constantly taking our calls and we were constantly taking theirs. It's a bit incestuous but you had some very interesting characters to work with. Elias Freij the Mayor of Bethlehem is an extremely fine man. And of course was a prophet not honored in his own country because he had been preaching for 15 years what the Palestinians should be doing vis-à-vis the Israelis. And of course now they're doing it, which is talking directly. So Freij was very interesting. Natche the mayor of Hebron whom the Israelis deposed but in fact most of us considered him the legitimate political leader in Hebron. Natche is a very, very astute political animal. Then there's the crowds in Nablus--The Kanaan clan and the Musris. So there was a hierarchy, not a hierarchy, there's a political establishment which is now mostly gone. These people are much less influential now than they were then.

Q: We're talking about the mid-80's. You were going, I mean these were some of your principal points of contact for political reporting. Just a little how-to which I think is interesting. What would you do, go down and chat with them, sort of have an agenda? What would you do?

CLUVERIUS: Well there were 2 things you wanted to do. One of course was to keep your finger on the pulse of day-to-day events. And of course there were frequently day-to-day events. And I think it was the week that I arrived as Consul General in '83, which was after the 4th of July party.

Q: You mentioned that the last time.

CLUVERIUS: There was the shooting at the Islamic University in Hebron.

Q: What was that?

CLUVERIUS: Some Israeli settlers went out and shot up the student union or something like that and there were people killed. And it was some crazy guys from Kiryat Arba or wherever they were from, I'm trying to remember. But the interesting thing was my USIS guy, the Cultural Affairs kind of guy in the Consulate, was in the office of the President of the University when this shooting started. He grabbed the phone off the President's desk and called me. And you could hear the shooting in the background and he was lying on the floor. It went on for some time. So there were those kinds of dramatic events. But of course you were always trying to keep up with which Palestinian groups were influential where. There was always the disputes amongst the Palestinians of the West Bank themselves. Along what you might call the traditional fault lines in the society. The Hebronites didn't trust the people from Nablus, certain clans didn't trust other clans. There's also the town and the village disputes. At that time also the Israelis were pushing something called the village leagues. Which was trying to create basically a collaborative group of Palestinians. That didn't work. Its probably long forgotten but it did create a lot of tension among the Palestinians. There was a guy named Dhudin, whom I think was from the southern part of the West Bank. And they tried to set him up as the leader of the

village leagues, which would be those Palestinians who were willing to cooperate with the Israelis. Not in the sense that Elias Freij of Bethlehem was talking about, which is the kind of thing that's going on now. It was basically collaboration for the village leagues. So you're trying to keep track of all these trends and all the fault lines. To what ultimate purpose other than to have the knowledge of what was going on and who was doing what to whom. At that time there wasn't a hell of a lot of ultimate purpose. But it was always felt that whatever was going on in the broader peace process, you really had to know what the Palestinians were thinking and what they were feeding to the Jordanians, what they were feeding to the PLO leadership in Tunis. Which of course at that time was only a year or two after having been thrown out of Lebanon. And Arafat was becoming increasingly irrelevant, to the joy of the Israelis, until he was rescued as a political animal really by the Intifada which broke out in '87. The uprising in the fall of '87. Which still goes on in some way. So you're always trying to know what these folk were up to. Now some of the means you used, one of the things you had to be careful of was that the Palestinians had the smarts of the survivors. And very carefully they tell the Israelis one thing, they tell the Americans another, they tell the British another, the Jordanians something else and the PLO in Tunis probably got a different story. And this wasn't malicious dissembling, this is what survivors do. Also try to find some advantage in the fault lines of the world around them. Just like we were trying to understand the fault lines in their political culture. But that was always kind of fun. And of course then an Israeli election came along. You would have the various Israeli parties dabbling in the Palestinian political scene. Trying to find people they could work with, trying to find people who could carry accurate messages to the Jordanians, to the PLO or whatever. Some of the means we used were pretty straightforward. Traditional political reporting means you go out and have coffee with the guy and we all knew each other quite well because it's not all that big a piece of turf. It wasn't hard to have a meeting at 10:00 and have coffee in Hebron and then be back in East Jerusalem for lunch and go to a dinner party in Nablus. We also had a political officer, Tom Dodling, who was a very clever fellow. He had very good Arabic and spent a lot of time in the old city. He met a guy who reads coffee grounds and there are certain events, kinds of groups that meet and they'll have somebody in to read the coffee grounds. Not that anybody believes it but it's kind of traditional. Kind of traditional stuff. But what was interesting was that very often the meetings amongst the notables of the West Bank in which they would have this traditional event take place were meetings in which we'd be very interested to know what was going on. We'd find out from the "coffee grounder." They often did this for example when they received some important Israeli official, particularly a Labor Party official or something like that.

Q: Did you ever, for example, and this could probably work both ways, in perspective, see a report that would come out of our Embassy in Tel Aviv and say--Gee, that's really presenting one point of view, in a way fair enough? In other words, frame some of your reporting to show the other side of the moon on this. In order to give a balanced view?

CLUVERIUS: Absolutely. But usually you would, if your relations were good, and I think ours were when I was in Jerusalem, they usually are between the Embassy and Jerusalem. You'd usually know in advance that someone was working on a matter that

would kind of illuminate this subject from the Israeli perspective. And it would be useful if Jerusalem would do a counter-piece that would illuminate it. So that it'd often be done cooperatively. Now on fast breaking stories, you might have to do it by phone very quickly. You know the Embassy might call and say we're going to do this. Or I might call and say, Look this is what the papers are saying, it ain't right from what I'm getting. You know what the press are saying and all of that. There's something else back here that's going on. And here's how I'm going to play it. Occasionally you might be in conflict with what the Embassy is reporting but very rarely.

Q: I would think that on your reports, a report that would be eagerly awaited, or maybe not eagerly awaited, but expected would be on the human rights side. Essentially we have an Israeli at this time, an Israeli occupying force in a land that doesn't want it. And the Israelis are not sweet, kind, considerate and gentle people particularly when they feel that their national security is at stake. Can you talk about what you would do, how you went about it and the problems therein?

CLUVERIUS: You do pretty straight reporting jobs. The Israelis were saying as they did and even for a number of years they published an annual report published by what was called a Civil Administration which means the military occupation government, basically. To say how wonderful it all was and what a benign occupation it was and all the things we've done for the local folk in the past year. It was pretty kind of outrageous PR stuff. But we would take it and my staff would tear that thing apart in a report to Washington. And say this is BS, and back it up. The annual Human Rights Report is a big problem because human rights is not a black and white subject. One man's violation is another man's benign mistake. And the way we did it was to call a spade a spade and the politicking would take place in Washington between the bureau, NEA, and the Human Rights Bureau. And depending on who was running, which political animals, which political appointees were in the Human Rights bureau, you'd have a hard time or an easy time getting the facts published as we saw them in the field. There was a lot of negotiation over language, you know lots of negotiations over adjectives and stuff like that. You know, it's a painful process.

Q: Elliott Abrams was not the Human Rights person when you were there, was he?

CLUVERIUS: No, I think he was an IO person at the time. There were some other political appointees, frankly whose names I can't remember and don't want to remember. They could be pretty tough. There was a negotiation in Washington one year I recall, it was really trading off language. The people in the Human Rights thing were pretty protective of the Israelis, but they wanted to land with both feet on the Syrians. So you had some tradeoffs. I mean you can't use those terrible adjectives about the Syrians unless you let us use reasonably descriptive adjectives about the Israelis.

Q: Just to give an idea to move one layer down, what were some of the problems that you were reporting on with the Israelis in dealing with the people there in the West Bank?

CLUVERIUS: You mean on the ground problems. Well you had continued land expropriations. I remember we did lengthy reporting on the Israel claim that this is all state land. And therefore the state can exercise eminent domain etc., etc. And we did some very extensive historical reporting. Because in fact there had been, just before the '67 war, the Jordanian government was going through the West Bank, north to south, modernizing the records and things which traditionally are held by the Mukhtar of the village, some of it is almost verbal. Because everybody knows that Muhammad's land extends from this rock to that tree and over to this. And in fact the Jordanians had only designated about 17% of what they had covered as state land; they had not reached south of Jerusalem. Only about 17% of it was designated state land which meant roadways, rights of way, things like that. Whereas the Israelis were claiming huge percentages of state land. And made the argument that as an occupier you can't change the status. But of course there were some very complicated Ottoman rules of squatters rights and kind of thing--how many years has this land been tilled by this family before ownership passes. And all kinds of things. But we would tear into those subjects to illuminate the facts.

Q: Had the Israelis confiscated? I heard in stories that taking the records and putting them somewhere meant they had control over, they could call the shots because people didn't have the original records.

CLUVERIUS: Sure and very often they got some of it by bribery by Mukhtars who did hold the records of the whole village. And if he turned those records over to the Israeli authorities then they knew who owned what and they could make the records disappear or whatever. There were a lot of very sophisticated shenanigans going on about land. And of course the Palestinians were almost always the losers on that. So it was very difficult. And if Palestinians could prove a claim that land had been taken, at any time in the recent historical past, then they had to go through the Israeli legal system. Which occasionally gave some justice in that, but not often.

Q: What about, was Israeli settlements going on at that time?

CLUVERIUS: Oh sure.

Q: Could you talk about that and how you were viewing, reporting your impression?

CLUVERIUS: You were getting that and you getting this tide from the Likud government, you know they really put a lot of investment out there. Lots of people moved out there for purely economic reasons. Some land would be expropriated for a settlement by the government and the military would fence it, the Jewish National fund would pay for the bulldozers and the infrastructure, the housing was subsidized, the water and electricity rates were lower than Israel proper. So a guy could get 3 times as much house for the same money. But then again you also had the ideological characters and people forget, perhaps, but for the most part the settlers in North Sinai who as you recall had to be moved out as part of the treaty with Egypt, most of those real settlers took compensation from the Israeli government for about 300,000 some dollars per family and left. It was the hard line ideological settler,, who had then moved from the West Bank,

particularly from Hebron's Kiryat Arba, moved into those settlements. Those are the ones you saw on TV in the Spring of '82. They had to bring them out, water cannons, they were threatening suicide. Those were not for the most part the settlers who had lived there the previous decade. They had already been bought out. These were the hard-line guys, the ideologues. Who moved down from the West Bank into the settlements, in the Yammit area. That was a full swing in the early 80's. It really got going after the Likud came to power in '77. So there were settlements going and there were increasing numbers of these very vocal folk. And you were getting these very vocal folk from Brooklyn who were bringing in a lot of money. And in traditional American social and political activism they were really rocking the local boats. They were always trying to get me into a settlement. Claiming that they were on the West Bank and the Consulate General had to provide services to Americans in the West Bank and why wouldn't I show up at the settlements. I would send my vice-consul out there and sure enough there they had a TV camera crew it was a setup to get recognition for the settlement. You know, it's a silly game but that's part of things.

Q: But then you had to watch it.

CLUVERIUS: At the same time it was a legitimate claim to the services. So I just sent the most junior vice-consul out there, renew passports or whatever needed doing.

Q: The settlers, were they, the ones from America? Were they keeping their American passports tucked in the back pants pocket or not?

CLUVERIUS: For the most part yes, you had Levinger, who was one of the founders of the settlements in Hebron. His wife had been an American but gave up her citizenship. While I was Consul General we served Meir Kahane with his loss of citizenship papers. Which I think ultimately was overturned at the court anyway. Because, the way the law is written, it's almost impossible to deny anyone citizenship anymore. You have to prove intent. And as any lawyer will tell you, intent is almost impossible to prove. But it was kind of fun to send the notification of loss of citizenship over to Kahane's house.

Q: He was the head of the Jewish Defense League. What was your impression of the settlers? Were there constant confrontations with the Palestinians?

CLUVERIUS: There were some. And it was growing because their numbers and their aggressiveness in the streets were growing- People were looking for a little bit of trouble I think. Of course Levinger had served 5 months for killing a guy in the streets of Hebron, a Palestinian. And you had more and more of that. And of course it was that summer, I think '83 or '84, but in '81 there were attempts on the lives of 3 or 4 prominent Palestinian mayors done by some underground Jewish group. And they finally broke into it and arrested these folk, I think it may have been '84 or '85 when they broke the case. But it took them maybe 3 or 4 years. In the Spring of '84, a group, thank God, was caught preparing to blow up the Dome of the Rock mosque on the temple mount. And they were caught fortuitously because the Muslim mosque guards are not armed, It was a rainy, cold spring night and they heard the noise and saw these guys coming up the ladders with

satchels of grenades and explosives and all of this. But nearby was an Israeli unit that would not normally have been there. They were preparing to do a sweep of the temple mount the next morning because I think it was the German Chancellor who was visiting. So it was just fortuitous that these guys were caught. But so, yes, all of this was happening, you had the Gush Emunim which were shall we say ideologically motivated but not to the violent extremes of the Kahena movements. These guys were dangerous and the Israelis were very nervous about it. But they had a very hard time penetrating these groups and I think they still do. Because, one, they didn't take them seriously enough to begin with and, two, it's all done by face-to-face contact. It's hard to infiltrate small dedicated movements where everybody is known to everybody else.

Q: You were mentioning the shooting at the University. What happened there?

CLUVERIUS: That was the summer of '83.

Q: How did the Israelis respond to the shooting? What happened to the people who did the shooting?

CLUVERIUS: I'm trying to remember, I cannot. You'll have to look in the newspapers, I think. Whether they caught anybody for that, or not, I just don't recall on that particular event.

Q: It strikes me. You say that Levinger killed somebody in the street and he got 5 months?

CLUVERIUS: Something like that. A reduced sentence for manslaughter or something.

Q: I would think that at a certain point it would be very difficult for an American who is not ideologically in any camp, the Palestinian camp, the Israeli camp, the American-Jewish camp or something. To be sitting there watching a group of settlers, we're talking about these Israeli settlers who are coming in armed, who seem to be treated very leniently. Who are able to use armed force and all against the Palestinians. Because every time something happens, it's still going on even today, it always seems that if anything happens in Israel, it ends up a bunch of Palestinians including women and children getting killed. I would think that if the Jews are caught who have done this, I mean they get 5 months or something. I would think that this would buildup a feeling of outrage after a while. It would be very difficult.

CLUVERIUS: It was rather disgusting as these guys would get caught on the Israeli side, the Jewish side. And even if they got a pretty stiff sentence they would get a presidential pardon down the road somewhere. And of course some of them were American citizens who would go on trial. We would have a Vice-Consul go attend the trial. And of course it was like a circus and these guys showing open contempt for the court and taking their sentences as a badge of honor. And then being treated basically as good boys gone wrong and first they would get weekends off to spend with their family and then they'd get a presidential pardon. While for exactly the same offense a Palestinian might be doing 18 years. Now in the wake of this Hebron massacre thing, it comes out--Oh my God, there's

been 2 laws. I mean that's just the funniest thing you've ever seen. Of course there's been 2 laws and 2 applications of the same law or whatever you want to call it. Obviously people were treated differently under different circumstances.

Q: Could you explain, we're talking in 1994, could you just explain for the record what the Hebron massacre was?

CLUVERIUS: The most recent one? Harold Goldstein one of the very ideologically motivated settlers probably part of the Kach movement, going into the mosque in Hebron which is a divided building, because it's the also the tomb of the patriarchs and it's very important, to the Jews and the Christians as well. And just during Ramadan on a Friday shooting up 7 clips of ammunition from a Galil assault rifle and killing dozens, 30 people or more, and 60 or 70 wounded. Before the crowd managed to kill him. And that has put a spotlight on both the militant settlers and the Israeli attitude and treatment of Palestinians vis-à-vis their attitudes and treatments towards the Jews.

Q: I assume that you were reporting it and others were reporting it, there have been 2 laws and 2 ways of looking at it. It took something like this in 1994 for it to at least reach the headline.

CLUVERIUS: I think some of it came out during those first months of the Intifada which broke out in about December '87. In the first 3 or 4 months you had enormous amount of TV time and headline time devoted to what was happening. Which was basically the young people of the streets in Gaza and the West Bank taking on the Israelis with stones. So there was a lot of dramatic stuff there. We're going to break their bones kinds of things from Rabin who was Defense Minister and there was some extremely damaging footage for Israel's image. You know, heavily armed soldiers beating the bejesus out of some 15 year old. So this isn't the first time, this most recent event. It tends to be cyclical. It comes and goes and its all over the papers and CNN and then nothing happens. It goes back to being a fact which is no longer a public fact. And there's lot of facts out there that aren't public facts.

Q: Did all of this have an effect not only on you but on 'your officers that you have to work, on it? It's a difficult thing to be in the country, of what is considered to be a very close friend of the United States where you feel that, you know, tremendous injustice is being done or being misrepresented. I mean how did this affect you?

CLUVERIUS: I think it affects you. It's saddening, and occasionally it's maddening that on some occasions it's very difficult to get the attention. And of course at that time between the Likud and the Reagan administration there was a close ideological match, so to speak, which I think was nonsense. But it was played up very simplistically in conservative circles here. Which was--Oh, the Israelis now have a conservative government so they must be ideologically closer to us than that Labor Party bunch they've had for years. Which was nonsense. But the Israelis were smart and they played it up to their advantage as they played up the relationship with the religious fundamentalists in this country. They got a lot of support there.

Q: We're talking about the religious fundamentalists, the religious right of the Christians, the Baptists and other groups of this nature.

CLUVERIUS: Yeah, there was certainly an alliance there of that kind. I think it was rather nonsense. Then of course you had the other propaganda line or whatever it was called, the strategic asset. That Israel was a strategic asset in the Middle East of the United States. And that was played up by a lot of Israeli politicians. And was welcomed in the Reagan administration, I think. That this was a strategic asset. That made a lot of Israelis very nervous because a lot of them were thoughtful Israelis, shall we say, who understood that the real relationship between the United States and Israel is founded on something more profound than "strategic assets", which can be a passing phenomenon.

Q: How did you deal with Junior Officers? By the time you reach the rank you had you take a more world weary point of view. You understand political realities and all of this but Junior Officers come in with piss in vinegar and they are learning it's a pretty awful world out there, no matter where you are. And they take causes much more to heart than we do. Maybe they're right. But anyway, you must have had a problem, not a problem, but it was a challenge to you with your Junior Officers.

CLUVERIUS: Not really so much a challenge. If there had been a great deal of, shall we say naive idealism, amongst young folk. I think it disappeared after a while. These Junior Officers I was dealing with anyway, had their own cynical experiences and views. You know, the Vietnam thing and all of that. They already knew about a world in which all of justice is not done. Even when many people are screaming out that the emperor has no clothes, the emperor may still continue on. So I didn't see that as a problem. As a general sense what you would occasionally get was a member of the staff would get totally outraged at something that was going on. Some specific kind of injustice or wrong being done. And really want to make a huge issue out of it. You might have to sit down and say--Look, this one, you're right, but I don't see the backing for it, politically, to fix it. And that might occasionally entail a serious discussion with the Embassy in Tel Aviv. Saying that you guys have more clout and this one really is a outrageous. Such as a denial of consular access to an American citizen or something like that. Cause we did have American-Palestinians out there as well as Jewish settlers from Brooklyn. Events of specific outrage, yeah. And yes, perhaps the younger people would feel that more keenly than those of us who had seen more of it.

Q: Let's say you get a case where a Palestinian-American, the Israeli won't let you have access. This is always the great cause in consular business. This is where you really get on your high horse and wave the flag. Did you have to get the Embassy support?

CLUVERIUS: Well, the Consulate couldn't deal directly with the government of Israel, we could deal with other kinds of authorities out there. But then you don't have a problem because the Ambassador would jump on them and the Embassy would jump on them and say, "Get off, this is unacceptable." And it usually got fixed pretty quickly.

Q: What was your impression of the Israeli army? I'm asking this because the image of the Israeli army in the United States, maybe it's diminished somewhat. But that this is a very well oiled-machine, very efficient, knows what it's doing and yet when you look at it closely you have the feeling that here are the soldiers who are quite willing to fire. Almost as though they're treating the Palestinians like a subspecies or something like that. Did you have any feel for this looking at it on the ground?

CLUVERIUS: I think there's been a trend in the Israeli military that immediately after they took these territories in the '67 war under Moshe Dayan's both practical and philosophical direction, they put very good people out there. Some of their best Lieutenant-Colonels and Brigadiers who would be in charge, who understood that they were going to have to rule these people for a while. They wanted to do so in a way that would not ultimately damage the possibilities of making peace with them. They were very careful about confiscations, the settlement issue didn't start in full swing at that time. There was pretty good quality out there. And there was also close direction from the top. There was in the Labor Party in the late '60's quite a dispute, a philosophical dispute. Whether they should increase the number of work permits in Israel for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. That this might be socially damaging to Israel. To have these people come and be the drawers of water and the hewers of wood. That argument was basically won by the pragmatists led by Dayan. He said, I don't care about your philosophical argument. I've got these people in Gaza, they have to work. Otherwise, we're going to have a hell of a mess. So the pragmatists won that one. And of course by the time of the Intifada in late '87, you had about 100,000 Arabs a day working in Israel. Gradually when the Likud government came into power, a decade after the '67 war, in '77, they had quite a different view since they had no intention of ever giving up that land. So you're going to deal with the people quite differently. And they increased the settlement budget. Even though ultimately as Abba Eban called it, it was a failed enterprise; the settlement effort, but nevertheless it was a different attitude. And there was also a different attitude within the military. Gradually there had been, you know people don't like to go places where the job isn't career enhancing. And after the first 6 or 7 years, I don't think West Bank, Gaza assignments were career enhancing at all. And they were at first. The military government in Gaza in the late '60's, right after '67, was Mota Gur, who is now the Deputy Defense Minister, and he was very good at it as I recall. Because I covered Gaza from the Embassy then. But gradually the quality went down. The attitude toward the folk hardened or became less-sensitive, however you want to call it. Plus, you had the ideological drive of a right-wing government that really had no intention of doing anything except arranging things so that it would be impossible to give up those territories. Which they didn't succeed in doing. But they made a hell of a lot of trouble in between. You began to get little snippets of things in the newspapers. That so-and-so had been arrested for his activities while he was the junior military governor in Jenin, or one of the smaller towns. You know, the occupation began to corrupt. On the basis of the old saying, when you have absolute power it's corrupting and they had absolute power. And there began to be more and more tales of bribery by the Palestinians and of course this was terribly cancer like for the Israeli military. When a Palestinian bribed some captain or major in order to get his zoning permission to add a room to his house, he got his house and also had committed a nationalist act of which he could be

proud. But of course the Israeli was corrupted. And you also got some Israelis increasingly, with very little publicity, refusing to serve in the territories. Very often this was handled as just: Okay, next time you come on reserve duty, we'll send you to the Negev or something. But on some occasions people were punished for refusing to go, didn't want to serve in the West Bank, did not want to go out there and break heads. So all of this occupation really was corrupting and it certainly did affect the army. It affected their morale, it affected their attitude towards these people. Because, after all, these people out in the streets throwing stones at them were about the same age. They're teenagers. And for awhile of course the really nasty work wasn't done by the army anyway. It was done by the border guards. So the army is kind of there as the background as the ultimate source of power and authority but didn't have to do much. Until the Intifada started in '87, the border guards did most of the dirty work.

Q: Were the border guards a different breed at that?

CLUVERIUS: Yes, the border guards are often, they had a lot of Druze. You see, the Druze do serve in the Israeli army. The Israeli-Arabs do not, but the Druze do. There are Druze and they're tough and they don't like the Arabs very much. They're pretty tough and they are different units. They're not regular army units, they're border guards and they are the ones that chase the infiltrators in the Jordan Valley on those rare occasions when they come across and things like that. They're the trackers and they do indeed guard the border in a military sense but with a kind of police function. But they're the ones that they used if there were some trouble in the refugee camp. They were the ones who'd go charging in there, break a few heads and see what was going on. But once it became very wide-spread, this kind of uprising, then the army had to get into it, including reservists. Because the border guards were not that large an organization so the army had to get into it. Some of them didn't like it.

Q: Well is there anything else we should cover? On Jerusalem, you think?

CLUVERIUS: I don't think so.

Q: On this thing, by the way when you get the draft, you can add or expand anyway you want.

CLUVERIUS: Of course some of that has been used though.

Q: So let's move on. Back there in 1985, what did you do?

CLUVERIUS: In the summer of '85 there was of course, following the expulsion, you know, of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June '82, and of course the completion of the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty was the end of April '82. And then there was the commitment to the Egyptians, to the other Arabs, that we would then make a big push to implement the other half of Camp David. Which was the West Bank thing. And of course the Likud government had no intention of giving anymore. But it was felt then, of course the Israelis invaded Lebanon, and that delayed the whole thing, the Fall of '82. Alexander

Haig was fired or quit, whatever. George Shultz took over feeling he had to make a real push on this Lebanon thing. I think there was a debate, a conflict so to speak, in the Fall of '82. Remember there was a Reagan Initiative that September 1st of '82 which Ned Walker, Bill Kirby and I wrote. Charlie Hill, who put the finishing touches on it as the wordsmith. And then we were going to push forward with the Middle East process. At that point there was a real policy disagreement, basically. On the one hand there were those who said: Fine, we'll push the Lebanon angle. and bring Lebanon to be the second country to have peace with Israel. But I was not in that group. I was in another group which were the losers, basically, that said: Forget Lebanon, push the main peace process elements of the Reagan Initiative and let Lebanon come along, wagging its tail behind it. Don't make Lebanon the center piece. One, they can't make the Treaty, there's no government there, they can't make the Treaty, Syria won't let them. But this line lost really. It was the Lebanon push: Get the PLO out, make a deal, And it's described best I think in Tom Friedman's book. But it was a policy difference. I think the late Phil Habib didn't so us a service there. Phil had such prestige in this town. If he said he could bring the Syrians and the Lebanese towards a Lebanon-Israel Treaty, people tended to believe him. Why not. I mean Phil had enormous prestige, a wonderful man. But he didn't really come to the Middle East until he had been Under Secretary of Political Affairs. And he really thought he could deliver. He was also personally angry at the Israelis and the Syrians because he had worked the deal in '81. So anyway, by the time '83 came around I had been back in Washington since '78.

Q: *Well '85.*

CLUVERIUS: Yeah. But that was the background to Shultz's push to try to get a Peace Process going. Dick Murphy was Assistant Secretary, Dick was spending an awful lot of time on this and it wasn't going very well. Because we couldn't talk to the PLO and you couldn't do all these other things. And of course George Shultz had much bigger fish to fry vis-à-vis the Soviets and other major issues. But he thought Murphy was spending too much time on this. So they asked me if I would leave the job in Jerusalem early, because it was a 3 year assignment and I'd been there just a little over 2, and stay in the area and become the roving Peace Process guy. And with some doubts about it, I said sure I'd do it, because when the boss says you do it, you're a pro, you do it. But I made a deal I had to stay in Israel as a base, I had to talk to the Jordanians and some other people because my daughter was in high school in Israel, in the American school in Tel Aviv. And I didn't want to leave there and I also didn't want to leave the house in Jerusalem until January of '86. But actually I started this roving business based in Israel in the Fall of '85, that Labor Day weekend. I was back here in Washington, King Hussein of Jordan was here, that was when we first tried to get something going. That was basically what I did until the summer of '88. You know the Intifada started and we had various initiatives some of which were secret at the time and now are not. It was basically trying to see if there was any way to get the Peace Process going. It was very difficult of course because you had a Likud government. Then Shamir became Prime Minister, Arens is Defense Minister, these are people who either voted against or abstained on the Treaty of Peace with Egypt. You know they had not a lot of interest in this. Shultz I think gave it his very conscientious good shot but he didn't like the Middle East issues. He thought people were

extremely tricky to deal with. I thought a lot of them were dishonest and lied to him on one occasion or another. It didn't have all the nice cleanliness of going to an ASEAN meeting in Singapore where the issues are economic and the people are knowledgeable and straight forward. Middle East was a mess. And at the same time he had to deal with the Conservatives back here, people who never thought he was on the "Reagan team" and there was all this sniping. And of course his big issue in life as the Secretary of State had to be relations with the Soviets. Where I think he did win. I found that part of his own book very interesting. So I knew I was working for a guy who's conscience was in trying to make something happen in the Middle East but his political judgment probably was that it wasn't really do-able but you've got to keep trying. And of course then I was the guy who had to run around and keep trying. And it was a little frustrating.

Q: Let's talk a bit about, I suppose maybe try this country by country, I mean maybe that might be the easiest way to do this. What would you do in Egypt? They were already in the Peace Process, did they have a role in a way?

CLUVERIUS: They had a role in a big way. They were trying to bring the PLO into the orbit of respectability, shall we say, by trying to push the PLO to meet the American conditions for dialogue. They were also trying to get the Americans to manipulate those conditions so they'd be easier to meet. And of course all of this finally did happen in the Fall of '88. And the Egyptians worked very hard in the Peace Process. Not only out of conscience, which I think is genuine, but also out of a desire not to be so goddamn isolated in the Arab world. Even though the Arab League headquarters had been taken out of Cairo and there was no money flowing through from the Gulf Banks and the Gulf fees and all of this. So they had a pragmatic, and political and diplomatic and moral reason to push the Peace Process. To work with the Jordanians and all of this. And of course we had that strange Israeli government that came along in the elections of '84. The rotational government that Peres would serve as Prime Minister for 2 years and then Shamir would be Prime Minister for 2 years. And meanwhile Rabin would remain as Defense Minister throughout. And that was very strange. And as that came to an end, Rabin and Peres worked very hard trying to get something going. The problem was that on the Arab side, my sense of it was, the Jordanians and the Palestinians didn't think that Peres could deliver. They were a little nervous about him, some Israelis, that he's a little flaky. I don't personally think that's true. I happen to be an admirer of Shimon's. It's just that the pieces weren't there. And Shultz would come out and we would run around and then he would go away and I would run around and try to make something work. As it came closer to Peres having to give up the Premiership of his government, which was really a national-unity government, which was a national paralysis government actually, but when he had to give up the Premier-ship of course he would lose a lot of the levers available to him that he was trying to pull to get something going in the Peace Process. I think the Americans, including me, I suppose, and George Shultz certainly, we thought we had to get something going so that Peres can put something in place that the other guy can't tear down. And we got a little frantic about it, trying to get something going and yet refusing to agree to what the Arab side said they had to have. And this is where I did have problems with George Shultz and his immediate staff. He said no international conference because the Israelis didn't want it. But in fact the only way you were going to

get these folks under one roof was under the label of an international conference which had the UN flag, at least, standing in the corner. Because the Israelis didn't want it, Shultz wouldn't push for it and I kept writing messages that there is no way forward except through an international conference. And I would get phone calls saying what are you smoking out there'? The Secretary doesn't want one. And I would say, I don't care, I'm supposed to tell him what I think would work and what I think won't work. But Shultz was always very nice about that but in fact that was what was needed. Shultz would keep concentrating on what can we do to help Peres. A public meeting between Peres and the King of Jordan. The King wasn't having any part of it. He kept saying: Look I told you, I'll meet Peres or whoever under the UN flag in an international conference. Which of course is what eventually happened in Madrid in '91 but that could have happened in '86 or '87, but it didn't.

Q: What was the opposition about for the international meeting in Israel and why were we buying into this? I mean why were the Israelis opposed to having an international meeting and why did we?

CLUVERIUS: Because the Israelis always want direct discussions. They thought the international conference would dilute that, it would dilute the value to them of dealing directly with their neighbors and their enemies. On the other hand, it would provide a forum in which they could be ganged up on by the world community . In fact that was BS most of it. In fact they didn't want a conference, because they didn't want to talk about these issues. The Likud didn't want to talk about these issues. The status quo with them in control of the occupied territories was far more appealing to them than any possible alternative to the status quo.

Q: So the key player didn't want to play?

CLUVERIUS: And there were endless excuses why they didn't want to play this game or that game and you could reshuffle the deck but in fact he didn't want to play cards. So the constant effort to find a card that might appeal to him was doomed from the outset, basically. Because he'd always have a reason for saying: No, no I can't do that because; Oh I'm still interested in the Peace Process but I can't do this, I can't do this, I can't do anything. So it was frustrating. But it's also a useful part of diplomacy. With something as sensitive and important as that, you have to keep trying. And even though you may have a private judgment that it isn't going to go anywhere, you have to keep it alive.

Q: You keep it alive, I mean the basic thing that sort of sustained you, would it be I, obviously you're doing your job. But the other one did you have the feeling that, okay, the players that are in place right now, I mean the Likud and all, things change. I mean you never know what's going to happen. And you've got to keep the apparatus alive because who knows what's going to happen.

CLUVERIUS: That's right and also I think it was worth doing. It was worth doing for the United States, it was worth doing on, shall we say, humanitarian and ethical grounds to end that miserable conflict. And things do change. You had rising stars in the Likud who

had quite a different view in some of these things. Like David Levy who once he became Foreign Minister did play a subtly different role. So people do change, Begin disappeared from the scene, along comes Shamir. People do change. And you also have to know it as a professional in diplomacy. Sometimes going through the motions is necessary even though you know that you're probably not going to get anywhere on this particular round of going through the motions. You might have to do it a year or two in order to refine the issues, keep things alive, clear a little underbrush but no breakthrough is to the cards. But you still have to keep the ground reasonably well tilled until something new can spring up.

Q: How would you till the ground? I mean what would you do personally?

CLUVERIUS: Well there were a couple of occasions when we were making a real effort through the Jordanians or the Egyptians to having the PLO meet our conditions. And so it was, under law, that I couldn't meet directly with the PLO. You'd have to work through various intermediaries such as the government of Jordan. And so you would try that for an intensive 2 or 3 week period until you realized that wasn't going to happen. Because also Arafat was in a very weak position following the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut in '82. He was searching for a role and while someone is searching for a role he's not in a position to make great concessions. Because he probably couldn't deliver on them anyway. But you nevertheless kept pushing along.

Q: Who would you meet with say in Jordan or in Egypt?

CLUVERIUS: In Jordan usually with the Prime Minister who was then Zaid Rifai, occasionally with the King. The King in conference with the Foreign Minister and these guys. In Egypt usually with the Foreign Minister, Ismat Abdul Majid was the Foreign Minister through that period. And occasionally we do a stop in Damascus to keep the Syrians at least informed of what we were doing. Not that they agreed with any of it. And I'd have to go down to the Gulf to see the Saudi Foreign Minister occasionally, just to make sure they understood where we were coming from, what we were trying to do. Again you keep the ground tilled because something of interest might spring up even though you're not really expecting it.

Q: Did you have any problems with Congress? Would they get into the act at all, the staff or the members of Congress, about what you were trying to do?

CLUVERIUS: No. The tendency is to get involved when things are very high visibility. This was a period of very low visibility, And I think as far as that Administration went, '86 would have been the end of it.

Q: That was the end of Peres.

CLUVERIUS: Yeah, and that might have been the end of it for the United States in any serious way except for the Intifada breaking out in the Fall of '87. In which George Shultz, I think he felt he really owed it, with all of this miserable stuff happening, he

really owed it to himself, to everything and to the United States to make another effort at it. And he did but it was election year and it just wasn't going to go.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
USUN, Deputy Political Counselor
New York City (1983-1985)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: So what were we doing in the UN vis-à-vis Israel?

COWAL: Well, defending Israel at every turn, of course.

Q: I mean, here is the thing within this policy. You can understand our political leaders, they're scared to death of the Jewish vote and Jewish money, and, not as much then probably as they are now, of the Christian right.

COWAL: That's a new factor.

Q: I mean, politically, issuing any opposition to whatever Israel was doing was not politically ...

COWAL: The most interesting thing I think I actually got involved in was after Jeane left. Jeane and the Israeli permanent representative, Bibi Netanyahu, were close friends, and of course he later became prime minister. They shared inclinations about things that weren't really my inclinations. Although I was a great supporter of Israel – was and am a great supporter of Israel – my Israeli friends and contacts are, generally speaking, not in the Likud. They're generally speaking people who believe it would have been smarter for Israel to withdraw from the West Bank early on, and that it was not smart to invade Lebanon, and would have been smarter to get out right away. Again, I guess I wasn't particularly in sync with that administration. I think after Jeane left, and I guess Netanyahu was still there, I was able to get Ambassador Walters to get Secretary Shultz to agree, for the first time, not to veto a resolution which condemned Israel. I think it was the first resolution that ever passed the Security Council in condemnation of Israel. The United States did not vote for it, but we didn't veto it. That was when the Israelis bombed the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) camps in Tunis. An immediate human cry went up about this Israeli action, obviously inflicting grave suffering not only on the target, which was the PLO, but on a perfectly, if not neutral, at least perfectly innocent, third country, which had

nothing to do with it at all except having agreed to allow the Palestinians to come there when the Israelis wanted the Palestinians out of Lebanon.

Q: It had taken quite a bit of arm-twisting on our part to get the Tunisians to allow them to come in. They didn't welcome them.

COWAL: No, nobody welcomed the Palestinians. They've been, like the Kurds I guess, a difficult force to be reckoned with in many Middle Eastern countries over very much time. But the argument that I used, and I'm convinced to this day that it was the right argument, in that it was true, because of what I'd picked up. As you point out, you start running around places like the delegates' lounge, you pick up an awful lot of what's going on, what people are thinking about and what people are talking about. This resolution, or this action of the Israelis, came in the fall of 1985. Every year, one of the big battles in the early months of the General Assembly was whether Israel's credentials would be accepted, because every year there was a challenge mounted to the seating of the Israeli delegation by the Arab countries. They would get themselves voting for it and whoever else they could manage to get to vote for it.

There's a part of the UN rules of order that says if something is vetoed in the Security Council, it can be taken to the General Assembly and voted on in the General Assembly. So the two are connected, although the Security Council generally stands alone and is the only part of the UN which has the force of law. There is a tie between these two bodies, and I was picking up the fact that if the United States vetoed this resolution, then it would go to the General Assembly. But more than that going to the General Assembly, that would sort of stimulate the troops in the General Assembly to really go out and get enough votes against Israel that the Israeli delegation would not be seated, and therefore Israel would not be a member of the United Nations. The United States had long had a policy saying if Israel is ever kicked out of the UN, we will leave. So I was very concerned that that was a logical path that we were on.

I was able to convince Walters of that, who convinced Shultz, and we got the instructions to abstain on this resolution, and inside this little conclave to the east of First Avenue which is the UN, its own little world, it was an amazing decision. Nobody thought we would ever do it, particularly not in a Reagan administration.

Q: Well, did you find you became the focal point?

COWAL: Well, no, because I don't think it was terribly well known that it was I who had manipulated this; but I must say, because I thought it was the right thing to do, I felt a personal sort of triumph. I was I think happier to leave the U.S. mission to the UN on that note of feeling as if I had had an influence on what I thought – of course, we'll never know. You can never prove the negative. But what I could see laid out in front of us as a dark prophecy that I have no way of knowing, but I think could well have come true. The world would be a very different place, I think. If as with the League of Nations, if the United States had pulled out of the United Nations, the United Nations could not have survived. A lot was riding on that, and we were able to defuse what could have been a pretty tricky situation. I'm pretty convinced that if Jeane had been there, we would not have been able to do it.

Walters was terribly gifted in many ways: a brilliant linguist, for instance, a raconteur bar none. He could charm the cats down from the trees. He was really adept in nine languages. The good part was he was not so ideologically motivated as Jeane. He didn't have quite the same ambition as she did.

Q: He wasn't a political figure. I mean, he was more a professional. People kept calling him from all administrations.

COWAL: Right, he was a soldier, and he was a professional figure. I mean, he had a huge ego, but he would sometimes be somewhat self deprecating. When people would comment on his languages, he would say, "Oh, only in America. If I had been born in Europe, I would be a concierge in a middle-size hotel." To a certain extent, that might be true, because his tremendous facility for foreign languages was not, I think, matched by every other phase of his intelligence. He was a curiosity. He was a magnificent linguist. He was not a university graduate. He got a field commission in the Army in the Second World War, and from that became general and so on, so he was not a terrifically well-educated man. So I could put this over on him, if you like.

I remember convincing him of this, and he was very heavy, as you know, so he kind of huffed and puffed when he did things. So he huffed and puffed his way into his office and said to his secretary, "Get me the secretary on the phone." As she picked up the phone to dial this, he said, "Now, what do I tell the secretary." I said, well, A, B, C, D, E. Shultz was also a pragmatist, and I think it was Shultz who was one of Kirkpatrick's biggest foes; not that he didn't think she was competent, but he thought she was simply too ideological and that she was pushing the president beyond where the president really wanted to be, or beyond what was good for American foreign policy. I think that was a choice that was made by Shultz, basically.

KENTON W. KEITH
USIA, Deputy Director for Near East and South Asia
Washington, DC (1983-1985)

Ambassador Keith was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from the University of Kansas he served with the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1965. An Arabic speaking Officer, Ambassador Keith served as Public Affairs Officer and/ or Cultural Affairs in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, France and Brazil before his appointment as US Ambassador to Qatar. His Washington service included several tours in senior positions with USIA. Ambassador Keith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: You didn't mention Israel. Was it part of the equation?

KEITH: Yes, the NEA area includes all of the Arab countries and Israel and all of the South Asian countries – Pakistan, India, Iran, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh...

Q: The head of USIA at this point was Charles Wick, a controversial figure. He could get funds which other directors probably couldn't. He had political clout. How did you find him and his impact on what you all were doing?

KEITH: I think you touched on the important things. He brought with him something that too rarely have the directors of USIA had and that is political clout. Ed Murrow had it. Carl Rowan had it to a certain extent. We really didn't have anybody after that with that kind of political power or name recognition until Charles Wick came, bringing with him the personal relationship between the Wicks and the Reagans, That relationship certainly benefited USIA; there was a spike in the USIA budget at that time. He moved us into the television age. He was a man of great enthusiasm when he was with USIA. I thought his enthusiasm for his international television projects worked somewhat to the detriment of other areas of public diplomacy, but he definitely deserves credit for moving us into the television age.

Q: Did he have a point of view or was he reaching down as you were working on this very politically charged area of the world?

KEITH: I think he learned important lessons early in the game. He was not a policy man. He didn't have a deep of understanding of international affairs. In the earliest point in his Poland v. Poland fiasco, when he sought to influence affairs in Poland with a kind of political variety show, the Agency was in danger of becoming a laughing stock. At that time he was surrounded by political advisers who were committed to an ideological agenda that I'm not sure even he was comfortable with. I'm fairly certain he was uncomfortable with some of the politically-appointed ideologues who came into USIA under the sponsorship of right wing figures on the Hill. I think he felt they were a distraction to his main goal, which was modernizing the Agency's delivery system. Eventually he began to get rid of them. But he really didn't focus on those things until they became an embarrassment. Les Lenkowsky was the deputy director of USIA for much of the time that I was in Washington. He was and remains a person with a very conservative political agenda. He made no secret of that fact while he was there.

The enemies list. You've probably heard many of my colleagues talk about the enemies list. Lenkowsky publicly denied the existence of an enemies list, i.e. a list of Americans whose intellectual output or service in our overseas programs was prohibited because of their liberal credentials. When that became public there was outrage, and the Agency took some real blows. Lenkowsky, as you've probably heard, denied any knowledge of such a list and put the blame on "mindless gnomes in the bowels of the Agency" acting without direction. Agency employees were furious, and within a day or two people were sporting "Mindless Gnome" buttons.

In fact, Lenkowsky was one of many with neoconservative beliefs who came to prominence during the Reagan years, were less prominent under George H. W. Bush, were completely out of power under Clinton, and re-emerged with George W Bush. Under Reagan they brought with them a foreign policy agenda which was an aggressively American agenda with far less multi-nationalism than we had practiced since the end of WWII. The kind of cultural relativism or political relativism that marked a more liberal period in our history was gone. No remnants of that. There was a very strong feeling that our system - open markets, free markets, free enterprise, American democracy as a model – we should not be apologetic for these things and

we should not be too eager to allow a relativist discussion. Other versions of popular governance or economic systems were irrelevant in their agenda. It was a tough period. Also, Lenkowsky and the people around him had a very enthusiastic pro-Israel agenda, to the extent that it sometimes became a problem for the Department of State, which also had quite a pro-Israeli agenda at that time. But the nuances and the steps forward that you took at the appropriate moment, the effort to try to get the sides together to fulfill a longer range agenda which was held at the State Department was sometimes threatened by the more tactical activities at USIA. They might have taken the form of a VOA editorial that was ill-timed, that was particularly aggressive toward one or another Arab government or leader at a time when the U.S. was involved in delicate negotiations with the very same government. We were in a very confrontational stance.

But on balance the experience with Wick was probably good for USIA. He brought us kicking and screaming into the television era; he made us think about the use of new technologies; he didn't listen to people like me who talked about communication on a human level and face to face, etc. It wasn't that he didn't believe in those things necessarily. It was that the important thing to him at that moment was the use of the new technology and the establishment of USIA as a modern purveyor of information. He could be extremely persuasive. I observed him in action with ministers in Brazil and Jordan, and King Fahd in Saudi Arabia, and they took him quite seriously

Q: Did you find yourself acting as one of the gnomes in USIA?

KEITH: Vis-à-vis Lenkowsky I certainly considered myself one of the gnomes. In fact, I sported a gnome button, that I still possess, for some days after this comment was made in public. As deputy director of NEA, I was responsible for interacting with the Department and with the media on issues of public diplomacy and of public policy. So, when the part of USIA that was responsible for putting out material – brochures, pamphlets, and so on – wanted to do a piece on terrorism in the Middle East, it had to come through my office. I wasn't the final arbiter, of course. It would be an issue that would be discussed also with the appropriate State desk, but there was a political support structure for people who had a more aggressive propaganda agenda in those days – political support structure on the Hill and in academia and think tanks – whether it was the Heritage Foundation or other foundations who supported a more aggressive and more conservative agenda. So, those of us who were in the mode of the chess player moving pieces as it seemed to make the most sense at that moment, trying to get to a certain level of exchange and engagement between Arabs and Israelis, were in a way the opposition to that other way of thinking. I don't want to give you the idea that we had battles every day, but there was a sense that we, the gnomes, were standing in the way of effective policy action on these items.

Q: At the time, the Israelis were somewhat their own worst enemies because of the settlement policies. The Lebanese invasion had not gone well. There was still the aftermath and the Begin government was not sitting very well in Washington. That helped as far as trying to have a balanced field.

KEITH: I think that if you look back on that period there were certainly ups and downs. There were times when we were very angry with the Israelis over settlement issues and other things as well. But there was no comparison between the level of our relationship that was even at its

lowest point still well above that of the Arabs in general. That was in the early '80s. It was a time when the American public was only just getting used to thinking of people like Sadat and others in the Arab world as people you could deal with and who weren't all terrorists killing handicapped tourists on ships. We have come a long way since then. Still, although we can have our differences with Israel, there are still things that are givens in our relationship. One is that Israel must maintain a qualitative advantage in defense capability. That is always going to be a major foreign policy given for the U.S. We are never going to let Israel fall into a position of being unable to defend itself. But as we have moved on, our involvement with the Arab world has matured and their involvement with us has matured. Their understanding of the position of Israel in our foreign policy scenario is quite well understood. Often, you will have conversations that begin, "We understand about your relationship with Israel, but..." There was a maturity in the relationship that was just beginning in the 1980s. If you look back at Camp David with Carter and compare that with the Oslo and subsequent discussions, you will observe a more mature negotiating style, an understanding as of 1991 and the Madrid Peace Talks that we were all in the same riverbed. There were currents in that river that were moving faster than others. There were whirlpools in the river here and there. Don't forget that that it was a very conservative Israeli government that went to Madrid in 1991, but even they, including Begin and Netanyahu, then sensed that a direction had been taken, a course had been set, and it was just a question of pace and conditions along the way. We're still a long way from peace, but the outlines of a settlement can be seen through the fog.

Q: How did we operate in Israel? The Israelis know more about us than they probably know about their next door neighbors. Was there anything we could do there in terms of USIA?

KEITH: We've always had a very strong program in Israel. If one of the main goals of the USIA program is to promote an engagement of institutions and people, we did that in Israel very well. We had one of the best Fulbright programs in the world. One of the most efficient, well-known and important institutions in the country was the U.S./Israel Fulbright Commission that operated in the same building as USIA.

We had lots of important cultural exchange with Israeli, much of it voluntarily by major American artists. There excellent exchanges with academics, with the people in government, and with journalists. Israel is a political society. If you're on the road in a bus going from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the driver will have on a political talk show. It's the most political society, politically aware, that I've ever seen, particularly when there are elections approaching or when there is some kind of choice that has to be made, the Oslo Accords, etc.

DOUGLAS R. KEENE
Deputy Principal Officer
Jerusalem (1983-1986)

Mr. Keene was born and raised in Massachusetts and graduated from Colby

College. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967, serving first in Viet Nam and subsequently at Middle East posts including Jerusalem, Karachi, Cairo, as well as Amman and Muscat, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. His Washington assignments also concerned primarily Middle Eastern matters, including the Arab-Israel problem. Mr. Keene was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: All right. Now you were there in 1983. How would you describe the situation in Jerusalem in 1983, when you got there?

KEENE: A consulate that was very heavily focused on supporting the Habib mission, on trying to deal with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. That was Habib-Draper.

Q: That was Morris Draper and Philip Habib. Morris Draper...

KEENE: Who visited frequently, going shuttling around the area, trying to work out a deal after Sabra and Shatila to get the Israelis out of Beirut. And because the UN also had their regional headquarters at Government House in Jerusalem, and the involvement of UNIFIL (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) and UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization), and various other organizations, as well as the Israeli government—they came to Jerusalem very frequently.

Q: How would you describe sort of the attitude of the officers—American officers—you were dealing with about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon?

KEENE: Well, I remember one of them saying something to the effect that this was different from the Palestinians: the Lebanese shot back, and that sort of stunned the Israelis, because it really wasn't the Lebanese government—it was various factions, like Hezbollah...and the Palestinians. They were there too. I think by and large everybody saw it—and certainly after the Sabra and Shatila massacres—as orchestrated as much by Sharon as anybody else, and they certainly had no enthusiasm for the Israeli invasion.

Q: Well, what was happening in the Con Gen Jerusalem's area responsibility—was it eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank?

KEENE: It was actually all of Jerusalem, which gave us an opportunity to enjoy a bit of a window into Israeli thinking as well as Palestinian: and that was one of the really great things about being there. It was sort of two for the price of one. Many days you could have lunch with an Israeli official and dinner with a Palestinian—the only place, really, where you could get both sides, and it was endlessly complex and fascinating.

Q: You were there from '83 until when?

KEENE: '86.

Q: What were the Palestinians—You didn't have Gaza, or did you?

KEENE: No, we didn't have Gaza. That was covered out of Tel Aviv, although we went down there frequently, because there were just natural connections.

Q: What were the Palestinians doing during this period of time? I mean looking back—a rather quiet time?

KEENE: Yes, in retrospect, yes. After the deal was struck to get the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) out of Lebanon, the focus shifted more to trying to restart the peace process. At that time, it sort of fell to the assistant secretary, Dick Murphy, to take the lead in that effort, so we did a lot of work on that, too. That actually became our focus—trying to understand what was going on in the West Bank and what it might take to promote some sort of progress in the peace process.

Q: This is the period of time when you couldn't talk to the PLO?

KEENE: That's right. And the Israelis—official Israel--wouldn't talk to us either. We were officially confined to the protocol and consular sections of the Foreign Ministry. But in practice, there were quite a few contacts, socially.

Q: Was the mayor—Teddy

KEENE: Teddy Kollek, yes. We had contacts with the municipality. Teddy had a foreign policy advisor, an Arab affairs adviser, and a religious adviser, all became good friends.

Q: Kollek. He was the mayor at the time. He just died, just a few weeks ago. How was he viewed?

KEENE: Very favorably. He understood the situation and was tolerant, tried to promote the Arab sector as well as the Israeli sector. He tried to promote peace and harmony. He had an advisor for foreign affairs from the foreign ministry who sort of was our liaison point within the mayor's office, and he also had an advisor on Arab affairs and we dealt with him too. Teddy was a good guy; he liked a good cigar and a glass of scotch, and he was accessible.

Q: Right now—looking at The Washington Post yesterday, they had a long article about how the Israelis are gobbling pieces of Arab Jerusalem. What was the situation, let's say first in Jerusalem; were the Israelis being aggressive to grab things, were there settlement groups?

KEENE: This is the same old story that's been going on since '67, really. In those days, they were focusing more on building pretty major settlements surrounding Jerusalem, including what we would have called the West Bank, so as to make it very difficult to re-divide the city. And they were controlling—putting major settlements on the major roads and lines of communication. Building new roads. The same group that you read about in the Post the other day, the Ateret Cohanim, were active then, and they'd started that then--buying a few properties in the Old City (of Jerusalem) and occupying them.

Q: Well, what happened? At that time, were we calling the settlements illegal settlements?

KEENE: At that time we were, yes.

Q: So essentially, these were settlements in the Arab territory, is that right?

KEENE: Yes.

Q: Therefore they fell under your jurisdiction?

KEENE: Yes.

Q: Could you do anything with them? Did you go there?

KEENE: Oh yes, we did. In fact, we started that; the consulate hadn't done that previously. We started visiting settlements and trying to get to know the leadership of the settlement movement.

Q: What was your impression of the settlements at that time?

KEENE: Well, there really were two types: there were those that were ideologically motivated, hard line, right wingers, many of them American citizens; and then there were those who were attracted by the subsidized housing that made it cheaper than settling in Israel proper, and those settlers just sort of used them as a convenient place to live--bedroom communities, if you will.

Q: How about the American hard-liners? I speak as an old consular officer. People who fly flags of convenience overseas—these are generally people whose allegiance is with the country where they are located—they may be immigrants or not immigrants, but are people...they enjoy all the rights of being citizens of the host country until things get tough, and all of a sudden, they're Americans. Did you find that flag of convenience type thing?

KEENE: Yes, there was a lot of that, and a lot of dual nationals, and whatever worked that particular day...Almost everybody would keep their American citizenship--I think as a safety net if things really went south, they'd have a place to go. It was a funny kind of place. We did have the great pleasure of carrying out the Department's decision to lift the citizenship of Meir Kahane while we were there.

Q: He was the head of the Jewish Defense League

KEENE: Yes, among other kinds of...

Q: A very aggressive American-Jewish activist attacking the soviets, and all that.

KEENE: And always attacking the Arabs, too. That was the day of the Jewish Underground, when there were secret violent groups...very right-wing Israelis who were doing things such as putting anti-tank rockets into the side of civilian buses and bombs in the cars of the Arab mayors. They were terrorist groups, really.

Q: They killed...they blew the legs off some of those Arab mayors.

KEENE: Yes, they did.

Q: It's so difficult to lose his citizenship. How did they take away his citizenship?

KEENE: He became a member of the Knesset. You're not supposed to hold foreign office. That's how they got him. I know the minister of defense was an American citizen also, but when he became minister, he voluntarily surrendered his passport. There was a lot of that.

Q: What was the attitude of the Arab leadership? Did they treat you as a last hope or did they treat you as just a bunch of stooges of the Israelis, or what?

KEENE: I think they were ambivalent. They resented the American role, but what they tried to do, I guess, was to convince us of the righteousness of their cause, so that they might turn American policy around a little bit. It was just a place on both the Israeli and Palestinian side where people lived and breathed politics. And they both loved to talk, so you had no real troubles making contacts, getting information. You really got around and knew a lot of people.

Q: Did you go all over the West Bank?

KEENE: Yes, all over. Everyday.

Q: How did the Israeli occupying force treat you?

KEENE: It wasn't too bad. We weren't supposed to have too much contact with them, but occasionally we could make a few contacts inside what they called the civil administration, which was mostly the military administration. We were allowed to talk to some contacts who dealt with refugee affairs, the head of UNRWA (UN Relief and Workers Administration) we could deal with; we had some secret meetings with the head of the civil administration, and tried to do what we could to help out with individual issues and just broader issues of the way the military occupation acted. There were a lot of arbitrary arrests, lots of stories about mistreatment of prisoners, many of whom were Arab-American citizens, so we had the consular function on that side of the issue, too. We went into the jails, visiting these people, doing what we could. We were also allowed contact with Israeli MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) consular officials, religious ministry officials and informal contact with many others.

Q: What was your impression, and of the officers at the consulate general, of how Arab-Americans who were arrested were treated?

KEENE: By and large, they were not treated well. They were sometimes physically abused. There were actually quite a large number of them throughout the West Bank, and a lot of them ended up running afoul of the occupation, one way or another. There were actually whole villages which were almost all American citizens in it. We'd go visit them sometimes, and they'd be out there playing baseball. It was a surreal scene.

Q: You can understand Jewish-Americans who go to Israel for Zionist causes, but why would Arab-Americans go back to Palestine?

KEENE: Some because it was a lot easier to live on your social security check there than in the States, some for family reasons, but overall it was more emigration than there were people coming back. That was particularly true of the Christian Palestinians, whose numbers continue to this day to fall kind of dramatically. There aren't too many of them left.

Q: How did you find, let's say, Arab-Americans who ran afoul of Israelis? I assume you made representation to Israeli authorities. In general, how did this work?

KEENE: Well, we could do it several different ways. Officially, it should have been to the consular department of the Foreign Ministry. It also happened during visits to jails. Raising our concerns also occurred during our more informal contacts with higher level officials.

Q: Did you find them responsive?

KEENE: Not very. We also had a channel through the embassy, the ambassador sometimes....

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KEENE: At first, Sam Lewis, and then Tom Pickering.

Q: How were the relations with the embassy?

KEENE: When I got there, they were pretty lousy...a lot of mutual suspicion, and, you know, clashing cables and things like that, but they improved. We had set up a system where we went to their country team meeting every week, and we had a couple of people designated as liaison. It got pretty good. I mean we were never going to see things perfectly eye-to-eye, but it wasn't bad.

Q: Well, did you find that particular junior officers who were assigned to Jerusalem, would take up, you might say, the cause of--because they were the ones who had seen the mistreated Palestinians and others--taking up the cause of the Palestinians, and in doing so became critical of the Israelis. Was this a problem for you?

KEENE: It could be, and in some cases...we did strive for a balance, and certainly it was easy to not like what you saw going on. But we had some very good junior officers. We had an AID program too, and one of them usually was designated as the point of contact for that. That was run through grants to NGO's (non-governmental organizations)—grants to NGO's. One of them who worked with me on this was a young Nick Burns.

Q: Undersecretary for Political Affairs. Number three in the State Department.

KEENE: Right.

Q: Within the, you might say, Israeli organizations, was there any particular group within this

that you had to deal with that was particularly hostile, or was it just plain a mixed bag?

KEENE: There were definitely very right-wing groups that were very hostile. Not *so* much in the government, although certainly that strain of thought was present in the Likud and some of the other far right Israeli parties. And that was the time when Begin and then Shamir, the Likud was in power. It was hard to get much out of them.

Q: How about the Israeli religious community—I think about the Orthodox. Were they sort of off to one side of everything, or were they...how did you find them?

KEENE: Well, you had the ultra-orthodox, the Hassidics, that's one group; and then you have just sort of the right-wing orthodox, and shades in between to pretty totally secular. That's a big thing in Israeli society and remains so today; there are real splits between the very right-wing religious and the more secular westernized segment of society. It was kind of a...a lot of the real right-wingers—you might get to talk to them, but they didn't want to have a *lot* to do with you. We knew a lot of Israelis; we'd go to their homes for social affairs. You could talk to a pretty broad spectrum of people. And they have a lot of organizations, too...you had this group or that group that you go call on and talk to. We got to know a lot of former officials who were in academia who really knew---well-connected people—former generals, this, that and the other thing. We'd be up at Hebrew University all the time, talking with them, too. We got around.

Q: How did you find Hebrew University? Were they trying to work as a bridge with the Arab population, or were they really representative of the sort of straight Jewish side?

KEENE: No, I think that they were... Well, there were people up there that ran the spectrum, too, but on balance, I thought it was a pretty impressive organization. They had a lot of very impressive people working there who did try to understand what was going on in the Arab sector and in the Arab world. Some of them knew a great deal and were pretty well connected.

Q: Well, right now when we've over time seen places that can really start clashes in the various holy sites, particularly Muslim holy sites. During your time were there any particular problems there?

KEENE: Oh, yes. We had a big issue over the so-called Hasmonean tunnel, Israeli archeological digs near the Western Wall that provoked protests.

Q: What was that?

KEENE: It was an ancient tunnel they were trying to excavate, but it was right next to the wall, to the Haram Es-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary, and suspicions always run high when the Israelis do that that they're trying to make a territorial grab in what has been an area that Palestinians consider administered by the waqf, for the trust, the Islamic trust. So that went on for a long time, and we had stuff like that happen all the time—occasional riots after Friday prayers, occasional shutdowns of the Temple Mount. Always an issue, but that was typical of the whole area and wasn't just an Israeli-Arab thing; you also had all the Christian groups fighting among themselves over control of the various parts of the various holy places. It was a unique place, and

you just really had to well...you got interested in it—not everybody would be, I guess, but you can get into the differences between the Greek Orthodox and the Russian Orthodox and the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Syrian Orthodox—all of those groups and their interaction. One that was very interesting was we had the white Russians and the red Russians, and Russia had no representation at that time, so they used the church members as their unofficial channel. So, it was interesting.

Q: First, let's talk about the American tourist, the strange sort of Christian tourist. Were they a problem or not?

KEENE: Generally not. I mean you're always going to have the stray citizen who gets in some kind of trouble, and you have to try to help them out--citizen services and things like that. But a lot of the Christian groups would come in fairly large, organized tour groups. They'd get on their bus and go around; we had a lot of Jewish-American groups came too, as tourists, or as part of their American-Jewish Congress sponsorship or something like that. They were generally not much trouble either. That wasn't a big issue. Well, you had the guy who thought he was the reincarnation of Jesus Christ; he'd get himself eventually in trouble. You know, the people who have psychiatric problems.

Q: Well, I went to the archives and did a--this was back in '84, so I was in the historian's office the year before I retired, and I did a paper on our consul in Jerusalem in the 1870s. The American Colony, for example, one of the cults at the time, where the leader of the Americans there...I can't think of his name--the family's still around, but he and the senior members--male members--absorbed the wives of some of the other members. I mean, there was a lot of that sort of hanky-panky going on, which often happens in cults. And then, again, we had one guy--he was earlier, who arrived, declared he was the consul, American consul, had never been approved, and then eventually converted to Judaism and disappeared into the woodwork. But the Turks accepted him as the American consul for awhile.

As a consular officer, how did you treat...I arrive in Jerusalem and decide I'm Jesus, and am wandering around declaring this and maybe putting out robes, or something

KEENE: We had a few.

Q: How did you deal with it?

KEENE: Well, it's pretty hard to deal with them until their actions become so bizarre that they trigger a reaction by the host government. Sometimes they'd go violent. I mean, they're just troubled people. If they got into some trouble, you tried to get them some help...either from their family or if they needed psychiatric help or repatriation...every situation on its own merits, I guess. We had a few.

Q: How about Congressional delegations; you must have been deluged with them.

KEENE: Absolutely. I think I had a count at one point. When I was there I think I met over 400 members one way or another.

Q: You know, this is such a political almost third rail, that I would think that ...I mean, every time that there is a presidential primary in New York state, all the candidates support moving our embassy to Jerusalem. Although we all know this is sort of a charade, I would think with politicians you couldn't talk about that.

KEENE: Well, some politicians know that, and some don't. It depends. It was usually a little different there, because we would usually split these CODELs with the embassy in Tel Aviv. They'd take them to go see the prime minister or whoever and then some of them wanted to come and talk to a few members of the Palestinian leadership and see how things were. And some of them did it but weren't too interested in spending a lot of time doing it. So we would maybe get them only for a day, and we'd host a lunch or a dinner or take them around the West Bank to call on some of the mayors or tailor a program to what they were interested in. There were a lot of them.

Q: How did you find life there?

KEENE: I loved it. It was fascinating. It was before the *intifada* (Palestinian uprising); I didn't feel a lot of danger. I never knew, but we used to say they hated each other so much they'd sort of ignore us. That turned out to be pretty much true until later on.

Q: What about immigration: were you running a fairly large visa program?

KEENE: Yes, pretty large. We had two different buildings in those days--one in the west side and one in the east, and the consular section was in the east. We had lovely buildings—old, beautiful, historic landmark-type buildings. A lot of the Israelis didn't like that because they had to go to east Jerusalem to get their consular services. But it really wasn't deep into East Jerusalem; it's not very far from the American Colony, which in those days, at least, was one of the very few sort of neutral meeting places where both sides didn't mind going at the same time. So we could have stuff there and get away with promoting dialogue a little bit.

Q: Was there a fairly active USIA (United States Information Agency) program there?

KEENE: Yes—modest, but yes. We only had a single American officer.

Q: Who was that?

KEENE: Well, Bill Cavness at first and then his successor, David Good. But that was curious, too, because the embassy also had an office in Jerusalem, staffed by another USIA officer Arthur Green. So, you had that coordination problem that you had to work out, too.

Q: Well, did you feel that you spent an awful lot of the time vetting anything that anybody...every piece of paper that you put out, or letters, or announcements, or anything else, to make sure that you weren't setting off vibrations that would come back and haunt you by showing that you were either too pro-Arab or too pro-Israeli?

KEENE: Oh, yes, for sure. It got to be second nature after a while to find out where all the land mines are. But that was part of the fun...and all the diversity and different views and trying. I mean we consciously set out to try to improve relations with the embassy and the Jewish community and the Jewish-American organizations, and the consulate was generally hated by them and mostly “biased” and “anti-Israeli.”

Q: Did you have problems of your officers being accused by newspapers in the halls of Congress as being pro-Arab and anti-Israeli?

KEENE: Yes, it happened. It wasn't too bad then. We got to work with the Arab-American groups, proactively helping them schedule appointments with our CODELs and things like that. Socializing with them, getting to know them. We got to know a lot of the Israeli press, too. That helped.

Q: How'd you find the press?

KEENE: Well, they have a right-wing press, but they have a lot of people who are pretty good.

Q: The Jerusalem Post. How is that?

KEENE: In those days it was liberal. Now it's right-wing. They had good, solid, English-speaking reporters—it was an English-language paper, and we got to know them well. That helped. They'd come to our receptions.

Q: How about the Hassidic community? They have big enclaves in New York...they used to have up in New Hampshire, too. They're a group apart.

KEENE: They're a group apart. There's a very big area in Jerusalem that's Hassidic, Mea Shearim. They are ultra-orthodox: no driving cars on Saturday, or anything like that, so if you tried to drive through that area, they'd throw stones at you. There were riots sometimes. There are some 90 separate Hassidic groups, and it's very hard to figure out all of them.

Q: Such as Lubavitcher. They consider that the messiah hasn't come yet and therefore the whole Zionist cause is a fraud.

KEENE: Yes. And there's another even more screwy group, Neturei Karta, who believe that the state of Israel is illegitimate, and they support the PLO. Really! When the PLO went to Madrid two or three Israelis of this sect went with them. And the leader of that group's an American, so he would bug us all the time. He was quite a character. He knew he was running a fraudulent operation, but...

Q: Did you feel under any particular threat, you or the consulate of bombing and other things like that?

KEENE: You know, not particularly. We had bomb threats and we had—that was the era when we were starting to tighten up on security and we had a major security upgrade program which

caused us some little concern, because we were in an historic building and had to preserve that under Israeli law and we didn't want to put ugly concrete barriers on the sidewalk out front. Kollek didn't want them either, so we had to do some nice planters out there. But I didn't really—I mean we tried to be prudent, but it wasn't something that kept me up at night, no. We felt we had a pretty good network and knew a lot about what was going on. There was violence. I know one of my very good contacts was the mayor of Nablus, and he was assassinated by the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) while I was there.

Q: What was that group?

KEENE: Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine. It was one of the...they were splintered into five or six groups; that was one of the more radical ones. Anyway...and then we had the Jewish underground to worry about, and the mayors certainly did. There was violence, but it just didn't...we just didn't seem to be major targets.

Q: Well, you left there when?

KEENE: '86. I lived in east Jerusalem. Then we had people living in east Jerusalem; we had people living in Bethlehem.

Q: Where'd you live?

KEENE: In Lazaria, which in English is Bethany, Mount of Olives, near Lazarus' tomb.

Q: Who was the consul general after Cluverius?

KEENE: Well, we had...I started with Grove, then Cluverius, and then Draper.

JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN
Deputy Political Counselor
Tel Aviv (1984-1988)

Ambassador Sullivan was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts, Georgetown and Yale Universities. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he served in the Department of State in Washington, D.C. as well as in posts abroad. His foreign posts include Mexico City, Lisbon, Tel Aviv and Havana. Mr. Sullivan served as US Ambassador to Angola from 1998 to 2001 and as Ambassador to Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2004. Ambassador Sullivan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: I have to say that Israeli politics are a very complicated kettle of fish. You were there from when to when?

SULLIVAN: The summer of 1984 until the summer of 1988. Sam Lewis was the ambassador my

first year there and then Tom Pickering my next three years. My political counselor the first year was Paul Hare who later went on to several ambassadorships and then later Roger Harrison for two years and then actually I moved up and became political counselor my fourth year there with Tom Pickering's support.

Q: When you went out there in 1984 how stood matters in Israel at that time?

SULLIVAN: Yeah well they were just having an election actually that summer and that was the point at which the previous system of Likud or Labor domination of politics was breaking down irreparably in a way that each party was subsequently only getting forty or so of the 120 seats in the Knesset and therefore were ever more dependent on small party alliances. Because in that 1984 election, Labor and Likud finished in a virtual dead-heat, neither one of them was able to form an alliance with the small parties. Instead they decided on a grand coalition and the two parties would alternate in power with Shimon Peres being prime minister the first two years and Yitzhak Shamir the Likud leader being foreign minister. Yitzhak Rabin would be defense minister the whole four years and then at the two year point Shamir and Peres changed positions. Now at the end of the day at least as far as broader issues the peace process, what the unity government amounted to was a formula for deadlock. Likud was always able to stymie Peres' ambitions to promote a peace process whether he was prime minister or foreign minister. Shamir probably didn't have much interest in advancing a peace process in any case and was certainly not going to participate in such a venture even when George Shultz came over and made a major push late in the Reagan Administration.. Shamir and Peres both distrusted each other so much on those fundamental issues that there was very little movement on peace process issues.

Q: What about the small parties like the religious parties with other parties? Were they able to throw their weight around?

SULLIVAN: Well less so than the more normal government in which either Labor or Likud used to be dependent on them because Labor and Likud had some eighty votes between them the weight of the smaller parties was less. That said, because both of the large parties were looking at the future, the coalition included, as I recall, that at least some of the religious and other small parties within the Grand Coalition continued to direct resources and benefits their way looking at the future and when they might need them again for future coalition building efforts.

Q: What was your impression of the party system? Well let's talk about the smaller parties first since you were dealing with them on a personal basis.

SULLIVAN: Well it was a system which essentially did work in a very advantageous position for small parties to get their benefits, particularly if their benefits were narrow benefits, money to fund Yeshivas, religious teaching programs, money to support their own party building in the guise of social institutions and so on. It was a situation which elsewhere in the world is rare, but small parties in Israel have great leverage. Even bearing in mind that I was in Israel at the relative low point of their leverage, the small parties still had the ability to get their way and the large parties saw it in their interest to throw substantial resources their way in the interest of having a good relationship.

Q: Well did you find that the small parties had much interest in trying to manipulate the United States or were they playing their own game and we were outside their orbit?

SULLIVAN: I think probably the less small parties I would say settler groups were in that period that I was there just beginning to cultivate in a major way U.S. political forces to try to take sides in this issue of whether or not Israel should be discouraged from or encouraged to settle in the West Bank in Gaza. Settler groups had some success in their efforts at that point. I remember Senator Jesse Helms actually came over and visited. I don't recall whether he even took a briefing from the ambassador; we certainly would have offered one. But his trip would have been paid for by a Christian interest group in the United States that had a special relationship with Jewish settler groups in Israel and the West Bank. And Helms's views were further encouraged to be very supportive on behalf of settlers; so this was a relatively new phenomenon. As far as other groups and other parties, Peace Now was beginning to emerge at that point and they had sort of some natural allies within both liberal forces in the U.S. as well as within liberal Jewish organizations but I don't think they were as active or as effective in cultivating U.S. allies.

Q: The Israeli Arab group was it at all effective or not?

SULLIVAN: Let's see, there was to some degree I recall at that point there were about seven Israeli-Arab members of the Knesset, seven or eight, somewhere in there. About four of them were Communist Party which effectively made them really ineffective. They were excluded from all security matters and, as a matter of fact, all Israeli-Arabs were excluded from knowledge of security matters and had virtually no real influence on foreign policy issues. The Labor party had several Israeli-Arabs, who had a little bit more influence. But overall at that point, you were dealing with a group that was so small that their ability to influence matters was quite small.

Q: You were there during the last year or so of Sam Lewis weren't you?

SULLIVAN: I was there his last year, yeah. My principal recollection of that period is that we were still I would say, clinging to the hope that an agreement that had been forged between Israel and Lebanon with US brokerage could somehow be maintained, even as it was breaking apart under our eyes. It had been brokered by the U.S. in about '83 in the aftermath of the '82 mess in Beirut. Israel agreed to mostly depart from Lebanon and yet be able to maintain security in south Lebanon. Sam's last year and my first year witnessed the collapse of any hope that that agreement would have any real importance in the longer run..

Q: During that period what was the status of Ariel Sharon and how did we view him?

SULLIVAN: Sharon was at least the first part of that period very much on the outs. His stature was much reduced because of the nightmare that the invasion of Lebanon had resulted in was and the internal Israeli investigations which had blamed him for the Sabra and Shatila massacre of Palestinians. He was much diminished in political stature, but in the course of my four years was rehabilitated and eventually incorporated into the coalition government in a considered relatively minor role as minister of commerce. So from being somebody who had been a major figure, he became a minor figure. His ego didn't diminish and he still came into receptions with a large retinue of people and certainly whenever I would accompany visiting Congress people to

meet with him, he certainly spoke as if he was a major figure. But I think that was probably his low point of political power and it took him some time thereafter to build his status back up.

Q: How did you find various groups, particularly Congressional groups and other ones, coming to Israel? I mean by this time this was a part of the ebb and flow of serving in Israel wasn't it?

SULLIVAN: Sure, I mean I'm not sure I can give a number but I would guess that it would probably have been maybe as many as 100 Congress people a year counting the numbers that came in groups. Others, like Congressman Steve Solarz and Senator Arlen Specter came every single year. Solarz used to ask for about 30 meetings in the course of three days and he wanted every meeting to last exactly 45 minutes, transport fifteen minutes to the next meeting and right on through his agenda. So it was a part of a very intense workload and it often involved our organizing some events for visiting members of congress in addition to me or another control officer being the embassy notetaker. It was more ambiguous if they came under private sponsorship as did Senator Helms for instance and we typically did not accompany those groups or might only have a briefing for them. Congressman Charlie Wilson also came often in that period and he also knew his way around Israel very well, had lots of very good Israeli connections, was chairman of armed services appropriations subcommittee and he basically did his own thing. Yes, we received him at the airport and asked him if there was anything he wanted. He always came on a military plane and was accompanied by a military assistant but he didn't ask much from the embassy and preferred all of this meetings private. But I or someone from the embassy did accompany if there was a ministerial level meeting and the Ambassador would accompany to a meeting with the Prime Minister.

So everybody would want to see Rabin as defense minister and then the prime minister and the foreign minister Shamir and Peres and those were interesting and good meetings. The American Congress people were there because it was important for them and their constituents and their supporters that they go. Probably only a few of them were critical of Israeli ever in meetings, there were a handful that were, such as David Bonior and Howard Wolpe, but most members tended to be unreservedly supportive, even in the midst of the first "Intifada". Many Israeli politicians sought to use those meetings in order to encourage more Congressional support. I always had great admiration for Rabin because he was very much a straight-shooter even though the first "Intifada" was starting at that time. He used to downplay the threat of that "Intifada" saying that it was a tactical problem that posed no threat to the existence of Israel. His assessment at that time was that the existential threat for Israel was in the East, Syria and Iraq. If they were to combine, this could be an existential threat and that was what Israel should concern itself with most. He would say this to some of the Congress people who were prepared to view every single threat as an existential threat to Israel, but Rabin was not playing to that audience, he was calling it straight.

Q: Great, okay well I've got to go now but I would like to pick this up really with the Pickering time.

SULLIVAN: Okay yeah there are some interesting things there. I was there in the Jonathan Pollard...

Q: So we are talking with Joe Sullivan and we are in 1980...

SULLIVAN: Well say 1985 in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Q: Yeah. So you had an Israeli government which was sort of in...

SULLIVAN: A unity government with both Labor and Likud 50 percent each and alternating the prime minister positions but, in fact, at least on peace process issues it became a formula for stalemate. The U.S. made a number of efforts, I would guess most notably in 1987 and 1988 when Secretary of State Shultz made a major visit out and tried to push the process forward. In fact, by that point, Shamir was the Likud Party's, Yitzhak Shamir was prime minister and he essentially wasn't interested; so things did not advance.

Q: Well Shultz came out full of, what I gather, full of drive and really going to do it. You had our ambassador in Syria, his name escapes me right now, Bob... I want to say Bob Paganelli but anyway saying Assad wasn't going to do anything, and from what I gather, with Shamir. What caused Shultz to come out into a no win situation?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, well I mean there is a sort of a continuing impulse on the part of the American administrations to do something; to press, to do whatever is possible, because they recognized that it was a corrosive situation to have no peace process underway. If I recall correctly the Palestinian first Intifada had begun in 1986 or '87 so that really was, I think, one of the factors providing some impulse. In addition, by then Labor Party leader Shimon Peres had become foreign minister and he was very anxious for the U.S. to move and so he was encouraging the U.S. to make an effort. Yet, of course, without Likud being in agreement there was no prospect that it would move. Likud and Shamir were usually, let's say, careful enough not to say no, they would just not say yes. So at the end of the day as I recall Shultz only came once. He had pre-missions come out with various members of peace party planning process that had come out and done pre-meetings, but at the end of the day Shamir was not going to agree so the U.S. peace process faded from the scene and I don't think Shultz ever made a second serious trip out, at least not on that subject.

Now Syria was not really involved in the Palestinian process at that stage because they really weren't a player. It would have been the Palestinians and some lingering efforts to involve Jordan in an agreement on the Palestinians. There had been some efforts to have them, in fact, be the spokesperson for the Palestinians but I think Palestinians were increasingly clear that they didn't want the Jordanians as their front person and, therefore, any effort needed to have a Palestinian lead. Shimon Peres, in particular, retained some hopes of having the Jordanians out front. Also, Likud in particular within the Israeli government was not going to take the encouraging facilitative actions that Shultz was presenting as necessary in order to move forward.

Q: Well at the embassy had we written off or were we just going through the motions?

SULLIVAN: Well you know Tom Pickering is a terrific person and certainly the best ambassador I've ever had. But he is a very enthusiastic and positive person who I think never

would have discouraged anybody. I've seen him in conversations with Israelis who can be extremely tough and basically say a flat no and Tom would always say, "Well how about this and can't we work it this way, can't we do this." So I believe Tom was encouraging and at least making the effort. Yeah, probably the embassy was being at least positive, we should try and the secretary had a full peace process staff which had some of the usual actors, including Aaron Miller and Dan Kurtzer.

Another interesting time was when Vice President Bush made a major trip out to the region in '87, as I recall. It clearly was a pre-Presidential trip in order to position himself as a foreign policy expert, which he was to a substantial degree. Yet he had not had previously, I think, terrific relationships with the Israelis so that trip was among other things to burnish his credentials in all the countries of the region and most importantly in the U.S. I don't think he took major out front positions, it was a fact-finding trip, it was a make contact trip and from his point of view went well. I happened to be the control officer for that visit. It's always a bit of adventure dealing with the staff because by that point the White House had begun to use advance parties who had no international experience. In many cases, they were the people who had advanced previous U.S. campaign trips and were rewarded with advancing an international trip. That was, in this case, particularly confusing because one advance group came out and worked with the embassy over several days with the embassy always presenting ideas of things that can be done, how they can be done. This advance group had their own ideas but we tried to make things work in a practical fashion. After we worked through maybe a three or four day visit of advance party number one, lo and behold about a week later comes advance party number two that had clearly never consulted with advance party number one, had a totally different agenda and we had to do it all over again. So I think that's the practice that as far as I know has continued at least did continue for the next ten or dozen years through both political parties in the White House but made things that much more complicated for an embassy that's trying to work a visit.

I recall one meeting with the Vice President's advance party, Embassy representatives and the Israeli Protocol and Knesset officials over arrangements for Bush's principal speech at the Israeli Knesset. All seemed to be going well until the Vice President's advance party proposed removing the Knesset podium's national Menorah seal to be replaced by a Vice Presidential seal. So I told him, "No, I don't think you can do that." He still was very insistent so I said, "If you still want to talk about it, raise it, but you will get a very strong reaction here in the Knesset and they'll want to maintain their symbol of their state. Eventually it got worked out and the Knesset seal stayed on the podium, but it reflects the naivety of some of the people that do the advance work.

Let's see I guess the one other memorable feature was the Jonathan Pollard spy scandal in which he was, of course, arrested in the United States.

Q: Was this during your time he was arrested?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I can't remember in late 1985 and into 1986.

Q: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: He was arrested and the Israelis, of course, were intimately involved and at quite high levels. A senior Israeli intelligence figure had orchestrated the espionage and utilized as one of the people who made contacts with Pollard an Israeli air force hero of the bombing of the nuclear reactor in Baghdad. The Israelis clearly seduced Pollard with that and with money; he became an agent and delivered materials to the Israeli Government.

Now the period where the embassy got involved was after Pollard's arrest when the Embassy and the US pressed the Israeli's to cooperate in the investigation and prosecution. The Israelis cooperated to a certain degree in identifying individuals who might have been involved, I think out of embarrassment and fear of its effect on relations with the US. There was a team sent out that included State Department then Legal Adviser Abe Sofaer, Justice Department officials and Joseph diGenova from the U.S. attorney's office prosecuting the case. We had a half a dozen meetings typically starting at about 11:00 p.m. in Jerusalem. We would go through three or four hours in stages, they later brought out some of the individuals who had been involved and those individuals answered questions from our side. So there was some degree of cooperation.

Now in a situation like that about how it had happened, what degree of involvement there was, the prosecution always wants more information and I think at a certain point the Israelis decided they had provided enough and were not interested in cooperating any further. That may have already been after the first set of visits I don't recall precisely but it was a very tense period in the relationship. The Secretary of Defense, at the time I recall, Caspar Weinberger was particularly upset and it cost Israel a certain degree of collaboration from the U.S. for at least a period, until there was a decision made, notwithstanding this case, that it was in our interest to resume most levels of cooperation with Israel.

Q: I'm not overly familiar with this but my understanding on the Pollard case is that Pollard had been tasked by his Israeli masters to supply on an urgent basis naval intelligence concerning the location of our nuclear launching submarines? I read this in an article by Seymour Hirsch of the New York Times.

If that's true the only conclusion one can make is that this was being passed on to the Soviets because the Israelis couldn't give a damn where our launching submarines were but the Soviets did. The Israeli's were going through a lot of negotiations to get people out of the Soviet Union at the time. Was this at all a subject that was considered by or batted around the embassy at all?

SULLIVAN: I don't recall that specific information and I don't recall us getting into the specific details of the information provided and certainly not in the meetings with the Israelis that I was part of.

Q: I have to look on the Internet to see a little more because if the information he was supplying was, as I said, of our nuclear stuff that has horrific connotations.

SULLIVAN: I think the understanding at the time, unless there was other information I wasn't aware of or that became known later, was that most of the information he was seeking was information about capabilities of their potential enemies and potential threats to them. We always

had a certain degree of sharing with Israel, but Israel always presumed that we didn't share everything so they were always anxious to get information in other ways to supplement whatever we did provide.

Q: It's an interesting case. I know the American military, particularly in the higher reaches, have been and continue to be absolutely adamant about not releasing Pollard. So there has to be something more than just a garden variety spy, I would think.

SULLIVAN: I don't know the answer to that.

Q: During the Pickering time what was your piece of the action?

SULLIVAN: Well, I continued to be the deputy political counselor for the first two years he was there; my second and third years there, and I was principally focused primarily on internal political issues, which in Israel always involved a lot of foreign policy and a fair bit on relations with the U.S. as well. So I continued to follow internal Israeli politics, trying to interpret it as well as I could, try to establish good relationships with a full range of Israeli actors and seeking to get a little bit of advance information on what was likely to happen in the local scene and how it might affect us. This applied to specific issues we were working on the peace process, what were the effects of the Intifada, as well as coalition politics. Then finally, my fourth year there, I became political counselor so I had a broader sense of responsibilities and less specifically internal as somebody else took over most of that portfolio.

Q: Well as you were looking at internal politics were you sensing a significant change in the demographics of Israeli population and of politics; in other words as more and more people came out of the Soviet Union the less sort of the old European Socialist side of things, the Labor people were losing power in the Likud which is more Orthodox group was gaining. Was that happening?

SULLIVAN: I would agree with most of that happening with the exception of the impact of the Russians immigration. While Russian immigration was just beginning to increase, it really increased much more after the collapse of the Soviet Union.. With that said, the old European Socialist traditions, which were most notable within the Labor Party from Ben-Gurion on, were fading. The Kibbutz movement was less and less relevant, the Histadrut the Labor organization was less relevant and increasingly large percentages of Israeli's were born in Israel, had parents born in Israel and a diminishing percentage traced their origins back to the Pale of Settlement in Eastern Europe. More Israelis had origins from the Middle East and North Africa; they were Sephardim rather than Ashkenazim and they had tougher impulses toward Arabs and Arab states. So some of the traditions that Labor had led that gave it predominance for Israel's first forty years were becoming increasingly less relevant.

Q: Did we see this as a plus or minus?

SULLIVAN: Well it was a minus to the degree that we were encouraging a peace process. The demographic changes made the environment more difficult for a peace process. Otherwise it was mostly Israel's own business and we had to adjust as well and deal with people who were not

like those we knew before. If you think of somebody like the former foreign minister for many years Abba Eban, he was no longer a relevant figure. Even though he was in the Knesset, we had to focus on these people who were born in Morocco, born in Iraq or sons and daughters of people born there. We adjusted, we made contact and particularly the '80s, fewer of them spoke English so it was important to have Hebrew. Actually, Tom Pickering to his credit learned Hebrew in a year basically in an hour a day in the morning drawing upon some old Arabic that he had learned while he was in Jordan. I don't know anybody who in a year could learn enough Hebrew to function and he did and was giving speeches after a year there. That was his mark of incredible language aptitude.

Q: For the deputy political counselor and the counselor how important or how heavy was the hand of the American Jewish community, AIPAC, the Congressional lobby and all in your dealings or was this just part of the underbrush?

SULLIVAN: No, there are issues that it affects. One that it affected I would argue was the embassy itself, which was in a renovated old hotel right on a main street with a parking garage underneath us. We needed to improve security in that embassy and at the point I was there, we had an option on a property that was probably six or seven miles up the road in the direction of Herzliya that we could have gotten and secured quite a large perimeter without a parking garage underneath. It would have been our option to do with what we wished. Well at the same time the Congress, in the lead up to U.S. elections, was in its regular procedure of trying at least passing some resolution that the American Embassy must move itself to Jerusalem, notwithstanding any potential impact on US ability to promote a peace process. Even though the vast majority of Congress people, in private, would not have thought this was a great idea at that moment but they would pass the resolution to that effect. In any case, that year it was done in the form of an appropriation restriction and the appropriation legislation stated that the U.S. should not extend any funds to build an embassy in Tel Aviv, but should instead spend any embassy construction funds in Jerusalem.

Well, Pickering because he was such a good negotiator and he had contacts and he could be persuasive, wound up being instrumental in having the resolution watered down so that it instead said, "The U.S. government should both direct its efforts towards building an embassy in Jerusalem but could also improve a temporary facility in Tel Aviv." So in effect, we might have been able to go ahead but then the Israelis, of course, had their own interests and the mayor of Tel Aviv did not want us that far out of town and he intervened to block it. Those were realities and we had to deal with them.

It was true on a broader and more political front that Congress people visited all the time and sometimes they came on Congressional funds and sometimes they came sponsored by one of a number of usually American Jewish groups. As I mentioned in one of our previous conversations, even some fundamentalist Christian groups took an interest in settlement on the West Bank based on Jews' biblical links to West Bank land and began to sponsor some conservative Republican visits including those of Jesse Helms. With many of the, if I could call them mainstream American Jewish groups, we had good relations with their representatives in Israel and we would work together on congressional visits that they were sponsoring; the embassy would be involved in congressional meetings with official Israelis. These groups would

take congressmen on other portions of the visit themselves but it was reasonably amicable. There were limitations on that; the embassy would not go into, for instance, the Golan Heights with a Congressional delegation and we wouldn't travel with the Israeli government into the West Bank and we would discourage Congress people from doing it. But Congress members would often follow their own counsel. If there were groups that were very interested in perpetuating Israeli control over the Golan Heights and the West Bank these groups would encourage such visits strongly and try to make sure it became a major feature of the visit. Some elements of the Israeli government would be similarly inclined and push strongly for congressional visitors to make the Golan and the West Bank major component of the visit.

Q: At that time, how did reporting come from Gaza and the West Bank?

SULLIVAN: Historically, as you know, from your earlier interviews, there were often fire fights between the consulate in Jerusalem and the embassy in Tel Aviv. That was not the case in most of my time there; I think Maury Draper was consul general for a while and then later Wat Cluverius. In both those cases, there was an amicable relationship with the embassy so there wasn't the sniping that there sometimes has been, at least not in public. We wouldn't send dueling cables in with diametrically opposed views but we would have natural differences because we had different interlocutors and different perspectives but we would try to talk to each other and at least understand the other perspective before what we put on paper. Fundamentally though in the 1980's reporting on the West Bank was done by ConGen Jerusalem and that on Gaza by Embassy Tel Aviv.

Q: Is there anything particular going on either in Gaza or the West Bank? I mean the Intifada started then, didn't it?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: How did we view it at the time?

SULLIVAN: Well, it was I guess I would say that we viewed it with a lot of concern. We raised questions about whether the response was disproportionate because it was mostly stones against rubber bullets and eventually Washington did take public positions but it usually ended in that famous phrase lamenting the cycle of violence. We encouraged both sides to step back from actions which only inflamed the cycle of violence. So U.S. government positions were inconclusive at the end of the day.

Q: Did you find that in your reporting you had to be careful of circumspect or something? So often the story has been over the decades whatever is reported from the embassy usually ends up on a Congressman's desk before it hits the appropriate desk in the State Department.

SULLIVAN: Yes and I recall specifically with respect to the Intifada in one case, an embassy report referred to repressive Israeli actions. That caused something of a firestorm in certain circles of the Department of State where there was angst that this word was used. So we were, in effect, told to be very careful on how we dealt with the Intifada on paper.

Q: In a way as a political reporting officer was it kind of fun to be playing this somatic game in a so-called friendly state where your controlled interest was really very circumscribed by political forces?

SULLIVAN: I don't know if I would call it fun; you are being facetious; it was a bit frustrating. You see what you see and you know facts as you know them and it was Rabin as defense minister who had control of this Israeli reaction. As I said in my previous day's interview, I think he was basically an honorable man, somebody who was tough and tough minded. His whole life had been shaped by conflict but he wasn't someone who took pleasure in conflict or war. He felt that if people were provoking you you needed to be tough with them or else they would further provoke you. That said there were aspects of that reaction which were oppressive and which were cruel. They did go overboard sometimes and U.S. reaction to these excesses could help moderate the Israeli response. I think from the American point of view to the degree we had universal concerns with human rights and universal principals it was our role to make it clear to the Israelis that excessive response was something that we disapproved of. I don't think we were always clear at sending that message.

Q: Well you left there when?

SULLIVAN: In the summer of 1988.

Q: As you left in your mind whither Israel?

SULLIVAN: In order to be in our business and probably to be in the Middle East, one has to try to retain elements of optimism. There was at that point a fellow with whom Congressman Steve Solarz used to meet named Yehoshafat Harkabi, who had previously been chief of Israeli military intelligence and later an academic. Harkabi used to make an argument, which I think Rabin shared and Rabin probably followed when he signed on a few years later to the Oslo Accords. It was essentially that Israel and Palestinians had to come to an agreement, not because they loved one another, not because it was in keeping with either Israeli dreams or Palestinian dreams of what the future should be, but because the only way that Israel could preserve itself as both a democratic state and a Jewish state was by making an accommodation with the Palestinian inhabitants of the region that involved giving up territory. So I think Rabin essentially accepted that as well and I hoped it would be true as we've seen both before and after the Oslo accords, the devil is in the implementation and even when you have a broad-scale agreement I would say the implementation on both sides subsequently caused all kinds of turmoil and problems that have bedeviled the process subsequently.

So I remained hopeful in an eventual peace agreement, but without taking sufficient account of how difficult it would be; I certainly wasn't hopeful in the short term because I had no belief that Likud or Shamir would make serious compromises. Shamir later went on to become prime minister in his own right and was there at the end of the Gulf War to resist mightily the efforts of Bush and Baker to have an international peace conference. But basically they pushed him very hard, he went along but eventually was defeated and Rabin was more interested in a peace process when he became prime minister.

That said Israel is a tough place and a tough place to do business. I like the place, I like Israel, I like Israelis as tough as they are, but it's a difficult place and I wound up going there ten years later that we will come to later in a period where I was dealing with the Israel-Lebanon monitoring group.

I should add that Israel was a very intense place to live and to work. Israelis are very intense about almost everything and the pace of work was very intense with us working long days almost every day with many official dinners and receptions at night. So while it was a reasonably pleasant environment for my family, I was not at home as much as I would have liked.

JAMES E. TAYLOR
Political/Military Officer
Tel Aviv (1984-1988)

James E. Taylor was born in Oklahoma in 1938. He graduated from the University of Southern California in 1960. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1961-1965 and entered the Foreign Service in 1965. His career included positions in Iran, Germany, the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, and Israel. Mr. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 5, 1995.

Q: You left there when?

TAYLOR: In the summer of 1984.

Q: And went where?

TAYLOR: To Tel Aviv.

Q: Was this just a natural outflow assignment?

TAYLOR: Yes, I think it fit in pretty well with what I had been doing in PM and in State for three years and it was time to go overseas again. I knew the job was coming open, so I bid for it. Apparently it was a very popular job at the time, a very interesting kind of thing. It was one of the few times I ever asked anyone to put in a good word for me. I asked Arnie Raphel to call Sam Lewis, our ambassador in Tel Aviv, and put in a good word for me. So, it worked out and I was given the assignment.

Q: Did your wife have a tandem assignment?

TAYLOR: That was the first time she had to take leave without pay which she did for the first year. She had been to Israel before on a field trip from Afghanistan to visit the American Center and see how the operations there were going, and was so excited about it because she thought it was a place worth visiting. It was new to us, we hadn't been there before. But, there was no job until the following spring when something came open. That was the first time we had to take a

break in service as a tandem couple. We had been treated pretty well by the personnel departments of both agencies.

So, I got there and didn't have any overlap with my predecessors, and found out that one of the major elements of my work was Lebanon. I had all of the political/military duties and liaising with the IDF. Fortunately the IDF headquarters is in Tel Aviv, whereas the Foreign Ministry is up in Jerusalem with all the other ministries. So, the other guys in the political section who dealt mostly with the Foreign Ministry had to make that drive back and forth to Jerusalem all the time. This had been done because of security concerns. The Israelis wanted to put the IDF as far from the borders as possible and put them in Tel Aviv rather than up in Jerusalem.

Q: You were in Tel Aviv from when to when?

TAYLOR: From 1984-88, four years in that job in Tel Aviv.

On the Lebanon front, which we discussed earlier from the Washington point of view, the policy and operation was being controlled by the IDF in Tel Aviv and not by the Foreign Ministry, so it became with my particular portfolio a natural to handle that, because the Israeli liaison office, vis-a-vis Lebanon, was housed in the IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv. The senior Israeli there was a fellow by the name of Uri Lubrani, who was in the Foreign Ministry most of his career but then went over to the MOD, Ministry of Defense, to handle the Lebanon policy questions. I have seen him on television a couple of times recently as sort of the main representative in negotiations with the other countries in terms of the peace process. At least he was for a couple of years back in the early nineties.

So, we would go over any time anything came up on Lebanon or we just wanted to hear the Israeli explanation of their policy and what was going on in Lebanon. Usually, the political counselor and I would go over to his office and have him talk for an hour or so and I would write up a reporting cable and send it off to the region and the Department.

You mentioned earlier the question of whether there was hostility from our colleagues around the region. At one point, I forget exactly when, I was back here or something, I heard guys in our embassy in Beirut were constantly incensed when they would get a reporting cable of our meetings with Lubrani and his explanations of why IDF was in Lebanon and IDF support for what they called the Army of South Lebanon, which was a force created by the Israelis of former Lebanese military or militia. It was an Israeli supported and supplied organization that was to control what they considered a security zone, about 20 kilometers north of the Lebanese/Israeli border. This particular army would be responsible for maintaining security and preventing rocket firings and infiltration and things like that. We would report this stating this is what the Israelis are doing and this is what they are saying their policy is. Our colleagues in Beirut were constantly incensed by these reporting cables on the grounds that we, the American embassy in Tel Aviv, should be pounding the table telling them to do this and to do that. I could never figure out why they would get emotionally angry at us because obviously we are not going to have any influence at all in Israeli's policy in Lebanon. We could make demarches at any particular level, but they knew what our policy was and for us to tell Lubrani that he should rein in the IDF would

have been totally fruitless. He wouldn't have thrown us out of the office, he was too polite to do that.

Some of the more interesting reports were when Lubrani and his small entourage, there were only two guys in the office, would have come back from a trip up to Lebanon and South Lebanon and actually gone in and talked to people. If we happened to get lucky and time our request to visit him for a read out soon after his return from such a trip, that was when the visits were the most useful and the most interesting.

Q: I take it you were not allowed to go into Lebanon?

TAYLOR: No.

One particular funny story. When Ambassador Lewis left and Ambassador Pickering took over in 1986, he, of course, requested an IDF orientation tour of some of their bases in the south, in the Sinai and the West Bank and eventually up north. They agreed they would do all this, they were quite happy to fly him up in a helicopter and show him this and that. So, on one of these trips to the north, the Defense Attaché and I went along because we knew all of the guys on the Israeli side, and landed at a base here, had lunch there, got briefings, got to look in the helicopter at all the topography, flying over the Golan Heights and shown why they were such a strategic concern. At one point we landed very near a kibbutz which I knew was right on the border with Lebanon. We all piled into some jeeps and other kinds of trucks and started heading north. They wanted to show us a fire base that they had established up north to operate against the terrorists. It was a fire base as well as an electronic monitoring unit used to monitor the border fence against infiltrators. Well, we went through the border fence on the ground to get to this place and it was obvious that we were in Lebanon. I am paraphrasing it now, but it was very funny. Pickering said to his host at that particular point, "I won't even ask where we are." And, they all laughed because they knew we were not supposed to be in Lebanon. Pickering didn't seem to care very much, he was such a hard charging guy he wanted to see this damn post. He wanted to get educated, so we just went on up.

No, but officially we were not supposed to be there. That was the job of our guys in Beirut, but they, of course, would not come down to the area controlled by the Israelis or the puppet army of Lebanese created by the Israelis.

Q: Sam Lewis was there for the first two years?

TAYLOR: I think for only one year until 1985 and then I had three years under Pickering.

Q: How did you find Sam Lewis as far as how he dealt with things? He had been there a very long time.

TAYLOR: He was there eight years all together, an extremely long time.

Q: What was the feeling you had gathered? Had he gone native?

TAYLOR: First of all he was extremely knowledgeable about Israel, the affairs of Israel and what had happened in the peace process of Camp David, which was a long and detailed negotiation. He had an institutional memory that was extremely valuable and knew the society, knew people in every segment of society. When my wife eventually became a cultural attaché, he knew a lot of people in that field. He knew a lot of the generals in my field and especially the politicians. His real strength, I think, was his contacts and his knowledge of the political workings of the Knesset and all of the myriad political parties they have. One guy could become a political party. He had developed a whole network of contacts and was extremely good at it. I, by no means, had the impression that he had gone native. I found him willing to say that some of these people are just so loony that they have no concept of what it is to be a sophisticated political leader, that they, for example, were so obsessed with keeping every inch of conquered territory from the 1967 war that they wouldn't listen to reason, couldn't place anything above the interest of keeping that land, etc. I would not consider his being pro-Israel in any sense of being unbalanced in his view. In fact, as I said, I heard him make any number of presentations where he was critical of the Israeli policy because they were this, or that. He was not an easy guy to work for. He was a crusty guy who knew what he wanted and was determined to get it out of the staff and could be very demanding on many occasions. He had tremendous contacts with Members of Congress because the visits by CODELS (Congressional visits) added to the work load to an inordinate degree. They were constantly coming and in 95 percent of the cases political officers were made control officers for these CODELS. Once in a while a econ officer would get one because the interest might be finance or trade.

We would also have Executive Branch visits dealing with negotiations of various kinds. But, I think Sam Lewis had contacts that went back so far and so deep that he was really an asset to the US government.

Q: How about Tom Pickering?

TAYLOR: Well, he is obviously one of the most successful Foreign Service Officers in history. I think he went from being a JOT to being an ambassador because he has been ambassador six or eight times, or something like that, and the guy is not that old. So, he had to start a long time back. He is a brilliant guy and has a brilliant mind. He seems to be an absolute sponge on information and just soaks it up on whatever the issue is and has an energy level that really is remarkable. He was known to get up about 5:00 and start Hebrew lessons at 6:00, or something like that. He would be at the embassy by 7:30 or 8:00. Be up in Jerusalem for a meeting at 8:00, breakfast with so and so. That became a favorite tool for everybody in the embassy. If your schedule permitted you would have breakfast in one of the hotels and write up your report sometime during the day. But he would do that. It became obvious that he over scheduled himself. He would have a daily schedule down to a 15 minute meeting here and a 20 minute meeting up there and would be up and back throughout the day, with dinner at such and such a place and coffee and dessert, etc. This would go on day, after day, after day. He was what we would call a type A personality.

But, by and large, as far as I could tell, his operating technique was to reserve a few major issues for himself and delegate virtually everything else to the DCM and the counselors of the various sections. He did not need to sign off on a lot of reporting cables which I thought were policy

oriented reporting cables or analyses of certain issues. Some of these reports we included in the so-called Post Reporting Plan, your annual plan for the embassy reporting, so these were think pieces. He didn't have to sign off on those. I think he is the first ambassador that I ever met who didn't insist that all of these analytical kinds of policy oriented reports had to go through him. He delegated a lot. According to the political counselor who I worked for for two years, Roger Harrison, who eventually became Ambassador to Jordan...one day we were going through some of this feedback from the front office and Pickering had written something on one of these think pieces like "Good show" or "Nice job." Harrison said, "God, that is the first time I have seen anything like that in months." So, I guess, the feedback from Pickering to his senior staff was limited. He would have his daily staff meetings, but in many cases wouldn't attend them. He would ask the DCM to take care of them.

Q: Who was the DCM?

TAYLOR: There were two in my four years. Bob Flatin was the first one, who became Ambassador to Burundi, I think. Art Hughes was the second one, and I think he is still active. He became Ambassador to Yemen.

So, that was Pickering's style. There wasn't a whole lot of interplay between Pickering and the members of the staff, unless you were dealing with him on a schedule for a CODEL or something like that. He used you for specific missions, if you will, but on a day-to-day basis I could go for a week or two without ever having an exchange with him on anything. I detected he spent a lot of time on those issues that he felt were important to him in his particular portfolio and left a lot of the other kind of reporting to the section chiefs. But, he is a remarkable person and I think obviously the Foreign Service has recognized that given his meteoric career.

Q: You mentioned that the political officers, which you were one, dealt the Congressional visit a lot. Could you tell me what your impression was of the average Congressional delegation?

TAYLOR: First of all, as I said, there were so many of them. It was a dreadfully difficult workload to add that responsibility to what we were doing normally at a busy embassy like that. They would either be one person or a CODEL of 20. Senators usually came two or three and Congressman in much larger groups. I think I must have met 30 to 40 senators alone in that four year period and even more House members. They would be coming and asking very much the same questions. In most cases I felt they were not there on any real fact finding mission. They were there basically for domestic political reasons. They had to be seen visiting Israel because their particular constituency had a large Jewish vote. There was nothing unusual in that, it just happened to be that there were so many of them that felt that need to come out there.

One of the most notorious is Representative Charlie Wilson from Texas who probably doesn't have very many Jewish votes in his district, but he was notorious in the sense that he had girlfriends in Israel that he wanted to see. Of course, when he came it made it an easy CODEL because all you did was meet him at the airport with a car and a driver and he would take off to his various girlfriends. There would be no program. Then he would contact us when he was scheduled to depart to make sure he had the VIP treatment on his departure. Charlie Wilson was a real character. He is retiring now.

My overall impression of our Congressional leadership in Washington is not a very high one. There were members who were very, very shallow in their intellect and character and not too terribly deep in what they were thinking about most of the time. There were just a few who, in my opinion, really could be called exceptional individuals or political leaders. That is just a few, not very many. The Senators seemed to be more self-absorbed than the House members. I suppose that is because they considered themselves a member of an exclusive club. The extent of the arrogance toward control officers like me and other members of the embassy staff varied, but by and large it was fairly high. They considered us nothing but bag carriers and in many cases were extremely rude to me, and in exchanging notes with my other colleagues, it was not directed to me exclusively, it was the way they treated everybody. And on a couple of occasions I saw that treatment given to Tom Pickering, which I thought was, you know, he was a fairly senior guy, and for a Senator, no matter how high he might be...I mean, this is our representative to this country and he shouldn't be treated like they do me and my colleagues. But, Pickering on these occasions didn't react the way I felt he could have reacted given his particular status.

But, I would say the responsibility for handling CODELs was probably the worst aspect of that assignment to Tel Aviv. If we could have gotten rid of that it would have made the four years a much more pleasant stay. But, that is a fact of life. In the press recently there was a story about Senator Arlen Specter going out there and insisting on this and insisting on that and the infamous story of getting a squash partner and a place to play up in Jerusalem while he was there. I had Specter and that is exactly what he asked me to do, and, of course, I did it. Nothing changes.

One Senator from the State of Washington probably made the most positive impression as a human being and who didn't know the region very well, he was a first term Senator, and he wanted to learn about the area. So he had a broad program of various ministers to meet to get briefed and with some of the politicians up in the Knesset. He was serious minded. A very nice guy. He was all by himself except for a couple of staffers, so he didn't have any Senatorial colleagues with him and would listen when I gave him a briefing on who he was going to meet and what the issues would be, and maybe you would like to ask a couple of questions on this, that kind of approach. He resigned after one term. He said the Senate and Capitol Hill was a snake pit and he didn't want anything to do with it. So, I guess he was too nice. That was too bad, I thought we lost a good politician.

Q: What was your impression of the Israeli military officer corps? You were dealing with generals, etc.

TAYLOR: Extremely motivated. They sacrifice a lot by choosing to make the military a career. The pay is dreadful, very, very limited pay. Housing facilities are not very good. Everybody has to do military service at the age of 18. It is a universal approach. They stay three years and then at the end of this time you can get out and then you are a reservist until the age of 45 and yearly have to do a month's active service. That is a tremendous strain on the society to have to uproot everybody for an entire month every year. It costs that economy and society a great deal. Then, if you decide early on that you want to stay and become an officer and make it a career, then you know what sacrifices you are going to have to make. But, they are very highly motivated and highly skilled.

The elite, the cream of the entire IDF and the society as a whole, are your fighter pilots. Those are the guys who are the best trained, the best skilled and the most highly sought after guys to become fighter pilots. If you can become a fighter pilot, in the Israeli society you are on a higher plane, just above everybody else. That is more or less true of the Air Force in general. The Air Force is a very small organization, very elite minded and very highly motivated. So, even if you can't become a fighter pilot, if you can become a pilot of any kind that puts you in a category of its own. Then, further down the prestige ranks are your electronic people and other kinds of highly trained technicians in the Air Force. So, becoming the commander of the Israeli Air Force is quite an accomplishment for anyone. The ones I met and dealt with were really quite impressive guys. They were pilots early in their career and now at 45 or so were the commanders.

The ground forces are much, much larger and they have a lot of armored units and probably in the Western sense, I have heard this from our attaché guys, they are top heavy in terms of armor, but they feel that is the one way they maximize their limited man power by trying to maximize the firing power of each individual. So the armored units within the ground units are elites and they pick the best people coming out of the draft and assign them to the armored units.

And then you get further down, the artillery, that is a little less skilled. The infantry is probably the least skilled, and then you have your support units, usually staffed by your draftees. The Air Force is totally career, you have to enlist in it. The conscripts all go to the army.

Third on the list is the Navy which is extremely small, just a coastal patrol responsibility, and that, again, is a volunteer force, an all career force. If you go into the Navy that means you want to be in the Navy and make it a career. But, it doesn't have much clout politically, and doesn't get much of the Israeli budget and is constantly scraping for money. Naval installations are pretty poor in places. They don't even have a red carpet to give red carpet treatment for visitors, etc. It is kind of the runt of the litter, I would say. The guys in it are quite happy moving up and down the coast in their small patrol boats. They would come along beaches around Tel Aviv once in a while and you could see the guys with the binoculars looking at the girls on the beaches.

Q: Were you getting any impression from the military and the civilian population about Sharon and his reputation at the time you were there?

TAYLOR: By the time I got there he had resigned from the Ministry of Defense under real pressure because he was the one who was considered the architect of the Lebanon adventure and that had gone sour in so many ways that he had been sort of forced out. Begin had resigned in 1982 and Yitzhak Shamir had taken over and there had been elections just before I got there in 1984. It wasn't a majority for either the conservatives or labor party, so they formed a joint government called the National Unity government. Sharon was not in it. He had won a seat in the Knesset but he was not a member of that particular first government. He did eventually become a minister when the prime ministership switched from Peres to Shamir.

I remember taking a CODEL to meet Sharon. I think he was one of the minor ministers, minister of health, or something like that, but was no longer involved in the security forces, other than the

fact that he was a former minister of defense and therefore had influence in the private circles of the government. The general view of him was that he was extremely right wing and very hard nosed, bull headed, if you will, individual and was, in effect, a real menace to any thoughts of negotiating peace of any kind. He became one of the leaders of the very right wing anti-negotiation bloc within the Knesset. Most of the people I knew and who were willing...well all of the civilians were willing to talk politics all of the time constantly, the military wouldn't participate in political discussions unless you got to be a very good friend...therefore, the ones we tended to gravitate towards were members of the middle or leftist liberal kind of viewpoint, and they thought he was a very danger and had very little respect for him. They thought, obviously that he was a hero in 1967 and 1973, in those two wars, but they blamed him personally for a lot of the problems caused by the Lebanon thing and there were still casualties, every week more and more casualties from the Lebanese adventure. So, the people I knew best didn't have a lot of regard for him, but they knew that he had a lot of influence in the Knesset and that he might be able to exert that influence at some point. I guess he has been eclipsed by Benjamin Netanyahu, the current leader of the opposition. I don't know what happened to Sharon, maybe he is just too old and they want to move along to another generation of leadership.

Q: You talked before about the pressures of living in Israel, can you talk a little about the social side for you and your wife of being American representatives in this highly political, highly charged small town?

TAYLOR: Well, in the general sense social life was extremely busy. The Israelis loved to go to parties all the time...well, not just parties, but to go places and stop by and visit, go to theaters, etc. So, there was constant contact with Israelis willing to talk. A reticent Israeli is an oxymoron. They are certainly willing to offer their views, opinions and prejudices, if you will, at all times. So, we had invitations four or five times a week. A night out was the norm, except Friday night, of course, when all entertaining closed down. Although, some of our really liberal friends would be willing to come over on a Friday night without any problem.

Q: Did you find that you had to get out of the country, too?

TAYLOR: We would have liked to more than we did, but nobody in the embassy could get away as frequently as every three months. But, yes, by the time seven or eight months rolled around you were in such a frazzled state that you had to go somewhere to depressurize. TWA served Tel Aviv and we had an Israeli local employee who was sort of the liaison at the airport, the guy who met and greeted and made arrival plans for various people. He was so good at his job and had such good relations with the TWA people that whenever an embassy person would be traveling to Europe or to the United States, you would probably get first class all the way. The lowest you would go would be business class.

We made it to France a number of times and back to the States as much as we could to get out and enjoy what we could outside the region. But, yes, it would have been nice to do it more often, but we couldn't.

Q: Before we leave Israel, were there any major events during the time you were there that might be worth talking about?

TAYLOR: I also had the terrorism portfolio. You may recall there were a couple of hijackings, one in 1985, the hijacking of a TWA plane in Beirut and the *Achille Lauro* happened during my watch too. It was hijacked by Palestinians and they killed an American citizen, Leon Klinghoffer, executing him for just being Jewish. That was floating off the coast of Israel at the time and finally put into Egypt and that was the famous incident when they were being flown from Egypt to, I think, Libya and our guys intercepted them in the air and forced the plane to land in Sicily. That operation was a good one.

The Israelis, although they never did admit it, mounted one of their famous raids on Palestinian headquarters in Tunis during the time I was there by ship, by one of their fast patrol ships. They took a commando team all the way from Israel to the Tunisian coast after dark. The team made its way to the residence of the PLO leader who was suspected by the Israelis to be responsible for some terrorist incidents against Israelis. They got into his house and killed him and a couple of other household members and got back out and all the way home before anybody suspected what they were doing.

You asked my assessment of the Israeli IDF capability, I think they can do those kind of things very, very well. Sometimes they don't think through the potential political ramifications of some of their security operations, but they can do it. If they are given orders to do something like that, they can do it.

I mentioned Uri Lubrani earlier, he had a funny story. He must be 65 years old now. This had to do with the famous rescue in Entebbe, Uganda of hostages back in 1976. He said, even at that point he was too old to get into this commando business, but he had been stationed in Uganda for a number of years, not as an ambassador but as their head of the mission, they didn't have an embassy there. He knew the area and certainly knew the Entebbe airport and the surrounding area. So, he was sort of told by the guys organizing that rescue mission that he was coming along. He wasn't going to land with the commandos but he stayed in one of the C-130s flying above the airport sort of telling the guys on the ground what they would find...if you turn right in this corridor this is what you are going to see, etc. He was also the bankroller because they had to land in Nairobi to refuel these C-130s on the way back. He said it was funny because he had this huge wad of dollar bills to pay for the gas. So they landed early in the morning in Nairobi after getting out of Uganda, and there wasn't much going on. They just got off and started wandering around looking for somebody to pay for the gas. He said they found somebody and they pumped the fuel. I think there were three planes involved. He asked how much cash they wanted for this and the guy told him something and he paid him and they flew back to Israel. He said that was a funny operation. He said everyone was pretty tense at the time because they didn't know that it was going to be as successful as it was. There was only one fellow killed and he was the older brother of Netanyahu. So, again, they can do things like that very successfully.

Q: You left there when?

TAYLOR: I left in 1988.

LOUISE TAYLOR
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv (1984-1988)

Ms. Taylor was born and raised in Illinois and educated at Wellesley College, George Washington University and Boston University. After joining the Foreign Service of USIA, Ms. Taylor served in Washington and abroad in the field of Cultural and Information. Her foreign posts include Moscow, Kabul, Tel Aviv and Rabat. She also served in Washington as USIA Desk Officer for Afghanistan/Pakistan and for South Asia and as Policy Officer for Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States. Ms. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Having dealt with that, in a way, did you thirst to get into the more active world?

TAYLOR: Yes, so going to Israel, where, first of all, Sam Lewis and then the incomparable Tom Pickering were my two ambassadors. I had never had an appointee ambassador before. In Moscow, of course, Walter Stoessel I guess was an appointee but nobody considered him to be. In Afghanistan, Ted Elliott and after him Spike Dubs, who was assassinated while we were there, were all career people. So, getting back to Israel, where the issues were truly serious ones, getting back to the Middle East by assignment to Israel, was very welcome to me. I wasn't at all sorry to leave. My sister-in-law just can't understand it. "You've worked in all these difficult places and then you spend 10 months on Western Europe and you don't even go serve there. We wanted to come visit you."

Q: They don't understand the adrenaline rush.

TAYLOR: No, they don't.

Q: I was in Personnel and people looked at me... You could always get your next assignment. So, in 1969, I appeared in Saigon as consul general right in the middle of the war. But I had to see the reality.

TAYLOR: Right. I understand what you're talking about.

Q: It becomes so much a part of American politics. Having served in other places, did you have any feeling about the Arab-Israeli issue before you got there?

TAYLOR: Oh, yes. For one thing, I've always been a student of politics and current events. For another thing, having lived in Afghanistan and served there and then worked on those issues when I came back to Washington since South Asia was part of the NEA family, I was part of the NEA family. You went to the NEA country team. Of course, the Arab-Israeli issue was pretty dominant there. Plus, my husband, who is a political officer, has always had as one of his most

compelling interests the Arab-Israeli issue. So, yes, I didn't feel new to the issues when I got there. However, I'll never forget Sam Lewis saying... He was the ambassador when we first arrived. He was on his last year in Israel. That meant eight years for him as ambassador to Israel. I don't think anyone had ever served that long. Sam and Sally were known as the King and Queen of Israel at that point. I'll never forget Sam at one of his farewell parties saying that after the first year or so in Israel, he thought he pretty much understood what the issues were and how it was all going to work out and what was important and what he needed to think about. Then three or four years into it, he was beginning to have his doubts as to whether he understood what was going on and whether he really had it right or not. Then five or six or seven years into it, he really thought, "I don't have a clue as to what's going on here." As he left, he said, "I have no idea." But he and Sally, of course, are just devoted to Israel and still spend a lot of time there, although they still live here in McLean. They still go back to Israel a lot. Every time I see him, I remind him of that. I felt the same way. After four years there, I knew the country intimately. I had traveled everywhere. I had talked to everybody at all levels of society and dealt with so many different organizations and institutions. It became more and more complex and more and more wrapped up – like they say about the Soviet Union: a riddle inside an enigma inside a mystery. That's very much Israel. So, I certainly hit the ground there without a huge learning curve except that the learning curve goes on forever.

Q: For a long time, Israel was seen as "brave, plucky little Israel holding its own against these uncouth Arabs." But that was beginning to change, particularly after having invaded Lebanon. This was before you arrived. And Sabra and Shatila, the massacres there.

TAYLOR: And the election of Begin.

Q: And the election of Begin and with Sharon the bombardment of Beirut. The bloom was somewhat off the rose by that time. Had that affected you? Did you go there thinking you were melding in or bonding with the Israeli spirit?

TAYLOR: That had already happened in a way. When I went to Afghanistan after my two years in Moscow, the Agency recognized that I was still a junior officer with very little normal USIA experience because Moscow was so unique. So, they sent me to Iran and Israel for about a month TDY in both places. In the mid-'70s, those two posts were our model posts: Iran (This was before the fall of the Shah) and Israel. That was where the USIA was pouring in tons of money and we had first class programs, huge staffs. We were teaching English language to 20,000 students in Tehran in those days. The staff of American Foreign Service officers was 12-15. There were branch posts all over. So, the Agency said, "Well, give her a dose of these two places and then send her to Afghanistan and she can set up the same kind of thing there" and I did. So, I spent a wonderful, interesting month in Tehran, where my husband had served before we met. He was there in the late '60s. Then I went to Israel. This was right after Sadat visited Israel. The electricity was in the air. It was palpable. You would ride in a bus or a taxi, walk on the streets, go in the stores, and people were enthusiastic and excited and talking and jabbering – of course, Israelis jabber all the time – and it was all energetic and positive. I came back from Israel to Kabul, where we had only just started our tour, and I said to Jim, "We have to go to Israel. I don't care when we go. We have to go there. It is the most exciting place with the most fermenting ideas I have ever seen. I have never seen anything like this place." So, that was '77.

We got there in '84. As you just said, so many things had happened in the intervening seven years. The bloom was off the rose. The peace had not turned out for the Israelis or for the Arabs or the Palestinians the way anybody thought or hoped it would. Israelis were traveling to Egypt as tourists, but Egyptians weren't coming to Israel. The Israelis were, they thought, reaching out. The Egyptians were not responding. There had been skirmishes. What was going on in Lebanon was coloring and tainting all of this. Then there was the matter of the issue of Begin. Very much the bloom was off the rose by '84 when I got there. By 1988 when I left, I would characterize Israel as totally polarized as a society. It was 50/50: those who felt there should be all out warfare in the Middle East and "Let's finish the Arabs and the Palestinians once and for all" and those were on the "Peace now" side. There was nobody in the middle. I think it may very well be that way now, although I think the "peace now" side is eroding somewhat. But it was heartbreaking to see this. Although the Israeli energy was still there, it wasn't all positive energy anymore, whereas in 1977 when I first witnessed it, it was dynamic, positive energy. There is an energy among the Israelis which is phenomenal. I've never seen it anywhere else in the world. A little bit among the Russians the characteristic is similar, but not to the degree that the Israelis have it. But they were getting to the point – and not just the intellectual intelligencia, but almost every level of society that could afford it – they would leave Israel every three or four months. My Israeli friends would say to me, "Louise, how can you stand it? We have to get out of here." They'd go to Cyprus or Italy. They would take some trip for two or three or four weeks because the tension was just unbearable. The pressure of everyday life in Israel, some of it good, but not all of it good.

Q: You're not talking about terrorists or a military threat. You're talking about the internal...

TAYLOR: I'm talking about the way Israelis conduct their life and run their country and run their own personal lives. It's all mixed up together. The country is their life. The life is their country. Of course, there was a small amount of terrorism increasing. The Intifada started in '87 before we left. So, the specter of terrorism, the uncertainty of the future, those Israelis with children with obligatory military service for both boys and girls at the age of 18, all of that was weighing very heavily on their minds. So, it was all mixed up together. They live this extraordinarily energetic pace of life. They expend a lot of energy whether they're going to the grocery store to buy their vegetables or going to a political meeting. They recognize this in themselves. They will say to me, "We exhaust ourselves in the process of worry, in the process of discussion, in the process of argument." An Israeli who buys a cucumber has to have at least a 20 minute discussion, debate, argument, and then make up before the cucumber is exchanged. This ultimately is exhausting. My Israeli friends are probably my best friends in the world, but they exhaust me. I told them that. They said, "Yes, we know. We exhaust ourselves." So, there was a bit of an edge there. The theater was becoming very political. Some of it was very "peace now" oriented and some of it was very much in the opposite extreme. It permeated everything. You couldn't get up in the morning... In five minutes, the whole situation, political and social, that surrounded you would seep into your mind.

Q: Did you find that you were being tested or rated on your support of Israel, particularly when you first got there, by Israelis?

TAYLOR: I've never asked myself that question, but I would say that Israelis very much wanted

you to admire their country and to support them. But a fair sector of Israeli society that at that time was thinking much broader than that and understanding that an accommodation with the Palestinians was in their own interest. To the extent that they wanted you to admire and support them, they also tolerated and understood when you would raise issues of Israeli actions in the West Bank – for example, the settlements. You could have long, drawn out, open discussion about that. A huge number of Israelis, more than 50% at that time, were adamantly opposed to the settlements expansions. They wouldn't base their friendship with you on whether or not you were an ardent Zionist. No diplomat ever goes around criticizing the country in which they're posted, so that wouldn't happen either. But I think it was clear to my friends and associates and the people with whom I worked that I admired a great deal of Israeli society. So, that also meant that I could be critical and honestly critical.

Q: You were there as cultural affairs officer [CAO]. What does that mean when being assigned to Israel?

TAYLOR: I think the Israelis looked at that position as one of the most important positions in the embassy. I always had to laugh at the fact that there were people far more important than I was in the embassy, but there are a couple of countries in the world – Morocco, where I also served, is another one – where the cultural attaché takes on a huge meaning. It opens doors. I was a dinner partner of Shimon Peres on several occasions. I brought Saul Bellow to the country as a program paid for by USIA. Because of that, I traveled around the highest literary, social, and political circles in Israel. So, the invitations that I would get and the entrée that I had because of the fact that the Israelis regarded this position and the title as important... I would say that the importance that many European countries - and Israel considers itself to be a European country – place on the cultural attaché position is far greater than the importance that we in the United States place on the cultural attaché position. This has been a source of pain to me. I've spent my life largely as a cultural affairs officer. Dick Arndt is sort of the leading proponents of the value of a cultural diplomacy policy. You'll be with him for the next 10 years listening to what he thinks about the U.S. government's lack of a cultural policy. But I was in a very good position in the embassy because of my role despite the fact that I was not a junior member of the embassy but I was not the most senior. I got around about as much as anybody did by virtue of the position that I occupied and the doors that it just naturally opened to me.

Q: I was thinking of the influence of Jews that came out of Europe during the '20s and '30s and even today on our culture here in the United States in movies, literature, music, painting, you name it. It's completely disproportionate to the numbers. I've been looking for Israeli movies and novels and so on and maybe they just don't get translated. Whatever there is, I haven't noticed much coming out of Israel that seems to translate itself.

TAYLOR: You have to look for five or six leading Israeli authors who are translated into English and translated very well. I read them mostly when I was there in Israel. But I've looked for their stuff here and it's not very prominently displayed. Some Israeli writers actually publish in the United States in English, but the better Israeli writers are writing in Hebrew and they make a point to write in Hebrew. Even though these particular people I'm thinking of are not nationalists – well, some of them are – it is a nationalist, almost patriotic thing to do even though they could write in English. I'm thinking of fiction. The translations that I've read have been

excellent. But it's a small group. You're right. I'd like to think about that a little bit.

Q: I'm also thinking of movies. When I think of the dynamism that came out of the most deplorable conditions in Central Europe and these people came in and essentially created the American movie business. I can't think of how many novels I've read about being Jewish and growing up in New York and Brooklyn.

TAYLOR: Creativity and creation are certainly going on in Israel. Unfortunately, I didn't speak Hebrew well enough to go to the Hebrew-speaking theater. Of all the languages I've studied I found Hebrew a very difficult language. But my Israeli friends said there were some exciting things happening in the Hebrew-speaking theater politically. But what is certainly not absent from Israeli life is artistry. Whether they are creating in the sense of writing original music or movie scripts or fiction, I'd like to think about that and I'll comment another time. But in terms of developing as artists, there is no other country that on a per capita basis is as dynamic or as fertile as Israel. Music is, of course, the number one thing. They also have three or four major dance companies of major quality. My personal view is that they're lacking somewhat in the fine arts, painting and sculpture, but there is a lot of people working in it. As cultural affairs officer, I got so many invitations to exhibitions and opening nights that I could have done nothing but that. Of course, if I went to one, I had to go to them all because you had to show up and wave the flag. So, there is a lot of dynamic interaction there and a lot of creativity. I'm not sure they're the most successful in the fine arts realm as they are in other realms. Poetry. Again, I didn't speak good enough Hebrew to understand poetry, but there are a lot of people writing poetry. The arts are very much alive and well. Israeli movies? I don't think they have the resources to make them.

Q: Maybe not, but when you think about the Italians right after war and yet they turned out a whole set of works that is still resonating.

TAYLOR: Right. This is a question that's always intrigued me. Maybe some media are more suitable for some countries to deal in. The Germans are not really great painters, but they're wonderful musicians and writers.

Q: And they make lousy movies, particularly since the German Jews left. The German Jews, in my mind, their departure or their killing took the salt out of the German soul. It had been such a flourishing culture. Hitler's great contribution was to essentially destroy German culture. A lot of people would argue with that.

TAYLOR: A lot of people would argue with that, I think.

The two Israeli brothers who write with Ruth Kempala Jabar and do all the film scripts are working in the United States, not in Israel, to do these movies.

Q: What was your feeling as you were dealing with the cultural side of the religious community? I'm thinking of the solidly Orthodox.

TAYLOR: Well, I suppose, to be self-critical, I could have led my program more in the direction of trying to reach out to these people, but I don't think they would have been receptive in any

way. Even had I been male rather than female, had I been Jewish rather than not, I really don't think there is an opening to that group. I think it's a very closed group. Most Israelis have the same view. They're a little nation unto themselves in a way. So, to the extent that it might be a criticism of the way I led my program, I didn't really develop any program to target that group. The embassy as a whole didn't really target that group much other than the political section, where we had one or two officers dealing with internal Israeli politics. My husband was not one of them. We had one Jewish officer, who is actually the ambassador to Israel right now, Dan Kurtzer. Dan spoke fluent Hebrew. I think he had pretty good contacts. He could go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and talk to the few representatives from that group who were there. I think he had some entrée into their circles. But largely, they would not accept invitations from us. Maybe we should have cultivated them more.

Q: One always looks at this, but there are groups that really do stand aside and that you can't get to. Particularly very orthodox religions, including Islam, the Greek Orthodox Church at a certain level...

TAYLOR: I worked with Joe Sullivan, who was ambassador to Angola and has gone on to Zimbabwe, who was also in the political section as an internal political officer, to put together an IV [International Visitor] group of four parliamentarians, members of the Knesset – one from the Labor Party, one from Likud, one Arab-Israeli (also a member of the Knesset) and one member of a conservative religious party but not the Lubavitchs (This fellow was pretty conservative, but he wasn't totally radical). We thought this would be a good experiment. The Labor Party guy, Hayeem Ramon, whom you see in the paper all the time, and the Arab-Israeli were already good friends. They had known each other for years. The Likud person who became part of this delegation was a very moderate, easy to work with person. He was a member of the Likud, but he realized that the Likud and Labor had to work together or the whole thing would fall apart or become polarized. So, the three of them were pretty much able... They became very good friends on this 30 day trip. The idea was that the four would come back and this would have a ripple effect through the Knesset or through their parties saying, "Look, we went to the United States. We saw these wonderful things. We saw the way they work out partisan politics. But we also got to know each other in the process." That was the secondary rationale for putting this group together. But the person from the extreme right religious party – and I forget what party it was right now – stayed apart from the other three during the whole trip. He evoked certain Shabbat regulations in the view of the group unnecessarily in order to extract himself from other group activities. He created a disturbance in Boston when he went off on his own and got into serious trouble in the nighttime district of Boston – let me leave it at that. When the other three fellows went out and had dinner and maybe they went to a movie and went back to this hotel, this guy went off on his own... Because of his religious strictures, he had refused to accept travelers cheques the way most of our international visitors travel. He had insisted on having all of his per diem in cash. Because of this sort of rumble he got into in the shadier side of South Boston, he ended up without enough money. It was sort of a funny story that of the four guys who would get in trouble of this nature in the United States, the one who was the most openly religious and holier than thou was the one who did so. To the credit of the other three guys, that story never got back to Israel. This person would have been banished by his party had they known what his behavior was like while he was here. So, it was sort of an interesting story on human behavior.

Q: What were we trying to do? How did you see your job?

TAYLOR: Not vis a vis this particular...

Q: No.

TAYLOR: I was trying to consolidate the excellent relationships that the embassy already had with a variety of institutions around the country whether they were academic, press, think tank, or artistic institutions. I was trying to reach out to other institutions beyond that who did not know the United States. There is a surprising number of Israelis who don't. Particularly outside Haifa, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and the immediate suburban areas, there are other institutions. Secondary teacher training institutions, for example. I felt that there was a very narrow-minded perspective being developed in some of these teacher training institutions in towns with new immigrants, for example. It was hard for us to work with them. Again, I didn't speak fluent Hebrew. In some of these places, they spoke no English. That was a surprise to me. I was trying to develop relationships for the embassy through my programs with institutes on that level. These would be organizations which weren't entirely sure they thought the Arab-Israeli peace process was a good thing. They would be organizations which probably would support the Likud at that point. I was trying to reach out to them. Third, to the extent that I could, and I was probably more successful at this, I developed a list of – and it had to be a representative list; it couldn't be all-inclusive – organizations which were made up largely of what Israelis called "Second Israel." These would be the people from North Africa, the Yemeni Jews, sort of the second, third, and fourth wave of immigration.

Q: How about the Falasha from Ethiopia?

TAYLOR: They were just beginning to come to Israel. They were really at the stage of being trained in Hebrew by the opons, the language teaching institutions. They were just really learning how to live in a society like that. Their numbers were quite small. I met them because at the opon that I went to to learn Hebrew, I met some of them and saw their dignity. But I also saw that they were a little bit outside what we were trying to do at the embassy at that time. I don't know how they've developed at this point.

The great Russian migration had not yet started. That would be very interesting to be part of. They brought all their musicians, chemists, scientists, psychiatrists... There weren't enough professional level positions for these people. Subsequently, they became gardeners and laborers. It's been a terrible problem for Israel, which practically doubled its population within 15-20 years.

So, that was the third thing I was trying to do.

Fourthly, I was the first CAO to have specially congressionally committed funds for Arab-Israeli scholarships and for a Gazan program. I was the CAO who started both of those programs, not entirely successfully at first because it was hard to find qualified people. You interview Israeli graduate students for the Fulbright program and they're all going to Harvard, Yale, Stanford, the

University of Chicago, the University of Virginia, the big 10, some great school. You interview an Israeli Arab and their educational levels are so vastly different because of the resources available to them that it's very hard in good conscience to select an applicant. When I started the program – things may have changed by now – it was hard to find an Israeli Arab who had the appropriate educational level. The schools available to them were substandard and inferior to the schools for Israeli Jews so it was hard to find candidates who could have prospered and thrived in an American university environment. Nevertheless, through the Fulbright Commission, we worked very hard to identify at least three or four a year from the Israeli Arab community. Similarly, we had a program of special money separate from the Fulbright Commission dedicated to Gazans. I had never even been to Gaza in my first two and a half years in Israel. All of a sudden, this money came our way. There were only three of us who worked on this program – another American, who is now consul general in Bombay, an American woman married to a Palestinian, and then we had a Palestinian in Gaza itself to help us set this up. The last year I was in Israel was the first year of this program. We interviewed 10 or 12 would-be candidates. They were all in agricultural sciences. We had money for more than we picked, but we felt we hadn't gotten the qualifications that we needed and we didn't want to send people off to fail. We felt that would be worse. So, we took some of the money and put them in intensive English language in Israel for a year or made it possible for them to get their English language skills up to a level where they could study in the United States at the undergraduate level. So, those were the four things I was trying to do.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop. We've covered living in Israel and the programs you were dealing with.

TAYLOR: One of the joys of living in Israel that should be at least touched on at least when we were there was to travel around the country and see what the history of this place really means to people, where some Americans take a look at it and say, "This is just a desolate rock. Why does anybody feel as passionate about this as three major religions in the world do?" Jim and I were both extraordinarily busy. When I left Israel, I was exhausted and I was only 37 or so years old. But we did make the time to travel around. We went to almost every major archeological site.

Q: Also, you might mention next time about any influence that the American Jewish community in the United States had that you saw on both the politics and your work and the embassy and how one dealt with this.

TAYLOR: I don't know that I'm the best one to comment on that.

Q: I've asked other people, too.

TAYLOR: It was huge.

Q: It was huge, so you don't want to let that go.

Today is November 5, 2001. Louise, you are cultural affairs officer in Tel Aviv from when to when?

TAYLOR: That was 1984-1988.

Q: While you weren't on the political side-

TAYLOR: In Israel, everything is political.

Q: What about the effect of American Jewish influence on what was being done as far as you saw it?

TAYLOR: Well, the embassy was a very integrated institution. We all worked together for the same goals. What is now called the mission performance plan at time for us in USIA was called the country plan. Everything that we planned out as a professional activity in our master planning document, the country plan, was designed to reinforce and support what the embassy as a whole was doing in its mission performance plan. So, despite the fact that I wore a hat called the cultural affairs officer, much, if not everything, that we did in the state of Israel was political coming at it from different angles. I would say that one of the major political activities that I undertook as the cultural affairs officer – and I touched on this the last time we spoke – was trying to reach out to both Israeli Arabs as well as to Gazans in the academic exchange program under the Fulbright rubric. There was money authorized by the Congress as a result of the Intifada, which was just beginning to gain momentum while I was in Israel, to be made available to Arab citizens of Israel as well as to a beginning, fledgling, program on the West Bank. This particular program, although it represented a diversion of resources from the Jewish community to the Arab-Israeli community and then beyond into the West Bank, was widely supported by American Jewish groups who were aware of it. Just as Israeli society was becoming polarized during those years of the '80s, the American Jewish community was becoming polarized from what I understood from reading the American press and talking to American Jewish friends who traveled to Israel. There were those who felt that the peace now groups or the groups that were organizing to bring Arabs and Israelis closer together, was the most important thing on their political agenda. There was the other side of the Jewish American spectrum which felt that the fight between the Jews and the Arabs was a fight to the death, that settlements should be expanded, that a literal if not a figurative wall or the other way around, should be built between Israel proper and the Palestinian state or the Arab state. If your question was, was there interference or undue influence in what I did, I would say nothing of the sort happened in any of the programs that I was involved in. In the broader sense, the embassy, was reacting to American foreign and domestic policy and taking its lead from Washington in carrying out the administration's foreign policy toward the Middle East. That obviously reflected whatever domestic political influence American Jewish thought and opinion had on the White House, as happens in any American administration. We have a situation now where American and Jewish public opinion is probably being quite reserved and restrained. Just as we are asking the Israelis and the Palestinians to be reserved and restrained right now to the degree that they can in their ever escalating back and forth and retaliation for an event. From what I read and hear in the press, there has been very little said by American Jewish public opinion right now. As the Intifada was arising in the '80s, you had in Israel a coalition government which represented the phenomenon that Israeli opinion was eventually becoming polarized. I would say it was a 50/50 split by the time I left in 1988 between those who felt that an accommodation should be made with the Palestinians and the Arabs and those who felt literally that it was a fight to the death and

that Israeli security depended on being as strong and as tough and as unrelenting with the Arab population as possible. Ambassador Pickering was our ambassador for three of the four years that I was there. For the first year that I was there, it was Sam Lewis. Both of them being consummate diplomats. They were extremely careful to represent the foreign policy that the White House handed to them, but at the same time in their normal everyday course of carrying out their duties, responsibilities, and contacts, they had a tremendous amount of contact and relationship with American Jewish leaders who came to Israel all the time. Every day, there was someone of importance from the American Jewish community. The embassy always greeted and received these people cordially, wanting to hear their point of view. Attempts were frequently made to mix them up with members from all sides of the Israeli political spectrum so that American Jewish leaders themselves would hear what a wide variety of thought there was on Middle East politics from the players themselves. I would say that on the one hand, I know that people feel that American Jewish influence on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has been overly persuasive. I think that a lot went on during those years that the Intifada was growing that probably caused great anxiety among the American Jewish population, particularly our continuing outreach to various Arab populations. Yet I think they managed to say to themselves that, after all, this is a mature world. We must acknowledge that there are other demands and other sides to this story. I think the American Jewish public opinion was maturing during this whole process and continues to mature. There are the extremists on both ends and it's hard to really talk with them. But there is a huge body of opinion in the middle. Most who traveled to Israel with whom we had contact tend to be of what I would classify the more liberal persuasion, saying that we had to make accommodations. That not only the Israeli government and the American government but non-governmental movements and groups had to continue to expand contacts and bring people together. Much of the work that I did as cultural affairs officer was designed to bring Arabs and Israelis together whether it was through an International Visitors program, where the political section and the cultural section together would craft a group of Arab Israelis, Jewish Israelis, and if we could, put other Arabs from other parts of the world together in this group so that on neutral turf – the United States – they would meet, they would discuss, they would get to know each other. There were many programs. There are to this day programs of that type that are designed to bring Arabs and Israelis together. Some of them are funded by the U.S. government. Some of them are private spin-offs.

Q: Was there any attempt to do something to persuade Egyptians, for example, to come to Israel? Did we get involved with your counterpart in Cairo? It's been a cold peace.

TAYLOR: Yes, it has been, and Israelis were very resentful of that. After the burst of enthusiasm during the Sadat visit to Israel, Israelis did begin to flock to Egypt – at least relatively speaking. They went as tourists. They went as professionals, particularly archeologists and ethnographers and historians and social scientists would go for professional conferences and meetings. They had been barred from such meetings and conferences for years because they couldn't get visas to travel to the Arab world. So, I would say this initial enthusiastic outburst from the liberal spectrum of the Israeli Jewish population was met with what they felt, even the most liberal among them, was almost an insult since the Egyptians failed to respond. I recall being involved in several attempts with my counterparts in the embassy in Cairo to try to organize some professional conferences that would bring everybody together in one country or another. Those efforts eventually broke down at least during the years that I was there. You would have to talk

to someone who was there after I left in 1988 to see whether or not there was eventually enough trust on both sides to hold these joint conferences under U.S. government auspices in one country or the other. We always found the best solution was to take people off campus. By “off campus,” I mean put them in a group and take them to the United States.

Q: Which wasn't really an overly aggressive problem.

TAYLOR: No, only on a very small scale. In a group project where you have Arabs and Israelis traveling together for a month, you would find people on both sides of the issue coming back enthusiastic about their new friendships and their new relationships and how they were going to keep these things going. On a very small, incrementally expanding basis, scholars did go back and forth, particularly in what I would call “non-threatening” fields. I had one year of leave without pay in Israel when we went there from '84-'85. My position had not yet opened and so I took the archeology course at Tel Aviv University, which was just one of the best courses I've ever taken anywhere. In those days, the Israeli archeologists were just feeling so oppressed that they couldn't get out into the Arab world where all these wonderful archeological sites were. They could go to Egypt, but in '84, that was about the only Arab country they could go to. Morocco, but that had less archeological interest for them. Where they really wanted to get their hands dirty was in Jordan and Syria. We, of course, could travel to those places. I took a trip to Jordan once. When I came back, my archeology professors wanted to see all my photographs and know what the Jordanian archeologists had to say. This kind of scholarship and curiosity kept Israelis going even though the Egyptians didn't return in large numbers and even though the Israelis were disappointed in the Egyptian ambassador to Israel, whose name was Basieri. They felt he wasn't doing enough when he went back to his government to say, “Look, we've got to have organized travel groups of Egyptians coming to Israel.” But the Israelis kept the momentum going for a while. I don't know what's happened in recent times along those lines.

One of the best trips that we took was with the first joint business setup between Israelis and Egyptians. It was a small travel company in which Israeli Jews and Egyptians had invested. It was a small company that had about 10 small Mercedes buses that could go into the desert. They had huge wheels. They were wider than most buses and sort of squat and ugly looking. They could go anywhere. We went with a group of only 12 people – this was one of the beauties of this travel company – and we had an Egyptian guide and a Jewish guide. Both of them were representatives of the company and they both knew the archeological sites. We went to the Sinai. We went to Santa Catarina. We camped out at the foot of Santa Catarina. We climbed up Jabli Massag at Mount Moses and Mount Sinai at dawn the way everybody does. We had not only our Egyptian guide and our Jewish Israeli guide, but we had a Bedouin tracker with us. He was invaluable when the Mercedes bus got stuck in the sand any number of times. He knew exactly where to find materials to get us out. But this was one of the first examples of a joint project and business investment of any kind and it happened to be tourism. At dinner, these guys would cook these wonderful meals out in the middle of the desert. They had known each other for a long time, the Egyptian and the Israeli, and they would joke about the fact that, well, if another war comes along, they'll be shooting at each other the next time around. So, that was a wonderful experience. That was an example of what could happen if people were open-minded and good spirited in years to come.

Q: Were there problems of mistreatment of Palestinians, particularly in the West Bank and Gaza, by the Israeli authorities? Did we turn the other cheek to these things or not?

TAYLOR: I have no idea what went on inside an Israeli police station. Lots of others have commented on this. The Palestinians have certainly said that Israeli police used unnecessary force. Israelis would say in unending tit for tat that they were dealing with terrorists who had just blown up a bus of schoolchildren. It's hard for us as Americans to comment on that in any moral sense. One thing that went on that was probably inexcusable – and the Israelis didn't have to do it for security reasons, but they did – was sort of a passive oppression rather than actively mistreating and abusing people. They would close the borders between Gaza and Israel proper after one of these attacks or incidents. It would mean that tens of thousands of Gazans could not go to work for sometimes weeks. Usually, it was days, but sometimes it was weeks. This meant a loss of critical income for these people. Again, you would have to ask someone else in another agency what the Israeli tactics in the police stations were; if there were demonstrations in the Arab side of Jerusalem, did the Israelis use excessive force in breaking those up? I think sometimes yes, just as sometimes happens with our own police forces. I think that they are a civilized people and I think that they do have a rule of law that they try to observe. When things got out of hand, it usually was as a result of some horrendous terrorist attack having happened in the days or weeks previously. I think Israeli is a very well ordered society. People are extremely emotional. But they're also very well educated. They are an extremely well educated society. One of the things I loved about the Israeli military – and my husband dealt with them a lot because he was the political-military officer and I'd find myself seated at dinner next to a general who would be one of the most decorated war heroes of Israel, but he would also have a Ph.D. in philosophy and would be a concert level pianist and then raise chickens on a kibbutz on top of that. There was one particular person who combined all of those qualities. I used to enjoy talking with him immensely. So, the Israeli military mind is a multifaceted mind. They certainly know a lot about humanity and suffering. All that said, I have to suppose that press reports of Israelis overextending their police forces in some of the Arab villages that they controlled or in Gaza are probably correct.

Q: What about the Intifada? How did that affect you and how did you observe it?

TAYLOR: De jure, it affected the embassy community because the regional security officer [RSO] would feel compelled to issue travel advisories and such. If one had houseguests, you would have to advise your houseguests not to go to the old city of Jerusalem. Of course, nobody paid any attention to that and we went to the old city in Jerusalem, to the architectural centers, to the souqs and the bazaars. You paid attention to what was going on around you. You certainly wouldn't go there the day after some cataclysmic event had happened. You had to use your head. Hebron was one city that was so volatile, particularly the last year we were there as the Intifada gained momentum and rock throwing escalated into more overt mob violence. I spent less time in Hebron than I would have liked. It was a place I never got to know. There were some really dreadful events back and forth between what I would have to call right-wing Israeli settlers who were just fanatical about their use of certain pieces of land within the city itself and extremely agitated Palestinians and Israeli Arabs on the other side. Hebron did become a very dangerous place.

I think that the whole level of violence there has escalated sharply since I left. My activities were never really curtailed in any way. There were kibbutzim in the north that I used to visit. They lived way in these wilderness places up on the Lebanese border. They did have rocket attacks from Lebanon from time to time. I was up there once when it was suspected that there would be an attack. So, we curtailed some of the business appointments that we had up there. But I always felt very safe in Israel. I felt much more unsafe on the roads. The driving is atrocious and you take your life in your hands on the Israeli highways. But as far as the actual violence was concerned, as long as you used your head and didn't deliberately go into a provocative area when you knew there was trouble. For example, Nazareth was wonderful to visit, but there were times when you knew it was just wiser to stay away. On the other hand, some of the security advisories just went way overboard, as they always do.

Q: They tend to because it's a matter of covering your ass.

TAYLOR: Yes.

Q: Did you find that having our embassy in Tel Aviv and the seat of government being up in Jerusalem was a bother to you? Did it make much difference in your business?

TAYLOR: Again, Israel is a very small country. In my business as a cultural affairs officer or a USIA person in general, our modus operandi is to get around. We traveled all the time. And there was the fact that the embassy was an extremely unpleasant place to work and is one of the worst embassy buildings in the world... It's just the pits. Everybody will tell you that.

Q: What's the problem?

TAYLOR: Physically, it's just the grungiest, grimmest, dankest place I have ever worked – and I worked in Moscow. In Moscow, there was a reason why that was a miserable, horrible place at the time. But there was no reason for this in Tel Aviv.

Q: Unless everybody was waiting for the shoe to drop.

TAYLOR: Everybody was supposedly waiting for the move to Jerusalem, so the Department never put any money into the embassy. To fix up one would be a big political statement. It would mean "We're staying here for a long time." So, the place just crumbled away. It really was just an awful, awful place to work. So, I didn't mind getting out. There were a few key ministries located in Tel Aviv. The Ministry of Defense, for example, where my husband spent a lot of time, was in Tel Aviv. So, he was not one of those who trekked up the hill to Jerusalem all the time. I remember someone asking Ambassador Pickering about this strange scenario where all the ministries are in Jerusalem and the American embassy and all the embassies except for two (I think Costa Rica and Ecuador were in Jerusalem) were in Tel Aviv. What this meant for him and did he have to go to Jerusalem all the time? Ambassador Pickering said, "Well, I try not to go there more than three times a day if I can help it." When we were there, it was roughly an hour. The last 20 minutes of that hour were just spectacularly beautiful. The first 2/3 of the drive out from Tel Aviv toward Jerusalem is sort of flat and uninteresting. But then you start climbing up to Jerusalem and it is spectacular. Everybody knows that Ambassador Pickering likes to drive

fast. He likes to drive faster than his drivers like to drive. So, he would get there in record time. The rest of the drivers would sort of poke along a little bit more because it was a dangerous highway. One of the interesting things you saw along the way on this highway was the bombed out remains of military vehicles from the war of independence in the late '40s. Those are still left by the sides of the roads. They are very small military vehicles. They look more like small pickup trucks and strangely shaped, elongated pickup trucks. They were left there deliberately as a memorial, knowing that people would be traveling this road frequently. I looked at them every time I went up and every time I went back down. But it was wonderful to travel to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is such a beautiful city. Tel Aviv is such an exciting city. It's very much on the go, but I wouldn't call it a beautiful city by any means, even though it is on the Mediterranean. I always loved going to Jerusalem.

Q: Did you find there was much division within the embassy about our policy?

TAYLOR: Like in any embassy that's really well staffed – and Tel Aviv was one of the best embassies I've ever served in or had anything to do with – there is always good, healthy debate and fights and shouting. Oh, yes. There was a wide diversity of opinion. The embassy spoke publicly with one voice. Internally, there was healthy debate. Ambassador Lewis encouraged this. Ambassador Pickering especially encouraged this. In the end, as in any embassy, there was a unified position. But the informal commentary and conversation that went on in all the sections and among all the sections was very wide ranging. In the political section there was an internal political unit which dealt with internal Israeli politics. In that group, there is the Arab watcher. The Arab watcher brings to the table all of the things that from the Arab perspective are going wrong because of U.S. policy and support for Israel. So, I would say there was a fairly healthy free for all. The same with our relations with Washington. Ambassador Pickering had a pretty healthy dialogue with his interlocutors back in Washington. Assistant Secretary Murphy, who knew the area very well and had been ambassador in Jordan, selected Pickering.

Q: On the cultural side, dealing with the conservative religious community, I can see that almost anything you did would be anathema to them.

TAYLOR: We did touch on this briefly last time. You almost had to forego their participation in many of our activities. With the help of the political section, we were able to expand our programs to include some conservative Jewish members but not the most conservative because they would never come out of their community, they just would not have anything to do with anybody from the American embassy. But from those who were maybe 90% into that category and a couple of whom are represented in the Knesset, we selected members of those groups to be part of our International Visitor Programs. We mixed them up with some Labor Party people, mixed them up with some Likudniks, mixed them up with an Israeli Arab in one instance, and sent them off to the United States. In terms of our regular cultural programming, meaning outreach from the library, we put them on our mailing lists so that they would receive our material both in Hebrew and in English. This would be material on any subject of interest from environmental issues to political issues. So, they were getting it. I think that they were users of the library to a certain extent. Particularly they were call-in users and we would mail them information. I never saw too many people of an extreme religious nature in our library. The library was very heavily used by academics, by people in the social sciences, by journalists. But

the people who lived in enclosed communities in Jerusalem who were strict, strict, strict observers of Jewish law, I would not expect to see them in our library or in our cultural center. Similarly, when we had public events such as a performing arts event, very few of them would have any interest. It's very hard to reach them.

Q: Did you ever get involved in cultural events or academic things of comparative religion and that sort of thing?

TAYLOR: We did some conferences on comparative religion. We brought American specialists in various aspects of comparative religion. It was usually a university sponsored conference. We would not take the lead on this, but if Hebrew University or Tel Aviv or Haifa University or Bar Ilan, which had a more religious basis than the other three, if they were doing a conference on comparative religion and wanted to have an international aspect to the panel, we always cooperated. We brought speakers recruited by our specialists here in Washington who were sent out to do that. Those were always very lively debates. Israeli academic life is pretty wide open and very free. Some of the best arguments and shouting matches I've ever heard have taken place at Israeli universities where we didn't run the conference but we contributed to the conference. It's better to let them take the lead. This is true in any country. If they're going to do a conference on conflict resolution or anything like that, we will respond that it's probably better to be a participant but not to run the thing.

Q: You mentioned conflict resolution. Obviously, it's been going on for millennia.

TAYLOR: The conflict but not the resolution.

Q: Yes. But in one way or another, people have been working on this. But it really wasn't even a phrase until about the time you were there.

TAYLOR: We certainly used it all the time.

Q: Did you find you were dealing with people coming from good intent who were going to solve the problems?

TAYLOR: No, I think everybody was pretty realistic that unless you solve the problem of Jerusalem and the settlements, unless you establish trust on both sides and somehow end this unending cycle of violence, you're not going to settle this ever. We had one or two speakers who were recruited by USIA who really didn't know the Middle East well enough and had no business being at these events, but mostly the people that USIA sent to contribute to these conferences, panel discussions, or seminars were really savvy. The core of American scholarship and journalists, the Thomas Friedmans of the world to the Norman Ornsteins, who spent their lives thinking about these things. They are really good and are so articulate. The Israelis are articulate. So, that makes for a good meeting of the minds and lots of disagreement, sometimes some pretty good practical advice on where to go next. But of course, all of it devolved back into the internal Israeli political situation, which I said was pretty much polarized and you can't move when you have a coalition government that's polarized.

Q: Did you run across any political turkeys? You were talking about some of the people who had not been sent out under the Wick administration of USIA. How about ones that were sent out that really were so ideologically fixed that they really weren't effective?

TAYLOR: I think I mentioned one last time – and I would prefer not to mention him by name because he still is a big name figure in the academic world – and his field was more Cold War/Soviet Union. This was still the 1980s. He really is somewhat superficial. Most of the Israelis knew it also. He was selected by our agency at the time because he, in the eyes of people like Charlie Wick, was a great one to fight the Cold War. His thinking really hadn't developed much over the years and he said the same thing all the time and just wasn't a terribly engaging, exciting person anyway. But I got stuck with him once, as did other posts in the world. It wasn't just to Israel that he was sent. I may have mentioned in our last session my friends at Tel Aviv University. Itamar Rabinowitz, who eventually became the Israeli ambassador to the United States, was at Tel Aviv University. He is a great Syrian expert and a wonderful intellect. Itamar knew this fellow. He said, "Look, Louise, I know you've got to do these things. We'll host him and have a nice lunch. I'll get 10-15 members of the faculty and some bright graduate students to come. We know that you wouldn't be doing this if you didn't have to." So, I took this guy to Tel Aviv University, where Itamar was running one of the major think tanks there. Then I also took him to some outlying places where we rarely did do programs. They were just so thankful to have anybody come talk to them about anything. So, that was the way I handled that sort of thing. It was ideologically inspired, but it wasn't so much ideologically inspired by the Arab-Israeli situation as it was the Cold War and fighting communists everywhere.

For the most part, my experience with the U.S.-run speakers program has been very good. We've usually gotten the people that we wanted. The worst speaker we got in Israel was not political at all. His field was education and he was just a total bomb. It had nothing to do with his politics or lack of politics. He just didn't know his own field. So, those things happen in our business.

Q: Particularly during this period, there were a lot of Harvard Marxists in the academic world in the United States. Many of them had skipped the Vietnam War, so they had to take a Marxist approach. Was Marxism much of a factor in Jewish intellectual life?

TAYLOR: In Jewish intellectual thought historically, yes, but in the great materialistic commercial society of Israel today, Marxism is the farthest thing from their minds. That's true of the Arabs as well. They're not interested... There is an Israeli-Arab Communist Party. The call themselves that to distinguish themselves from falling in line with the Israeli Labor Party. Who is a communist really today? A few people in Bengal and maybe a few people in China. But they're aren't any pure communists anymore. Probably at some level in some universities in Israel, there were people who thought that the historical Marxist movement was an interesting thing to dissect. Of course, the whole kibbutz movement in essence was a pure form of communism but on a very small scale. It wasn't a national government. It was a very small and regional. It was as big as this house and the garden around. So, there is that experiment that the Israelis went through early in their national life, but it was not part of their society now, which is very much a market oriented economy. Many of the kibbutzim have to be subsidized.

Q: Did you get involved with the kibbutzes?

TAYLOR: Yes.

Q: You say they are subsidized? Is it nostalgia?

TAYLOR: They are kind of an anachronism. They're not doing well economically. It was a great experiment. It certainly galvanized the society in the '20s and earlier. You have to admire what they did. These people went out to, in some instances, pretty miserable plots of land and they constructed an egalitarian society where people with Ph.D.s and people with no education whatsoever worked in the laundry together or fed the chickens or did any kind of mundane labor together and nobody knew what the background of their neighbor was. The children were all raised communally. This was the most difficult problem for the kibbutzim, that during the war period in the 1920s, the idea of putting the children in a central... Usually, as the kibbutz was built around a square or a circle or some kind of a shape, the children's dormitories would be in the center. That protected them when the sniping that started in the '20s and grew into the '30s and finally became a war in the late '40s with the war of Israeli independence. The children were protected by being in a more internal area of the kibbutz space, within the perimeter of the kibbutz. When peace finally came in the '50s the kibbutzim continued to operate the way they always had with the parents, the mother and father, of the family unit living in a small one or two room place, the children living in their dormitories and then everybody taking a communal meal in a kitchen and dining room down the road a bit but still within the kibbutz proper. This was – and my friends who lived on the kibbutzim said this was the major problem – that parents wanted to have their children at home. The families wanted to be a unit. It no longer made any sense for the children to have to go stay in the dormitory. The Arabs weren't firing on them every single night as happened in the '20s.

The other thing was, the economic viability of the place. Most people who live on kibbutzim now – 50% or more of the adults – are working outside the kibbutz. This was not the original philosophy of the kibbutz. Some of my friends who lived in the kibbutz in the south where the main industry was to make those plastic racks that you put bombs in. This is not a very high tech industry, but that's what the kibbutz did. They didn't make a whole lot of money from doing that. I had a friend who was a professor at Hebrew University but he lived in the kibbutz and would drive back and forth. When this began to happen, it created huge disturbances within the kibbutzim. There were some members who felt this should not be allowed. Everybody works here, lives here. Our livelihood is here. If you don't find intellectual satisfaction working in the laundry or ladling out soup for dinner, that's too bad; that's your job; you have to do it. Most people, like my friend the general, who lived on a kibbutz and raised chickens, but obviously he was a general and he was away in the army all the time, have come around to allowing people to work outside the kibbutz and still live there. There are some – and I haven't looked at this for over 10 years – who actually the community would sit down and vote to expel this family. If someone in the family was going to work in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem or someplace else, then they were no longer welcome. They were no longer full supporting members of the kibbutz. Then there are very liberal kibbutzim where people come and go all the time. One in the north where I did a lot of work was an English-speaking kibbutz. They also have little houses where everybody lived together. Instead of just having the one room or so, they had still small houses by our standards, but they would have three or four little rooms so the children could sleep at home.

They would build a kitchen so they didn't have to go eat in the main dining room. Three meals a day in the same cafeteria style dining room. The food is notoriously horrible in these kibbutzim. Everybody says it. I'm not making a pejorative comment about Israel. The food is just dreadful in these places. So, the kibbutz movement I wouldn't say is alive and well. I think it's nostalgic and symbolic that the kibbutzim exist. I don't think the state supports the kibbutzim, but I'm not sure about that. But if one is failing, the state will put money into it and try to keep it going.

Q: Were you seeing ardent American Jews who were coming back to go to settlements? You see on TV, all of a sudden, somebody who was very obviously an American, probably from New York or Brooklyn...

TAYLOR: Oh, yes, you see them all the time. They're very determined people. I don't know how to deal with this problem. My opinion is that no administration since the 1980s when I first started really thinking about this has been tough enough on the Israelis about the settlements. Other major problems are the status of Jerusalem and the separation of Gaza and the West Bank with no real transportation between those areas. I think the settlements are such a horrible thorn not only in the side of the Arabs and the Palestinians, but also in the side of the Israelis because they cost so much to keep them going. They put them out in these places where there is no water and then they irrigate them somehow. It's like "Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom." They're beautiful now, but they are a tremendous strain on water and security resources. Some of them are a total blot on the landscape. There is one in the middle of the country where you're winding through these Arab villages. It's just so pretty with little olive groves and dirt roads. All of a sudden, you come around the corner and there is this monstrous settlement that looks like something has landed from outer space. It doesn't fit the landscape. Apparently, it cut off some Arab crossroads. It was built in the middle of an Arab crossroad or something like that. It's those kinds of things which we've expressed our displeasure as a government on but we've never said to the Israelis, "You can't do this anymore."

Q: It may be the fatal flaw that may bring down Israel. I'm not very optimistic about it working.

TAYLOR: I don't know what you mean by "bringing down Israel."

Q: Well, in the very long run, rather than withdrawing to the '67 borders. The fact that they have taken what in my mind is a colonial policy and are fighting to protect it.

TAYLOR: It makes no sense. These areas add no economic viability to the country. They add no security to the country. In fact, they lessen the security of Israel. First of all, they've instigated many of the attacks on Israelis. But secondly, having to put Israeli soldiers out there to guard these places puts them in harm's way. The settlers themselves have to commute through Arab lands to get to any place to shop or work or whatever they do. There is nothing there for the most part. Of course, they've built rather elaborate housing out of concrete there. But there is nothing that says you can't blow up the concrete and start all over. You do have to think about the geography of Israel. At one point, it's only seven miles wide. That doesn't give you very much security. It also doesn't give you very much room to put people. When I went away from Israel, I said, "The next big war is not going to be over oil. It's going to be over water." Water is going to be a critical problem.

Q: I was talking to a man here at the Foreign Service Institute who is just retiring. He was a water expert and was pretty disillusioned. He was saying that five percent or so of the population in Gaza... The Jewish settlers are sitting on three of the best sources of water.

TAYLOR: I've heard that. You wonder why anybody would want to live in Gaza. It's the most wretched place on earth. It is just really the living end. There is no way to support that many people. It's so overgrown with settlements and Gazan settlements. The landscape has just been ruined. It just looks like a giant slum, all of it.

Q: In '88, you left.

TAYLOR: We did.

Q: Whither?

TAYLOR: We came back here. We were exhausted. Four years in Israel is just exhausting. It wipes you out. I had been on the go for four straight years without ever sitting down and catching my breath.

WAYNE LEININGER
Consul General
Tel Aviv (1984-1988)

Born in New York State, Mr. Leiniger was raised in New York and Florida. After graduating from Florida State University he joined the Foreign Service. His foreign assignments, primarily in the Consular field, include Moscow, Tel Aviv, Hong Kong and New Delhi, where he was Regional Supervisory Consul General. After attending the State Department's Senior Seminar, Mr. Leiniger had several assignments in Washington concerning Personnel Management.

Q: This must have been chief of consular section.

LEININGER: Consul general.

Q: Did it call for any language training?

LEININGER: No it was an English-speaking job. We had I think, two JO positions that were Hebrew designated, but for anybody I dealt with, any Israeli official of any importance, you could count on him speaking better English than you would ever learn to speak Hebrew.

Q: Now what was the size of the consular section?

LEININGER: We had eight officers, including me. Just a one person, one officer American

Citizen Services unit, one officer doing immigrant visas, five in the NIV unit and me. What you do as a boss in addition to making sure things are running right, you float around and pitch in. As it happened I ended up taking hands-on responsibility for two issues, primarily, the Black Hebrew Community (BHC), and the harassment of Palestinian Americans.

Q: Now before you went to Israel – you went in the summer of 1984 – before you went there did you get briefings from the State Department and if so, what kind of sense did you get from those as to what to expect or, did you know what the general tenor was, the circumstances? Did anybody say much to you?

LEININGER: The first Intifada still hadn't cranked up. They were still operating under a Labor government that had been in place forever, so the political situation seemed rather stable...

Q: Who was the prime minister then?

LEININGER: Shimon Peres. Small steps toward peace were being taken. Small steps toward peace had been being taken since 1948, and are still being taken today, and we are virtually in the same spot we were. We are not going to go there, on that issue...

Q: Did they tell you no contact with the PLO?

LEININGER: No, they didn't have to. That was a given. Nobody who didn't have professional responsibilities, didn't have any official reason to be in contact with the PLO, was authorized to have even casual contact. But even when we had formal negotiating sessions, people had to be specifically authorized to have those conversations because the PLO was not recognized as a governmental authority. It was a simple terrorist organization. But you know, we in Tel Aviv, we dealt with Israel proper. The Consulate General in Jerusalem is totally free standing, and they had jurisdiction over the West Bank and so carried out most of our day-to-day contact with the Palestinians. They did not report directly to the Embassy. The CG there is a Chief of Mission in his own right, by statute.

Q: Without an ambassador on top. But CG Jerusalem reports directly back to Washington don't they?

LEININGER: Correct. They do not come under the authority of our Ambassador to Israel at all. So Jerusalem had complete responsibility for dealing with the West Bank and the Palestinians. Conversely, they were not authorized to have any direct contact with the Government of Israel. Any time they needed to have some kind of representation made to the central government, on any issue, we in Tel Aviv had to drive up the hill. Though they had a lot of central government offices in Tel Aviv, the Israelis maintained that Jerusalem was their capital – a claim that the U.S.'s executive branch, at least, has not been willing to acknowledge, pending the outcome of "final status" talks with the Palestinians. Most of their most important Ministries – Foreign Affairs, Interior, Justice – were all located in Jerusalem, so we had to go there for our government-to-government business.

Q: In your consular thing, you did not have any supervisory role over Jerusalem as Consul

General in Tel Aviv.

LEININGER: They would call on me as a colleague, for technical advice, but they weren't obliged to take orders. The consular section chiefs there were more junior in rank than the CGs in Tel Aviv, so they'd usually be grateful for the input, but they stood on their own. The volume of work there was much lower, but the political complications – they dealt with both Israelis and Palestinians within their jurisdiction, and sometimes those respective clienteles resented the attention paid to the other – made life interesting.

Q: So you went off to Tel Aviv and what was your sense, I guess, first, of the consular challenges there?

LEININGER: This was actually, as a boss, my first section with any volume business. I mean in comparison to Moscow, the volume of business was amazing. In Tel Aviv we were processing about 80 to 90,000 NIVs a year.

Q: Where you had to manage a lot of numbers.

LEININGER: Numbers of cases, and simply getting people in and out of the building with security concerns such as long lines standing out on the sidewalk, providing inviting targets for who knows who coming by with a hand grenade. We needed to get folks into the building quick. We had in those days 40,000 or more resident Americans in Israel, the bulk of them being dual nationals. Because of the Israeli Law of Return, anybody who emigrates to Israel of the Jewish faith automatically acquires Israeli nationality. This was never was grounds for loss of American citizenship, because the naturalization part was automatic. The naturalization is not upon one's own application. That dual national population was large, active, vocal. They stood up for what they believed; they were also entitled to full consular protection. We had an awful lot of income tax responsibilities. We had a lot of – I was going to say extradition work, but it really wasn't extradition work because the Israelis would generally reserve the right to try Israeli citizens. They would use our evidence, in an attempt to try the suspects there. We were also laboring under an older version extradition treaty, one that enumerated every single crime that is covered. Modern extradition treaties usually say "any crime punishable by a year or more in jail is grounds for extradition," and that is that. That helps you avoid having to deal with revolutions in technology and newly invented crimes, like Internet crime, that no one envisioned when they drew up the treaty. "Crimes with more than a year jail time," covers all that. But, no, we had an old treaty, in which things were spelled out. Not only do you run the risk of new crimes not being covered, you also have the problem of differing interpretations of the elements of the crimes themselves. One of the god-awfullest case we got tripped up on there had to do with a Jewish-American religious teacher, who was accused on very good evidence of molesting three students in a yeshiva – religious school – in Brooklyn. He had fled to Israel, but as a tourist, so he was not an Israeli citizen. So we got the evidence from the U.S. District Attorney in New York, all bundled up pursuant to the extradition agreement article 77 and so forth. The guy was accused of raping these three students. We sent it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who sent it over to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice says, "Hmmm. We don't think so." We were dumbfounded. "Say what?" "It is not covered here. This offense is not covered in the treaty." "Well, it says rape. See here, Article 13. Rape!" Well, it turns out under Israeli law rape

is specifically defined as a crime committed by a man against a woman, and this religious teacher had molested little boys. In the Israeli interpretation of rape, his crime was not covered by the terms of the treaty. Now, they offered to try him in Israel on the basis of the evidence, but there was no way the U.S. Attorney was going to get these three kids on a plane and ship them to Israel to testify in an Israeli court. So the guy skated. That was just absolutely maddening. But it led us to eventually getting around to renegotiating the treaty.

Q: Which you did.

LEININGER: We did. We started the process when I was there. It wasn't completed on my watch. Negotiating extradition treaties usually is about a five to seven year process in my experience. Both countries are dealing with at least two different executive branch departments, justice and foreign affairs, and then they each have to get the treaty ratified by the legislative branch, and all kinds of procedural, jurisdictional, and, eventually, political problems have to be surmounted along the way.

Q: I suppose.

LEININGER: We ended up concluding one at the end of my tour in New Delhi. It had taken seven years to okay. Anyway, my primary task, as I said, was dealing with a subset of American citizen problems having to do with Black Hebrews; actually, the Hebrew Israelite Community of Israel. That is a redundancy, but that is what they called themselves, and, secondarily, we had to do something to control the GOI's harassment of Palestinian Americans. Now the Black Hebrews were led by a charismatic guy named Ben Ami Carter who, I don't know, I guess by his own inspiration, got it in his head that he and his followers, and any other like-minded people in the United States who cared to join up, self-identified, were in fact the lost tribe of Israel.

Q: So these were blacks in the United States of no otherwise discernable Jewish connection.

LEININGER: No lineal descent whatsoever. They came out of Newark and Atlanta, and Chicago, St. Louis. No prior connection. Once this community was founded, it became a magnet for people, some sincere, others who wanted to some extent masquerade under its umbrella and hide from check kiting, forgery, drug dealing, and other kinds of criminal charges. I have no reason to believe that Ben Ami was not sincere. I really believe he was. The conditions within their little community were pristine. Regular study of the Torah. Law and order without any discernable means of coercive exercise of force in any way. People behaved themselves. They were clean. The kids went to school, were polite, alert, well-nourished, well-dressed, industrious.

Q: The point is these people began to arrive in Israel.

LEININGER: Again, the Black Hebrews in Israel were originally Americans who decided they must be the lost tribe of Israel, and began to arrive in Israel in the late '70s. The original pilgrims made a stopover in Liberia for two years, as I recall, but didn't find any welcome there. You would have thought they would have. For whatever reason, they decided to come to Israel. As Americans, they didn't need Israeli tourist visas. The first group came in and comprised on the order of 35 or 40 people, but that number kept being added to. Hundreds more came over the

next ten years. By 1984 when I got there, they numbered about 900 people. By the time I left it was nearly 1300 or 1400.

Q: Why didn't the Israelis just deport them?

LEININGER: Well it wasn't that simple. First of all they didn't want to appear to be arbitrary, capricious, or racist with respect to these folks. They did try and go through the routine means of...

Q: I mean were they prepared to recognize them as Jews?

LEININGER: Well, no. This is the point. The civil authorities at least in the early days were taking a rather measured approach, and trying to work something out. But the community itself wanted to be recognized as Jewish. Now the Israeli political authorities are *not* the ones in Israel who decides who is a Jew, or, as a consequence, who qualifies for citizenship under the Law of Return. You read the newspapers even today, and every once in awhile this issue still comes up. The Orthodox rabbinical authorities reserve unto themselves the decision as to who is Jewish and who is not. In this case, they decided unequivocally that these black folks were not the lost tribe. "We have already identified the lost tribe." Those were the Falashas from Ethiopia, who were equally black, so the GOI was covered, you see, politically, from charges of racism, after they rescued the Falashas from the ongoing civil war in Ethiopia by airlifting them all to Israel. In Falashas' case, there were clear genetic markers linking them to ancient Jews.

Q: So you can't just claim to be a Jewish convert and somehow that will happen. The civil authorities so to speak do not make these decisions...

LEININGER: They do not make decisions on who is a Jew. The rabbinical authorities do. Anyone who claims he is Jewish has to demonstrate that to the religious authorities. There are in fact means by which one can convert to Judaism, but that, too, is to the requirements of the rabbinate. The Black Hebrews refused any kind of conversion, maintaining that it was not necessary, redundant. The rabbinical authorities begged to differ, and it was their decision that counted.

Q: I see. So these people are there, and you say the community gets up to about 1300.

LEININGER: And the BHC leaders said, "Okay, we're here. Then they realized, being politically savvy, that the political winds were blowing against them. The rabbinical authorities had made a definitive ruling. That ruling hamstrung the civil authorities. They cannot be declared to be citizens of Israel. By this time, as well, the law enforcement aspect of the issue started to kick in because, as I said, more and more people came to hide within the community who were actual crooks. Well, anticipating that this might have been the outcome, the BHC leadership, not being stupid people, and realizing that being thrown out of the country was a real possibility, embarked on a campaign of formal renunciation of American citizenship. They wanted to make themselves stateless, so they could not be deported to the United States. They came to us in groups of about four to six a week, over the space of about five or six years. It got started before I got there, and continued for the four years I was there. They renounced citizenship. By the time

I was getting near the end of my tour of duty, of the 1300 or so people in the community, there were about 800 adults, and of those 800, 700 of them had renounced citizenship.

Q: The Israelis must have known they were doing this from the beginning. Why didn't they pick them up and get rid of them?

LEININGER: They did, on an individual basis, but initially they didn't want to have to cope with the scandal, the outrage, that would attend any attempt at mass deportation. Can you imagine the scene of Israeli policemen or immigration authorities marching into this commune and driving out the black Americans, with kids kicking and screaming, all on CNN?.

Q: Were they living on basically Israeli public assistance?

LEININGER: No. They were not given formal work permits, but they were, as almost any developed country has, an under-population of folks who were willing and able to do the work that no one else wants to do. They swept the streets. They cleaned people's houses. They hauled garbage. They did those kinds of things. They were living in the town of Dimona, which was another burr under the Israeli saddle. Dimona is the site of the Israeli nuclear research program, so having these people camp out in an old kibbutz – that's what it was, it was an old abandoned kibbutz – just really got to them.

Q: So the Israelis were not willing to take the political heat for fear of going after them. Did these people have political support from the United States?

LEININGER: The Black Caucus would weigh in from time to time. That actually diminished as folks renounced American citizenship, but at least initially they had very strong support from the Black Caucus. Visiting delegations would make a point when they went to the Ministry of the Interior who had jurisdiction over the BHC, to ask the Government not to harm these people. Well, long story short. The Israelis had a change in administration. The Labor Government got voted out of office, and was followed by the more conservative Likud party; worse, the Likud formed its ruling coalition only by including what otherwise were the marginally small religious parties. Worst of all, the Ministry the religious parties insisted on having as their part of the coalition pie was the Ministry of Interior – exactly the Ministry that dealt with the BHC “problem.” The new Minister of the Interior was a member of a religious party, as was his right-hand man, Arieh Deri. They, unequivocally, were going to do something about “these people.” This is how they talked about the BHC, “these people.” Lacking a direct way of deporting them, because most of the adults by this time had renounced citizenship – we weren't going to take them back as aliens with respect to the United States – they sought other solutions.

Q: They couldn't be deported because they had no legitimate means of entry to the U.S.

LEININGER: Correct. The Israelis began to take indirect coercive action, shall we say, to induce these people to leave on their own. They cut off the water and the electricity, do you remember that? You were in charge of the Overseas Citizens Services office in CA at the time. Now, in the past, the Israelis might go after individual adults on the street. Occasionally they would arrest somebody on criminal grounds. These guys were not American citizens anymore; so we had

nothing to do with that. They were crooks, so we had no problem with that, either. We didn't even visit them in jail because they weren't Americans any more. We didn't have a dog in that fight. But once they started to do things against the Community that impacted on the well being of those 500 kids, we had real reasons to be concerned.

Q: The children remained American.

LEININGER: They were Americans, and they were suffering. They were in Dimona, in the Negev Desert, with no fans, not just no air conditioning, but no fans, even in the desert in the summertime. No water. So we went marching up the hill and said, "You cannot do that to these people. That is inhumane." Well then they would relent for two or three weeks, and then there would be outages again. They would be sporadic, pure harassment. Well, eventually the people in the community themselves got fed up with having to put up with things like this, and they started to send out feelers to the Government, "Isn't there some grounds for compromise here. Okay, you say we can't be citizens, okay. Can we at least have residence permits and work permits and can you just let us be?"

Q: In Israel.

LEININGER: In Israel. The Israelis for their part said, "On one condition and one condition only. You become Americans again, so that we can selectively deport those of you who are criminals." Michael, you know the drill when someone renounces citizenship. They come before you and you have to counsel them, and you give them a statement of understanding of what is going to happen to them. "You are going to be regarded as an alien with respect to the United States. You and any future children you might have won't have any rights of return to the U.S. You have to qualify for a visa. We won't have any ability to intervene on your behalf or welfare," and so forth. We tell them to think about it. And you ask them explicitly, "Are you undertaking this action under no force or threat of coercion?" Every single person who came before us would duly read all these things, sign all these things, proclaim themselves to be acting on their own volition, without any compulsion, force or anything applied against them. Well, once the general terms of this deal were outlined to the Department, the issue got thrust back to the attorneys in CA/OCS/PRI – Policy, Regulations, and Interagency Liaison. Is that right?

Q: Yes, definitely.

LEININGER: They did some very creative lawyering and came up with what turned out to be a very helpful interpretation. They said, "Well, though there were individuals who came forward one at a time, or in groups of two or three or six, all of whom individually stated at the time that they were proceeding with renunciation voluntarily and were not acting under any duress or coercion, we believe the case can be made that the overriding political and social environment created a climate in which a reasonable person could not make a reasoned decision" – and they voided all the certificates of loss of nationality that were issued as a result of those renunciations! So all those people had the right again to U.S. passports.

Q: Right, so did the Israelis let the people...

LEININGER: The Israelis relented. The Israelis issued residence permits and work permits. The community now lives there in relative tranquility, as far as I know. I keep in touch with my former secretary, who is now the senior-most FSN in the Tel Aviv consular section, Ingrid Barzel. Ben Ami Carter is still the leader.

Q: Did the Israelis take the position...did they stop new ones from coming in at port of entry?

LEININGER: Yes, well, our reaction to their tightening entry policies is what got the Israeli government's attention. The measures they were taking at the airports to limit the growth of the community got to be unreasonable, to the point of being abusive to black Americans in general. They were strip-searching, and detaining overnight without consular access, groups like the Baptist Church Choir of Montgomery, Alabama. We just couldn't have that. It just went on and on. I'd go to the Foreign Ministry, and I would get received graciously, and, "Oh, yes," the people in the Consular Administration would say, "we understand completely. This is awful. It is a blot on Israel's reputation. We will do everything we can." Well, yes, but how much pull does any Foreign Ministry have against the power of an Interior Ministry in any society, let alone in one that since its inception has felt itself to be under attack? The security officials trump everything; always will. So I would get heard out very nicely at the Foreign Ministry, and the abuses would continue. Within another week or ten days there would be another group of people getting strip searched; the whole nine yards. Tom Pickering by this time was Ambassador there. I started out with Sam Lewis, who was completing his seventh year when I first arrived. Then Pickering came. I had pretty good ambassadors. Hartman, Lewis, and Pickering in a row. Tom had been in Jordan most previously; I think it was Jordan. He knew the issues; he knew the personae. His focus, as it was for all political types, was, "We have to make peace. Let's work with the Israeli government, and we can't antagonize Israeli government if we are going to keep it on track for peace." But I eventually said, "Tom, look. We have a whole identifiable group of Americans who are as American as you or I, who are being subjected to conditions and treatment at that airport that are unconscionable, and we can not allow it to go on. And that is my job, to put out a warning." Now; you have to put this in context. We had not sent out a travel advisory or warning to the American populace to avoid going to Israel even during the 1967 war. Such was the Israeli lobby, the mood in Congress, and the reluctance of people in the Department on the geographic desk to antagonize the Government of Israel. We didn't even question it at that time. But the point about this, again for context, is that the State Department in the '70s and '80s had begun through the Bureau of Consular Affairs being more aggressive in issuing travel advisories when there were problems in other geographical areas. Once an advisory was issued, it could have a dramatic effect on tourism, in addition to having general public relations consequences...

Q: Exactly.

LEININGER: ...and, in turn, on tourist income coming in to various countries. So the advisories became very politically sensitive issues. This particular advisory, given the nature of the subjects of the advisory, and the reluctance of the Israeli government to be seen as persecuting, or discriminating against black Americans, I knew would get their attention, if we could get it ginned up, it. So that is when I talked Tom into backing it, and we got the Department to approve it. We told the Israelis, "We will be issuing this statement next Monday."

Q: What year was this approximately, do you remember?

LEININGER: This would have been 1987ish.

Q: So it had been going on for some time.

LEININGER: Yes, and only at this point did we get their attention. Tom notified the Deputy Prime Minister, as I recall.

Q: Did this particular advisory refer only to the question of how they were dealing with black Americans?

LEININGER: Right. It was limited only to black Americans at ports of entry. So Pickering tells the Government that this is en route, and that it is going to be issued “next Monday.” They fell all over themselves. “Oh, you can’t do that. Give us 48 hours and we will fix the problem.” Within 48 hours they replaced the airport immigration authority leadership with new people. They gave us the home phone number of an Israeli senior Foreign Service officer, a former Ambassador. “24/7, any problem with the airport, call and this guy will show up there and resolve it.” We said, “Okay, we will give you a month. We will test this system”—and it worked. Within a month the number of incidents went down to virtually nothing. And any time there was an incident, I called up this guy at his house, even if it was 2:00 in the morning. Some of those planes got in at ungodly hours. He was out there like a shot, and got people cleared.

Q: Did they still get, though, people trying to filter in to the Black Hebrew Community?

LEININGER: Yes, but any country has the right to exclude an individual tourist, and we weren’t going to be second-guessing every single admission decision they made. Our concern was with their arbitrary, and seemingly discriminatory, abuse of sovereign authority.

Q: Were they still deporting individuals from that community?

LEININGER: Yes, once the people got themselves eligible again for U.S. documents. Of course, the real crooks often were not willing to apply for a passport, but once we deemed them Americans, then we would give them a travel letter and they would be extradited, or deported, back to the United States.

Q: Some of them were removed then.

LEININGER: Some of them were removed. As a matter of fact some of them had U.S. federal warrants against them. They were wanted by the FBI. So the U.S. had a reason to want to get these people back to face justice.

Q: So that system has now worked for all of these years. Isn’t that interesting. And then the other issue of the black Americans entering seemed to go away.

LEININGER: Almost completely away.

Q: Tell me about the Palestinian American issue. Well with the Palestinian American issue I suppose one could say almost in effect the Arab-American issue, or would you really say it was a Palestinian issue?

LEININGER: It was in those days more a Palestinian-American issue. We didn't have that many problems with Arab Americans in general to my recollection. Unlike the situation with Black Americans, the Israeli didn't take blanket action against an identifiable class of people. They would hold individuals for what they regarded to be very good reasons. Our difficulties ran along the lines of consular access, and of mistreatment. The Shin Bet would pick up somebody on suspicion of being a PLO sympathizer or operative of some kind, acting on the basis of whatever kind of information security forces operate on. From their standpoint caution was the better point of valor, so they were always going after people before they built a rock solid case. Then they would just question, and question, and question some more.

Q: And you had strip searches and all that stuff at the points of entry.

LEININGER: Ports of entry, but again these were individuals, and it always was men so you didn't have this business about matronly contraltos being disrobed in front of witnesses. And it was done very quietly. When people were taken away for these kinds of things, they were held in secret for a long time. The only reason we learned that people were being detained was because they didn't show up when they were supposed to, and because friends and relatives, a week later, would say, "We were expecting a visit from our cousin, and he left Detroit on time but he didn't show up here." And we would backtrack, find out what flight he came in on, and we would eventually find the guy. Now, only once to my personal knowledge did I actually see evidence of a Palestinian-American having been tortured. There were cigarette burns, and visible signs of large welts and bruises having been healing for about a week to ten days, after we saw him when he was eventually released from custody.

Q: Was there anything to be done about that?

LEININGER: The ambassador and DCM took my report; I had a Polaroid camera and documented it. They took it up to the Prime Minister's office. I didn't hear any more. It was handled on that level.

Q: Interesting, and the ambassador and DCM didn't tell you anything after that. Did the Israelis ever...

LEININGER: The individual himself didn't want a public incident made about it for fear of retribution to his family.

Q: Did the Israelis ever produce a case out of these detentions or strip searches, did they every actually get anybody that was ever tried or held in prison on a formal charge?

LEININGER: Never on my watch.

Q: So what did you do? I mean did you try to produce the idea of a travel advisory for this group of people? I am curious if you did, because it came up later when I worked on this problem in the department.

LEININGER: We toyed with it at times, but again it was not a discernable pattern. It was individuals here, and individuals there, and we weren't sure of our facts. We could never be certain that any particular guy *wasn't* a terrorist in some way. Only over a period might such evidence have appeared. Keep in mind, the Intifada as an Intifada didn't crop up until the early to middle part of '87, which was the last year or year and a half of my tour. So we didn't have a stack of cases, a pattern, or a consistent body of evidence we could point to and say, "You have, with some degree of predictability, arbitrarily singled out these people for special attention, invidious attention, at ports of entry, and we want it to stop, or at least see better justification," because none of them had been charged. So at the time we didn't have that kind of documented behavior built up yet in order to make a strong case for a travel advisory to be issued.

Q: So you just had to deal with it on a case-by-case basis when people were reported missing and so forth. How did you fare with the Israelis in those cases?

LEININGER: As long as we were dealing with local officials, local police, or local immigration authorities, we had no difficulty. If we got to the Ministry of the Interior it was a stone wall. Again, the Ministry was in the hands of rather conservative faction of the religious parties, along with the professionally paranoid security types, and neither was inclined to play ball with us at all. They were taking steps that they believed necessary for the safety of their people and the security of Israel in general. "We understand your concern; we will take it into account, but we are not going to change anything we do." That is basically the approach they took. It is still the approach they take today, in my view.

Q: Yes, so that issue went on all the time you were there I take it.

LEININGER: Well, it was building. It was growing because the Intifada...

Q: So what else did you have to confront when you were there. You had a large visa demand; what was the nature of the visa work you were doing? Was it, let me put it another way. Did a lot of people slip out on visas and not come back to Israel or was it fairly honest tourism?

LEININGER: I would say like 80-90% of it was fairly honest tourist business, straightforward stuff. People who immigrate to Israel do so because they are highly motivated to stay in, and be in, Israel and build it up as a nation. We always took that as a foundation. The exception to that rule was usually recently-arrived Soviet Jews. Because many only went there because it was the only place the Soviet authorities would allow them to go.

Q: If they hadn't gone there initially just out of saying we want to go there...

LEININGER: Right. They had the option en route of "dropping out," as it was called in the transit cities of Vienna and Geneva – the choice not to go on to Israel, but to accept resettlement

in the United States or elsewhere in the West. But the private volunteer organizations and the major Jewish immigration organizations tried to convince them to follow through, and to go to Israel, lest the Soviets use a high drop-out rate as a pretext further to cut back on exit permissions. They'd say, "Give it a try, you will like it." Well, a lot of them did drop out and ended up in Brighton Beach. But those who 'd come to Israel and had a hard time adjusting, within six months, were at our doors, applying for visitor visas.

Q: Did you deny a lot of those?

LEININGER: We had a refusal rate among that group of about 80 or 90%.

Q: Did you have a lot of pressure about that?

LEININGER: Very little, surprisingly. Because people understood. In my experience, again, most of the congressional staffers who had any experience doing consular cases were reasonable people. It'd be only in their first six months or so that they'd be thinking that we, the consular officers, don't know what the hell we are talking about, or are arbitrary, rude, cruel and indifferent. The staffers pretty well learned on the job that there are two sides to every story, and our side, our explanation, is at least as compelling as the side they are getting from constituents in the United States. Any time we had such a case come up, we just simply wrote it up as "...recently arrived from the Soviet Union. He has got no full time job, he is living still on a government dole, and he is not learning any Hebrew." Duh! He's got no ties to Israel! We had no trouble defending those refusals.

Q: So you had high volume, but you felt that it was...

LEININGER: And it is interesting there because one particular subgroup of people who, ordinarily, all around the world would be automatic refusals, to whom we would routinely issue. We didn't start out that way. I mean we sort of grew into it, by growing out of our preconceived visa profiles. My predecessor clued me into it, and I found it to be the case, and it continues as far as I know. This was the profile: "unmarried, early 20 years old, young man or woman without a job."

Q: Probably just out of the army.

LEININGER: There you have put your finger on it. Those folks being discharged from the army, at loose ends, almost everywhere else in the world would be automatic refusals. But the tradition in Israel is that when the kids, and this is both young men and women because conscription is universal, get out of the army, mom and dad pay for a three to six month sabbatical trip around the world, or however much of the world the kid wants to go see. That is pressure relief. I mean, they had served their two to three years active duty, and they are going to be on reserve status until they are 50. All of them, without exception.

Q: I know. They have to do two weeks a year I suppose.

LEININGER: Two weeks a year active duty. And *everybody* returns. They didn't go in the army

in the first place with the intent to abandon Israel down the line. Again, the families went to Israel voluntarily, and these young people are defending the country. They haven't committed their futures and pledged their allegiance without some degree of real commitment. So when people got out of the Army, and they were at loose ends at that stage of their lives, it was the only time they could ever take this little world excursion. It made sense. When they got back to Israel, they are going to get back into the serious business of making a life and a future. So we would actually go ahead and grant visas. Our return rate among those applicants – we did the surveys – was like 98%.

Q: Interesting. Yes, I saw a few of those people in Montreal. I remember being very suspicious of them, but some of them managed to convince me they were legitimate, and didn't think of getting the visa in Israel. I would say, you are right; the profile was exactly people that you wouldn't normally issue to. That is intriguing.

LEININGER: When I am over teaching at the ConGen at FSI, and we are talk about “profiling your application pool” at your post. But we always caution, “This is good up to a point, but don't get carried away with profiles, and least of all don't let a profile formed at one post get carried over to another post where a certain little detail in the socio-economic situation can make all the difference.”

Q: That is still a valid point. I remember from my experience in Rome, and I would think you would get this, that a lot of Americans appear in Rome and I would think in the holy land, and have kind of went religiously crazy.

LEININGER: Yes, that is up next, with regard to Israel, too. The nature of the place attracts people of that bent in the first instance.

Q: Right, I mean it is a small number of the overall, but you have got some really strange people out of their minds.

LEININGER: And this is across the board, almost all religious sects. I mean we had crazy Bahais, crazy Christians, and crazy Jews. The historical aura of the place, what happened there 2000 years ago or 6000 years ago just tends to draw people who have got strong faith- based convictions about things. Fill in the blank: right or wrong, war and peace, Armageddon. When it happens, they want to be in Israel. So people are just attracted to the place in the first instance who are a little bit “off.” Secondly, at least among the Jewish American community, sending little Johnny, with behavioral difficulties, to Israel to work on a kibbutz for a year was perceived as a way to “straighten him out.” “This will get his head screwed on straight.” And of course it didn't. Life in a kibbutz is not easy. It is a lot of hard work, and it means getting along with others and obeying authority, and people who couldn't do any of the above in the U.S. did not adapt well to living in a foreign country, with, definitely, foreign customs and traditions. Don't make any mistake about it. Conditions of life were hard on the kibbutzim, and very strange for a kid from Brooklyn. Then finally, once you get to Israel, there is something about the place that sets some people off. It is – at least in the bigger cities like Tel Aviv – it is hectic, loud, it is abusive, or at least it gives such an appearance. You take New York City and blow it up into a country, and that is the state of Israel. Everybody is in your face all the time, car horns are

blaring, drivers are yelling and cursing at each other, and the gestures in the air, and the fingers. You have to learn, “don’t take it personally,” but a lot of people with genteel sensibilities when they arrived ended up getting really angry over time, and acting out. You would have bar fights and street confrontations. When people who went there were back home in Smallville, USA, they would be perfectly quiet green grocers or florists or something. But I think to an extent, obviously, there are pressures generated by living in a country surrounded by hostile neighbors, compounded by the history of the Jewish people, the history of the founding of the State of Israel, and, increasingly while we were there, the pressures of the Intifada, with even in those days, the beginnings of some random street bombings. Two people were caught in a rubber dinghy off the coast of Herzliya, which is an official American residential area, with RPG rounds in the boat. They caught two other guys with a stash of grenades in a hotel not a block and a half from the Embassy. So even we were feeling that to an extent, but for the people in the country, living in the country day in and day out, those pressures just build up and never go away.

Q: So you had a fair amount of these American services cases that were really the kind of people that went off the wall.

LEININGER: People went off the wall. We had Jesus Christ in the waiting room at least twice a week, and as the old Dire Straits song has it, “one of them must have been wrong.”

Q: Did the fact of people having been American citizens, having been in the Israeli army, have any impact on their citizenship?

LEININGER: No. First of all, they didn’t volunteer. It was compulsory military service. It was compulsory, not voluntary, and they sent you off to the Territories. And most of them didn’t serve as officers, and for us to be concerned about their U.S. citizenship they had to be either serving as officers or fighting in an army engaged in hostilities against the United States. None of those conditions applied to most people. And we’ve not even gotten to the question of their “intent” with regard to their American citizenship, which, almost universally, they had no intention of abandoning.

Q: Were there any cases of serious senior Israeli government officials that were also Americans? You don’t have to identify them, but that question ever came up you find the deputy prime minister of somewhere is also an American?

LEININGER: None to my knowledge. We will come to that similar circumstance when we come to Hong Kong down the road. But no, not in Israel, in my time. The Golda Meirs of the first wave of immigrants had long since exited the stage. I can’t recall a single highly placed government official who was originally born in, say, Shaker Heights. Of course even if they had, loss of U.S. citizenship would have still come down to it a question of intent and they’d be absolved on that, anyway.

Q: Did the Israeli government try to bring much pressure in visa cases did you find?

LEININGER: No. Not major government administrations. Local government officials would. The mayor of Herzliya happened to be my next-door neighbor. Yes, he would send his driver

over for a visa, and I'd have to tell him to come to the office like anybody else. It didn't give me any joy in those cases. The Druze leader had a little country estate north of Haifa, and apparently had been cultivating consuls general for years, inviting them up for long weekends and things. I very quickly scoped that out, with the help of my trusty senior FSN and said, "Thanks, but no thanks. I am not going there." He was a visa pusher extraordinaire, so I dodged him for four years.

Q: Did you have any scandals in the NIV section when you were there? There were some later I recall.

LEININGER: Some years later, different group of people, different NIV chief and different FSNs, two new junior officers, none of them present on my watch. We had some characters as NIV chiefs, however. One of them was a womanizer of the first water, a wonderful, um, reputation. Another guy suffered a heart attack, I think, about every six months, because he had the worst temper of anybody I have ever worked with. He just couldn't put things in perspective, couldn't mellow out. He had a difficult home situation, a wife who found fault a lot with what he was doing or not doing for the family, including housing. Among the other penances I had to pay when I was there, I was the chairman of the housing board. Being chairman of the housing board in a place like Tel Aviv, where the range of housing was so great, from small apartments with no closet space to large villas, three stories with nearly a quarter of an acre of yard, just sets you up for complaints. That was the most contentious business I've ever been involved with. I mean, who gets the small places? Singles, staff personnel, folks with no representation responsibilities – and you end up with a sort of caste system, it seems to the outside observer, as to who gets what kind of residence. You say, okay, well, the section chief has got to have a place with representational space, for section get-togethers, official dinners, and so forth. Well, those are defensible, but then there is this vast, fluctuating real estate pool in the middle that happens to ebb and flow only under market conditions. Who is at post and without housing when this particular house becomes available determines who is going to be assigned to it. Well, this NIV chief happened to get to a post at a time when there were no such nice large places available. Although he got a freestanding villa, it was rather small. The bedrooms were about 8x10, and there wasn't a lot of storage space, and it was vertical, and people don't like climbing the stairs, and on and on. We moved him three times to find like a place that would satisfy his wife. He was very understanding, himself, "Give me a place. I don't care." But he would get home and he would catch it, and poor guy.

Q: Interesting. These are the kinds of back office issues that you have to deal with in an overseas environment. They are not always transparent, and they can be extremely intense.

LEININGER: Extremely. It affects morale. People take it out at the office, against their co-workers serving on the committee, or, against supervisors, in this case. It is really awful when it is one of your own people and you can't come through for him. They expect that when you are housing board chairman, you are going to make it right for them. In reality, you have to bend over backward to avoid the impression of favoritism, which if it existed would create even more problems among everyone else in the housing pool.

Q: Did the Embassy own all the property there?

LEININGER: We owned at that point about 60% and we rented 40%, as I recall, but we had to rent more and more as the Embassy grew.

Q: So the U.S. Government was able to buy property in Israel.

LEININGER: Yes, but purchase prices were getting out of reach. Most of what we owned had been bought fifteen or twenty years before. Even if you could make a case that we'd recoup an investment in newly purchased housing over, say, the next fifteen years, FBO – the old Foreign Buildings Office, that oversees our purchase of properties abroad – isn't budgeted that way. They can't spend a lot now to save even more later.

Now on the opposite side of the house, I want to mention a guy named Julian Barkley.

Q: Oh, yes, killed in the bombing of the Embassy in Nairobi in 2000 or 1998. Julian was in my class. I knew him.

LEININGER: Julian was in *my* class, Michael. I've got the class photo to prove it.

Q: Julian Barkley was?

LEININGER: Julian Barkley was in my entering class.

Q: What number?

LEININGER: 99th. That's under the old numbering system; they started all over again in about 1980, I think.

Q: Then I encountered him very shortly thereafter. Isn't that interesting. I was his career counselor.

LEININGER: Yes, you were that. And you know he wasn't doing particularly well at the early stages of his career. He was still an FS-3 when he got there. When I got to Israel, it was 1984. We had been in the service 13 years. I was already an OC. He was an FS-3. Julian, frankly, had a reputation of talking a good game but not delivering. In this way he off-put some of the senior FSNs, the ones he needed to depend on to do his job properly. I brought him in and said, "Julian, you are better than this. At least you aspire to be better than this. Here is what you have to do in order to rehab your reputation. You have got to actually *do* something, and we're going to work on developing work habits in you that will help." I have never seen anybody dig in like he did, Mike. It was great. We did a baseline EER the first year that was very frank. "Julian has got to meet time deadlines. He has got to organize his work better. He has got to make greater attention to detail. He has got to pay greater attention to supervising his FSNs, and make sure they are doing what they are supposed to be doing," boom, boom, boom. We laid it out, year after year, noting areas in which he had demonstrated real improvement. He got promoted before he left post, to two, and then eventually to one, and he made senior service before he died. We turned him around. I have never been prouder of any individual supervisory experience than the one I

had with Julian. It was probably harder and than what the textbooks would tell you, because we were friends trying to deal with the boss-subordinate relationship. But it was also *easier*, because we were friends, because he knew me, and trusted that I had his best interests at heart.

Q: That is very interesting. By the time that I dealt with him in personnel, he had become much more impressive than when I had met him ten or fifteen years before. Anyway, one thing I was thinking about is what kind of relationship did you have with Israeli Arabs as far as business was concerned. Were many of them trying to get visas? Did you deal with them on other issues? Were they trying to emigrate out?

LEININGER: No, they weren't an issue. There was no particular issue in those days. Most of the Israeli population didn't regard Israeli Arabs as traitors. It hadn't come up as a point of concern at this stage.

Q: And they were not politicized against the Israeli state, at least in your impression.

LEININGER: No. Not at that state of affairs.

Q: Did they get the same benefits? I mean did they get as much money for their schools and that kind of stuff as the Jewish population?

LEININGER: My impression is their general economic status and station in life was generally on a par with the rest of the population. The low people on the totem pole were the recently arrived Soviet Jews. They were the least of the least. And then of course the Falashas came in, and they took the place underneath the Soviet Jews.

Q: From Ethiopia. But you didn't get the sense that the Israeli government was trying to in effect push the Israeli Arabs out and grab their land, causing them to be running to the Embassy to try and emigrate to America or someplace else.

LEININGER: No. Israeli Arabs were full citizens, unlike the Palestinians. Israeli Arabs served in the military like everybody else.

Q: Isn't that interesting. So did any of them come in for visas just to visit the U.S. Did you see many of them?

LEININGER: Just in proportion to the population. They mostly lived in north, the outskirts of Haifa, and toward the Golan Heights area. It was our consular district. When they got visas, they came back.

Q: Isn't that interesting? How did you get along? You talked a little bit about Pickering. Who was the DCM when you were there?

LEININGER: We started with Bob Flaten, and he became ambassador to some African country [Rwanda] along the way, and then Art Hughes, who became Ambassador to Yemen, I think, and eventually headed up the MFO (Multinational Force of Observers).

Q: How did your relationship with them go?

LEININGER: It was extremely good. Bob and I were golf buddies. Art never played golf, but he was relatively younger, and we talked music and things like that. Both had very pleasant wives who entertained and were very welcoming. There was no feeling of condescension in our relationship when I was there as consular section chief. In fact, I was often “Acting” – I was senior enough in rank that most of the time when the DCM was gone, I was his alter ego. So they were forced to trust me because they would be handing over certain portfolios to me for four weeks of home leave or whatever it was they were doing! Fortunately, again, mostly it was Pickering who was there when most of this happened, while he was ambassador. I was in good standing with him, so much so that when my four years were up, and we wanted to come back here and get my son into high school, and sit him down in one place in an American school before he went off to college, Tom asked me to stay on a fifth year as his *political* counselor. I said, “Tom, thanks, I am really flattered, but we owe it to our son.”

Q: So you stayed there four years. You must have extended I take it.

LEININGER: Actually we signed up for “two and two” – two years, home leave, two years – right at the outset. We knew we wanted to stay at least that long, before we ever got there.

Q: So you liked living in Israel?

LEININGER: We loved it. I mean it was paradise, and I mean that sincerely, after Moscow. The weather was wonderful, the people were welcoming. Fresh fruits and vegetables. The air was clean and fresh off the Mediterranean Sea. Our house was about five blocks from the Med. I used to run on the beach all of the time.

Q: You didn't have to go with bodyguards or anything like that?

LEININGER: Not in Israel proper. After the Intifada cropped up we couldn't go to Gaza or West Bank without an armed guard and an armored vehicle.

Q: Did you cover Gaza as a...

LEININGER: We covered Gaza as part of our district. But we had very little business there.

Q: Did many people come in from there trying to get visas or trying to get out of the country in your impression?

LEININGER: Nope. I think they didn't want to leave, for fear of not ever being allowed back.

Q: Yes because I guess they had very odd travel documents, the Palestinians. They didn't have passports from any...

LEININGER: Right, but sometimes carried the UN laissez-passer. So it was a really dicey

situation. I mean, most wouldn't have qualified for NIV's in the first place. I think we had about a 80% refusal rate for folks in Gaza.

Q: So after the beginning of the Intifada, and even then though you didn't feel at risk in Israel proper.

LEININGER: As I said, it ratcheted up to the point where we did have a couple of EAC (Emergency Action Committee) meetings about the fact the guys had been discovered in the rubber boat with the RPG rounds, and others with the grenades. It was funny, in a way, because our security officer, Chuck Boles had lost, was it Diego Asencio – was he kidnapped in Paraguay?

Q: In Colombia.

LEININGER: In Colombia, okay. Chuck had been his RSO, and he had been Spike Dubbs' RSO in Afghanistan when he'd been killed. So Chuck was just concerned to the point of paranoia that something awful was going to happen again on his watch. So when these incidents, involving real threats to the Embassy, came to light, and we were informed only after the fact, he went crazy talking to the Mossad and Shin Bet, Israel's external and internal security agencies. They'd humor him. "Don't worry, American, we have it all under control. You had nothing to worry about at any time. Don't worry in the future." That was their attitude. "As long as we have it under control, there is nothing to worry about, and we are not going to reveal information sources and methods to you when you have nothing to worry about. We have it under control." I don't think they are so cocksure these days.

Q: How interesting. Did you travel all around the country?

LEININGER: I got up and down a fair amount, yes.

Q: But I mean as a tourist did you go to different places?

LEININGER: Yes, we went all around especially south to Eilat and around the Sea of Galilee, because they had an annual marathon up there. I ran there three years out of the four. I ran a half marathon at the Dead Sea. Oh, listen, I have got to recite this. I lay awake the other night thinking about this. Because, you know, I do a lot of running, and because my Foreign Service travels have gotten me to a lot of places, for fun I started to catalog the "Bodies of Water Along Which I Have Run." So I was on the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea, the Red Sea, and the Sea of Galilee. I have done the North Sea. I have done the Moscow River. I have done the Black Sea and the Neva River in the old Soviet Union. I have done the Rhine, the Danube, the Seine...

Q: A real watery trip.

Q: Well, let me ask you again: do you have any observations or comments that you want to make about the Middle East political situation from your perspective of the time you were in Israel? I mean you must have. You went to country team meetings. You had a lot of neat talk. It had to be a frequent topic of discussion.

LEININGER: Then, as now, the Israelis took the approach that it is “us against the world, and no one stands up for us but us, and we have got to take a very hard and conservative line in making any type of concessions whatsoever, because we know what happens when you put yourself in a position of weakness. “ They tend to take the approach, “we won’t talk to those people because they are our enemies.” They have always had to be brought around to the position, “You have to talk to your enemies to make peace. Those are the people with whom you have to make peace – your enemies. You *have* to talk to them. We had an administration – the second Reagan administration – that was willing to start to push the Israelis a little harder to get them to the negotiating table, to start to talk. But every time there was any progress the fear mongers would step up and scream that the sky was falling. It worked; the Labor government was booted out; Likud people came in. One step forward, two steps back. It has happened ever since, but worse. Rabin was so close they killed him. Sharon, this is the same Sharon you are dealing with today who made Sam Lewis and Tom Pickering crazy 20 years ago.

Q: Not to mention Habib when Habib was working on the Lebanese problem.

LEININGER: Lots of people on the American side. But Sharon has always been a hard case. Sharon was banned from Fourth of July parties at the residence in the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp massacres, where he reputedly decided to let the Lebanese militia in to have its way. With Lewis, the feeling was actually personal; he didn’t want to have anything more to do with Sharon. When Pickering came in, the freeze-out was just maintained as a matter of principle. He didn’t have any personal animus against Sharon. But from Sharon’s perspective it has always been personal. I don’t know that he has ever been friendly to any American diplomat ever since.

There’s an article of faith I picked up during my four years there in the region, and in speaking to people who have worked in the NEA bureau both before and since it seems little has changed: anybody who goes to Israel with a pro Israeli bias ends up leaving understanding the Arab point of view more. Anybody who goes to an Arab country with an Arab bias ends up leaving with a pro-Israel bent. You immerse yourselves in these individual societies, and you get to see how they are so totally consumed with their own point of view, and cannot appreciate the fact that there are other human beings with wishes and desires and legitimate aspirations, too, who have got to be accommodated in some way. They are all going to have to live together, but neither will concede that that is the case. It has got to be maddening for people like Dan Kurtzer, who was an O-3 political officer in Tel Aviv when I was there, and has since been ambassador in both Egypt and in Israel. He is still fighting the same issue today, pushing the same stone up the same hill as he was 20 years ago. Same issue, and the same personages. Arafat, Sharon. Maybe they are all going to have to die, wait another five years, clear off a whole new generation of political leadership.

I tell this to new junior officers at the ConGen, and I confess, “Boy I’m glad I’m a consular officer. My attention span isn’t that long.” I like getting into concrete, resolvable problems. I got involved with the Black Hebrew’s problems; I got involved with the divided spouses’ problems. I was prepared to work on those for as long as it takes. They took several years to resolve, but they were finite. They *were* resolvable. Most consular issues are; you fix them, or not, and move

on to the next. But there aren't things that just hang over your head, amorphous, undefined, so that the parties involved don't even agree on what the problem is – like the “peace process.”

Q: So you felt the siege mentality is really a dominant feature, particularly if you were in Israel, and probably if you were in the Arab country, it would be from their point of view too.

LEININGER: Possibly, but I have difficulty sympathizing with some of the Arab governments who criticize the Israelis for the treatment of the Palestinians, and blame the United States for disregard of the Palestinians, given the fact that those surrounding Arab countries have disrespected the Palestinian people consistently as well. Not many Palestinians have legal status in these countries, let alone political and civil rights. I mean those governments have not provided material support or meaningful political support; they limit themselves only to gratuitous and inflammatory rhetoric. In many ways the Palestinians are stepchildren within the Arab world. Individual Palestinians I met while I was there were delightful. They are smart; they are family-oriented people. They are individually sweet, cultured, and peaceful. You see them and the Israelis as opposite sides of the same coin. They just happen to worship God by a different name. And it drives you nuts when you see what goes on, when you'd like to see total peaceful arrangement arrived at so that these people could live together. It could be an incredibly dynamic team. There is a richness of culture and of intellect there that is just waiting to be mined in a productive way. But it's now 50-60 years now of going at each other. It is a tragic waste. And that reminds me – well, later on when I got to New Delhi, it seemed to be the same thing with the Indians and the Pakistanis. Exactly the same thing. Exactly, in so many ways.

Q: Well, what else would you like to say about your experience in Israel?

LEININGER: Just that we were very glad to have had it. It was a great place to work, but it was also a great place to live in, in general. There's a good school, an excellent school, the American International School there is one of the best we ever have been associated with. The total student enrollment was something like 350 from K to 12. So class size was 15 or 20 kids in every grade, every class. You walk through the country and it is like living history. There is a Roman coin, arches are over there, and there, marble columns. The golf course has fallen marble columns left around from the ancient city of Caesarea. Marble columns left around from temples that are in play. They are regarded as part of the natural terrain.

Q: Don't hit it off the temple.

LEININGER: You don't get a free drop! My wife used to find old coins like other people find pop top lids from beer cans or something; she finds these little coins. She read heavily into archeology, did volunteer work on about six digs, including the Jesus boat in the Sea of Galilee, you know that 18-to-20 foot long vessel that is just the kind of fishing vessel used then, and it dates from the age. Jesus' apostles are said to have been on it when he did his walking-on-water.

MORRIS DRAPER
Consul General

Jerusalem (1986-1988)

Morris Draper was born in California in 1928 and graduated from the University of Southern California in 1952. An Arabic language officer, Mr. Draper served in a number of Middle East posts including Beirut, Baghdad, Jeddah, Ankara, Jerusalem, and Washington, DC. Mr. Draper was interviewed in 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: After your tour with the Board of Examiners, you were assigned to Jerusalem as Consul General from 1986 to 1988. Could you explain the uniqueness of our representation in Jerusalem and what your responsibilities were?

DRAPER: Jerusalem is unusual in many different ways. From the American diplomatic aspect, it is unique because the US has never recognized the status of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. We have always maintained, going back to 1948, that its final status should be decided within the context of a peace treaty. Consequently, we have a mission in Jerusalem which is not subordinate to our Embassy in Tel Aviv and which is only nominally recognized by the Israeli. There is no real parallel except maybe for Honk Kong which reports directly back to Washington rather than London or Beijing. The Mission in Jerusalem reports directly to Washington, although in the real world, any Consul General would be stupid to ignore the American Ambassador in Tel Aviv. There has to be close coordination. This scheme of representation gives the United States considerable leeway in that the Consul General has relationships of sorts with the Israeli authorities--very tenuous with the Defense Ministry--but satisfactory with the Foreign Ministry and others. At the same time, the people in the occupied territories see the C.G. staff as officials they can talk to and who might be potential intermediaries, as protectors, as people who follow human rights policies. There are many American citizens in the West Bank and Gaza; they see the American passport as an entry into a better life. Our consular staff is overwhelmed all the time by the Palestinians seeking entry into the United States to work, to study--there are an enormous number of students who apply for study visas. Then there are a vast number of Israelis who want to visit the United States; there is a very sizeable group of ultra-religious, ultra-conservative Jews who came originally from Eastern United States--Brooklyn, New Jersey, etc--who settled in Jerusalem, but maintain their American citizenship; some of them at least do not recognize the secular State of Israel and do not want to acknowledge its existence by becoming one of its citizens. There is a growing population in Israel and in Jerusalem so that you can see on any given day in the consular section a handful of American tourists in polyester and shorts and a vast number of Palestinians dressed in everything from business suits to tribal costumes and Israelis wearing their traditional costumes--fur hats, etc--with full beards with lots of children. It is tough duty; we reject many Palestinian visa applications if we suspect that the visitors might become permanent residents in the US. It is also a painful process for Israelis who are accustomed, after having spent two or three years in the army, to travel around the world for a year before they return to their jobs or schools; we have to turn down some applicants who are suspected of seeking an excuse to go to the United States to get their "green card" or otherwise stay in the US beyond the visa time limitation. We have to observe our laws and consular regulations. This leads to considerable friction and a lot of pressure on the part of powerful people--politicians, educators, etc. It is a human problem.

While I was in Jerusalem, I spent vast energies in promoting more contacts between Israelis and Arabs, particularly those who were politically acute who had been unwilling to talk to each other over the years. I held a number of quasi-secret meetings--lunch or dinners at my house, where people could come inconspicuously to meet others. One of the big problems is that so many Israelis and Arabs have never had such things as a sensible conversation with each other. There was always a great divide. When Israel first occupied the territories in 1967, the Israelis walked and marched and were bussed through the territories, but gradually, as the hostilities of the Arab population increased, fewer and fewer Israelis visited the territories. In 1986, when I arrived, I found that in fact the "Green Line" had been reestablished. Of course a lot of people still went into Israel and the territories, but it was very common to find Israelis who had never talked to an Arab in their lives and vice-versa. So I was trying to introduce and encourage many of the Palestinian nationalists to meet with certain Israelis, and not just the peaceniks. I encouraged the Palestinian militant to talk to the Israeli militants at my house or in other places. My success was uneven, to put it mildly, but at least there was a process. I made it a habit that all my social functions at my house would have a mixed Arab-Israeli guest list as much as possible, trying to find a concept that might be unifying. I remember we had an American ballet company, we had guest conductors and sometimes we could get Israelis and Arabs together in that kind of setting which was non-political and non-threatening. We couldn't do it in other ways. The Fourth of July party always had a mixed group from all sectors. Some people refused to come because they didn't want to talk to other groups. Particularly in 1986, we had a lot of interesting episodes. I spent a lot of time on this "exchange" program and there were some fruitful outcomes. It didn't always work well; in one case, two strong Palestinian Liberation Organization supporters carried on talks with a junior member of the Beirut branch of the Likud coalition, which was in power at the time. They came out with a manifesto of sorts which was quite moderate and pragmatic. Likud conservatives spanked the young politician for having that conversation, not to mention co-authoring a manifesto with Arabs. Then there were other such events.

There were other problems. The Palestinians can be pretty exasperating. As Abba Eban, the former Israeli Foreign Minister said one time, the Palestinians never lose an opportunity to lose an opportunity. It was very much rolling half up the hill, only to roll all the way to the bottom. Even my most pragmatic friends with whom I discussed the problem as recently as this past February knew that the Palestinian support of the Iraqis after their invasion of Kuwait, but the Palestinian "main-stream" including the most conservative and the most pragmatic, tended to see Saddam Hussein in a light which differed from that of the rest of the world. They are so frustrated.

We did some things for them in the early '80s. We had a modest economic assistance program which was doing a lot of good work, including then establishment of an Arab owned bank in the territories, which was an essential ingredient. Few Americans, even including officials, recognize the economic death-grip around the territories, particularly in Gaza. These people are doubly frustrated because they can't sell what they produce and they can't farm what they want. These restriction exists sometimes for practical reasons, such as the shortage of water, but people who grow vegetables, fruits, melons, nuts on the West Bank could have found a market in Jordan and in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, but were constrained not only by Israeli regulations, but also by Arab indifference and Arab road blocks or those set up by their competitors. A West Bank truck, loaded with fresh grapes, would cross, after paying an enormous fee to the Israelis, the River

Jordan to Amman only to find that the farmers and businessmen there would see to it that the truck stayed in customs for three or four days until the fruit had rotted. It was a continuous series of frustrations for the Palestinians in the territories. The Israelis would not let them compete and in fact gained considerable revenue from the taxes on the trade that the Palestinians conducted. But it was a "Catch 22" arrangement and some of our assistance programs were designed to overcome this. We introduced new animal husbandry techniques, better irrigation facilities, better sanitation, better medical facilities, etc. But the day to day life of people who were subjected to these constant economic and social frustrations and who had to deal with the Israeli bureaucracy which is unbelievable was just a major burden.

Q: What causes the Israeli bureaucratic problem?

DRAPER: I don't know why the bureaucracy is so complicated in Israel. It parallels the French bureaucracy, but the French at least have learned over centuries how to deal with it. But Israel, for example, it might take as long as six months to obtain a driver's license. The applicant has to pass a series of examinations; he has to take required courses by a fly-by-night outfit in some cases; and it is accompanied by implicit, if not explicit, bribery to facilitate the process. It is very painful. In many countries of the world it is difficult to get such things as telephones because of the shortage of equipment or technicians or other logistical problems. But in Israel, many of the obstacles are institutionalized. From a social point of view, one of the major problems is the extensive housing development, but the inability to complete a house in a reasonable period of time. Once all the licenses and approvals are obtained, it may take two and half years to build a house, which might take six months in the US. A house in the US can go up in two or three months with landscaping--and it has to be done that quickly if the builder is not to lose his financial shirt. In Israel I have seen homes that were unfinished after two years. Of course, there are different styles and materials, but that doesn't really explain the gap. It is a very serious problem. It means that, just as in the Soviet Union, young people who want to get married have to live with his or her parents in a small apartment, with all the complications that this arrangement generates. It is a serious social problem. When people don't get married when they are young, there are fewer children and that is a concern to the state.

There are a lot of problems of this kind. When the average Israeli needs six months to get a driver's license, imagine how long it takes a Palestinian who in addition to everything else has to undergo the scrutiny of the police and security authorities who could be very arbitrary if they suspect the applicant of being a secret member of the PLO or sympathizer or a person who could communicate with the PLO; they might just refuse to grant permission for a driver's license altogether. It is not the harsh part of the occupation--the night visits and some of the humiliation which are visited on the Palestinians (although those are very important to the Arab psyche)--but the day-to-day living experiences can be pretty bad for people unfamiliar with that kind of bureaucracy and its complications. The Arab businessman who needs capital has to go through a lot of complications and has to borrow money from Israeli institutions at very high rates of interest. It is very difficult.

Q: You mentioned humiliations visited on the Palestinians. What kind were they?

DRAPER: Just going through check-points all the time; seeing Israeli troops moving into villages; the attitudes of some of the Israeli soldiers towards the Arabs; the feeling of being a second-class person. These things don't apply to all; you have to give the Israelis credit. Many Israelis soldiers are reservists--every Israeli has to serve three weeks every year until they reach 55--who after having served in the territories, come home and write for their newspapers about the horrors of serving in the territories--about the things they didn't like. Many hate that duty; it is very difficult to be in a occupation army. We discovered that ourselves. While I was there, the Intifada began on a major scale. The Israelis still haven't learned how to deal with it effectively--I am not sure that anybody really could. It is a very difficult thing to do. The average Israeli soldier does not like to carry out a policy of repression, doesn't like to fire guns at kids throwing stones, but he doesn't have much choice. It is pretty exasperating.

Unfortunately, 1986 was a transitional period that might have led to something and didn't. Today, it has just gotten worst; it has degenerated greatly since 1988, partly because of the Iraqi policies and the ostensible support that the Palestinians in the occupied territories and in Jordan gave Saddam Hussein. It now will be much more difficult for the Israelis to compromise. The peaceniks in Israel--"The Peace Now" movement, for example--are in disarray and much weaker and less interested in making a deal with the Arabs. Israelis who a few years ago were willing to give up territory--parts of the west Bank and Gaza--no longer feel that way, in part because of their experience with the SCUD missiles from Iraq. They want territorial depth. They are also very unhappy with the Palestinians who were so eager to support Saddam Hussein.

Q: Have the changes in demographics in Israel played a role in this new attitude? Is not today's Israel different from the one we perceived decades ago when the European Jews were predominant?

DRAPER: I think that is true. The dominant forces in the creation of Israel, going back to the beginning of the century, were Ashkenazis--European Jews--from Russia, Poland, Germany. They dominated up to 1948 when Israel was established. Ashkenazi leaders--the Ben Gurions, etc--were in the Labor Party at the time; they had migrated to the kibbutz and had fostered pro-Zionist sentiment. During the founding of the new state, however, many of the so called oriental Jews were brought into Israel from Morocco, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, India--all over. Their birthrate was higher and their attitudes were more Middle Eastern in many ways--their synagogue is different in appearance, for example and so is their ritual. They have gotten to the point where they are now the dominant element numerically in Israel and that has changed the culture. I first visited Israel in 1958 and the differences are considerable. The music you hear in the streets emanating from cafes and restaurants is very Arabic in nature. In fact, a lot of the so called oriental Jews grew up primarily in an Arabic-speaking culture--Morocco and Yemen especially. They never lost their affinity for that culture. The Jews from Morocco tended to know Arabic and French much better than Hebrew, which they only learned after arriving in Israel. Unfortunately, in Israel's early days, there were great biases directed against the "orientals" by the Europeans to the point that as late as 1970, there were no "oriental" Jews among the top fighter pilots in the Israeli Air Force. All this began to change in 1977, as the "oriental" Jews became increasingly important. Begin, an Ashkenazi, reached out to the "oriental" Jews to gain their support which made it possible for him and his party to win elections after having been out in the wilderness for a long time. In 1958, when I first visited Israel, I was a guest in an

Ashkenazi home and they referred to "them"--the "oriental" Jews. There were considerable racial undertones in their comments as if the "orientals" were all second class people. In more recent years, inter-marriages have broken down the barriers and it is clear that the "oriental" Jews are now getting an education which is at least the equivalent of that received by the European Jews. Now the "orientals" are really the balance of force. The Labor Party, which was the home of the Ashkenazis and the Zionists, is no longer in a position to gain a numerical majority, even with its alliances, in the Knesset. The "oriental" Jews tend to be more anti-Arab, are much less willing to be accommodating with the Arab states. They tend to be more conservative religiously although that varies considerably in specific instances. That has effected all kinds of things in the Israeli body politic, including the explosive issue of religion--for example, the definition of what is a Jew. So Israeli life has really changed since its founding, but it has made it in some ways more lively. Israel, in 1991, is much more democratic culturally than it was in 1958 because of the inter-marriages and the co-mingling of various parts of society. An "oriental" Jew from Yemen can succeed in society just as well as his European colleague.

Q: The Palestinian at one time was considered the merchants of the Middle East--shrewd trader--who was interested in education and self-improvement. That drive seems to have atrophied.

DRAPER: I don't think so. The Palestinians at the turn of the century were not considered at the top of the heap by other Arabs. Through the years, starting even before the establishment of Israel, they tended to respond to the Jewish challenge and emulated certain attributes such as respect for education. Therefore, today Palestinians whether living in Kuwait or Jordan or the West Bank tend to have a very high degree of education. They want it. They also tend to be travelers--people who go abroad to seek success and have found it. They migrate the way the more aggressive Chinese did. Today, the Palestinians are considered pretty strong in the sense that they have responded very effectively to the Israeli challenge. It has in fact brought them up to the level where the Lebanese have been all along--excellent traders with a great respect for education. I remember years ago being in a typical Palestinian home in Amman, Jordan, visiting friends; their children were not allowed to watch television after five o'clock in the afternoon; they had to do their homework. They would sit down at the dining room table or where they could and go to work until 10 when they went to bed. It was very interesting.

Q: When you were in Jerusalem, who was the Ambassador and were there any particular problems?

DRAPER: None what so ever. Tom Pickering was the Ambassador. He and I had been good friends for many, many years. We did have problems with an American citizen of Palestinian origin who was a pacifist; he wanted to generate a genuine pacifist movement, a passive resistance to the occupation. It drove the Israelis up the wall. We tended to think that the Israelis tend to overreact to these kinds of activities. They were very upset by another Palestinian, who was not an American citizen, who published an Arab newspaper in Hebrew in an effort to show the Jewish community that there were moderate Palestinians. The Israelis did everything they could to stop distribution of this paper--harmless as it was. There were other incidents of this kind.

It is very difficult to be Consul General in Jerusalem because if you stop just beyond a certain line, the Israeli will consider you and tell you and publicize you as being anti-Israeli or worst, anti-Jewish. The Arabs do the same. You have to walk down a very narrow path. You can stay out of trouble by never saying anything or doing anything, but if you want to encourage interchanges and to know people and if you want to show the flag in different quarters, you have to take risks and can get into a lot of trouble. My wife was criticized the first week we were there by both Arabs and Israelis; so we knew she was doing something right. But you do antagonize people and that has its reverberations. I remember making a sarcastic remark about Meir Kahane, an American born rabbi who headed the Jewish Defense League which supported the expulsion of Palestinians from the territories. I found him repulsive and I told that to a Jewish American group that was visiting; I received scores of letters of complaint to me, to the Department, to the White House. I was always in that kind of trouble. I escaped some of it because Teddy Kollek, the Mayor of Jerusalem, defended me vigorously before the members of the Jewish American community. But it was a hard task. I was criticized by the Jordanian government for some of the positions I had taken, mainly because the Jordanians wanted more jurisdiction over our modest economic assistance program. The American employees of the Consulate General were also laboring under impressions left by previous generations of Foreign Service officers. Congressmen would come on visits and sort of automatically expected that the Consulate General's employees would tilt irreversibly toward the Arab side. That was very hard on junior officers. As I mentioned before during our discussion of UN forces, American officers tend to sympathize with the "under-dog". The Palestinians are the "under-dogs". Some of that creeps into your views, but you can't afford to let that bias your reporting.

Q: Did you have seminars with your officers?

DRAPER: Yes, of course. These biases work both ways. We couldn't fantasize the Israelis as people who turned the deserts into gardens. You have to be objective as possible, although it is very difficult. We tried to handle this in various ways, by making sure that we had bonding with both sides. The Chief of our Political section, who spoke beautiful Hebrew and beautiful Arabic, was one of the people who emulated my example and brought Arabs and Israelis together. So we had ways to bridge the gaps. Many Israeli organizations took the initiative and invited our staff to see their kibbutzims or their organizations. We were particularly interested in organizations on both sides that tried to hold out a hand to the other side.

There was another not-too-well understood factor of living in Jerusalem. There were certain people who sought to be stationed there for reasons that weren't so imperative, including religious reasons. So there were some Americans in the organization that were fine people who did excellent work, but had come to Jerusalem for cultural or religious reasons. That is a major factor; you could be an atheist in Jerusalem and yet you would have to be affected by being at the well-springs of major monotheistic religions--Islam, Judaism, Christianity. There are many parts of Jerusalem that look the same today as they did 2,500 years ago--absent the television aerials. You can easily see the marks the many invaders have left, going back to Chadians to the Mamelukes, the Turks, the Jews, the British, etc. It is one of the most fascinating and attractive cities of the world because of the interplay of history.

Q: How would an officer with strong religious views be affected by an assignment to Jerusalem?

DRAPER: We had Jewish officers there, including one who was very exposed because he was the chief of the Consular Section. It never hurt his performance or the attitude that the Arabs had towards him. They regarded him as a very tough individual, but they thought he was fair. They didn't think that he made decisions on the basis of his Jewish heritage. That didn't work with everybody. It worked with this officer because he made such an effort because he made a conscious attempt to have a mixed of national employees, both Jewish and Palestinians.

We were improving our language capacity all the time; our junior staff was very good. Often they had had Arabic training before they got to Jerusalem and then they studied Hebrew while they were there and used it. I didn't see on the staff any very militant Christian, but had there been one, it could have effected his performance. I am speaking theoretically because many of the fundamentalist Christian groups in the US are vigorous supporters of Israel, partly because they believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, which includes designation of the Jews as the "Chosen People". I used to tease my Israeli friends by pointing out to them that they were getting such strong support from Southern Baptist groups; I said that the reason was that when Judgment Day came they expected the Jews and their supporters to be chosen. I can only speak to the question of the effect of personal religious convictions on a Foreign Service officer from a theoretical point of view. I do think that a person in the Jerusalem Consulate General has to watch out very carefully for the hidden agendas that some people have. In Jerusalem, there are inter-racial tensions, compounded by inter-religious differences. In the C.G., among our national employees, we had Israeli Jews, we had Israeli Arabs, we had Palestinians of various denominations. When one person died, who was an Armenian, the Armenian Patriarch called and said that he had a number of candidates that we should consider for what he called the "Armenian slot" in the American mission. So we had pressures of that kind.

Q: Did you feel that there was an Israeli intelligence officer among your staff?

DRAPER: We had to fire one person that we were pretty sure was a *de facto* Israeli agent; on the other hand, there were a couple of Arab employees that we were sure were passing along everything they could to their clandestine organization. But a lot of this doesn't matter. We used to speak on the phone in the hopes that the intelligence service would pick it up. We did that for our own purposes. There was only one case where we had a problem and that resulted in the discharge of the employee, as I mentioned earlier. It was complicated because not only was there an Israeli angle to it, but there was also a third country angle.

We had the usual other problems sometimes compounded by the need of people to get along with each other, but who were jealous about other's promotions. We had an inspection at the end of 1986 or the beginning of 1987 which was very useful. In the inspection group was a wise old consular officer who looked at our rather large consular establishment which was doing more business than Tel Aviv with only about half the staff. This inspector suggested that we should have a greater hierarchy--more leaders, sub-leaders, etc. We were concerned about doing this because it inevitably an Armenian might come out ahead of a Roman Catholic or Jew ahead of a Palestinian. But we wanted to make the section work better. The logical answer was a more hierarchal answer in rank, specialization and duties; we had one Chief and a lot of Indians. This inspector had served in Canada and Belgium where friction between religious and ethnic groups

was very much a problem. He convinced us that we could restructure; we followed his advice and did so, with good results, even though the jealousy arose. We handled it in the public relations way by telling all that the rivalries were negated by the advancement opportunities that the new organizational structure provided.

There were other complications resulting from wars and invasions, including that our old-time employees--people who had been with us before 1967--claimed exemption from Israeli income taxes by the virtue of their Jordanian citizenship, which theoretically made them still subject to Jordanian law. Oddly enough, Israel applied Jordanian as well as British mandate law to the territories as well as some part of Israeli law. Even to this day, I expect that there are pressures on these employees to pay Israeli income taxes. On the other side, Israeli citizens who were clearly subject to income taxes insisted all along that they be paid in cash and not by check so that the income paper trail is not so clear. This is something that virtually every Israeli citizen wants done; otherwise he would be wiped out by income taxes were the rates are 70 percent or more. The inspectors looked at our financial system both in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. We used some common arrangements. They pointed out that up to one half of our manpower could be saved by switching from a cash to a check basis. The head of the Israeli national employees immediately made it clear that every Israeli would walk out of the C.G. and out the Embassy in Tel Aviv if we switched systems. So here was a situation where the US could have increased efficiency and saved money, but was limited by local customs. Finally we worked out a system by which the Israeli citizens hired a retired employee, who would keep the books. The checks were sent to him and he would then pay the employees in cash; it required this fellow to spend ten to fourteen days in the Embassy and the C.G. to make the system work.

Q: There is a point of view in Washington which believes that everything reported from American officials in Israel ends up sooner rather than later in the Israeli Foreign Ministry and on Capitol Hill. Is there any truth to this?

DRAPER: It was a factor that inhibited some people from declaring forthrightly what they wanted to say. I made it very clear to our reporting officers that we had to bend over backwards to appear objective. That meant use of "code" words and the tone of objectivity had to be clear. That however should not stop them from stating forthrightly what was happening. In some areas as human rights violations, we had to be accurate. We couldn't say that three houses had been demolished last night at 12 a.m. when in fact it had been four at 1 a.m. We had to describe our sources; we tried to follow as much as possible the newspaper rules that there be at least two sources to verify a story. It was kind of interesting, but we got very little flack and our reporting was held up as a model around the world. Actually the C.G. was chosen as one of the ten best missions inspected that year and our reporting was ranked as highly as possible. When you think about "code" words, it is very easy for things to creep in--all too easily. For example, we reported very assiduously about how people were arrested. In a series of reports, we showed that Israeli prosecutors had a 100 percent record of convictions in military courts. That is not possible statistically. These arrests included Palestinians and American citizens. One citizen was arrested because he happened to be on the fringes of a riot in Rammullah; he was brought before the Israeli authorities and even the violation citation contradicted the testimony in court. We had a full record of the proceedings. The prosecution didn't have any basis in law even to charge the defendant. The judge took secret testimony from an "intelligence" source which was customary

in Israeli courts and then came out and handed down a sentence on the American citizen. It was a trumped up case, but the judge tried to mitigate by not giving a sentence even though he found the defended guilty. So the American citizen was not actually harmed except that a sentence appeared on his record. We had many cases like this which clearly showed that the Israeli establishment was not willing to admit that it could be occasionally wrong or that in some cases it did not have adequate evidence. Our reports were very strong and aroused considerable controversy in Washington--so much so that our then assistant secretary for Human Rights--Dick Schifter--came out and talked to me privately about the nature of our civil right complaints. I was able to show him that we were being extra careful in our conclusions and in reporting the facts so that others could draw their own conclusions. Finally, he agreed to some degree. It was a tricky issue because the mission in Jerusalem in the past had gone a little overboard without adequate facts. That had been remembered by many people, including me. But we didn't get too much flak about it; our human rights submission was so carefully done that the real battle occurred in Washington on the question of how much of our reporting to include in the final report. The Israelis were very upset when the report came out and blamed us quite a bit for it, but not as much as I thought they would. The Israeli press was tolerant. I had many interviews with the Israeli media and was very outspoken about such matters as the Jewish lobby in the United States, about the need for objective reporting by the Consulate General, about the need to portray a balanced picture--some of which helped us, some didn't--, but they got a straight story from us.

I had a situation in which one of the most distinguished, successful and revered attorneys in Israel, whose pro-Zionist sentiments could never be challenged in any way, told me once in great confidence about his disappointments with the Israeli judicial system. He described what he called its corrupt nature starting from 1947-48 and up to the present. He confessed that he had gotten to the point where he no longer went into a courtroom willingly because he was so disgusted by the corruption of the system. This was a conversation worth reporting to Washington, but I could not identify him by name because I had to anticipate that this would become known to quarters that might try to get even with him and that might even try to ruin his reputation unfairly. Besides, his story was given to me in confidence. There are cases like this where we had to report the substance, but not divulge the source. That does weaken the report to some extent, just like a newspaper column that quotes "unnamed sources" is sometime suspect. But by identifying the source too closely, it would have been harmful and perhaps dangerous So there were cases where we didn't change the thrust of the report, but we did not divulge the sources. That was done for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Q: On the question of corruption, what kind was he referring to?

DRAPER: He was particularly unhappy with the appointment of judges, beginning in 1977 with Begin's assumption of power. He and his party had been out in the political wilderness since the formation of the state; therefore he had to find jobs for his followers. Many were put into the senior ranks of the Civil Service and the Labor Party incumbent was pushed out. My lawyer friend pointed out that many of the judges appointed by the Likud Party had no knowledge of the law; they were appointed for political reasons. It was getting worst. At the beginning at least these new judges tried to get help from lawyers and law students, but by the time I was there, not even that much was being done. He confirmed to us that the military courts were even worst; they had, as I mentioned, a 100 percent conviction record because of their willingness to use

essentially illegal or unethical methods to make their point--"we have secret evidence that shows, etc". So the lawyer was very unhappy; he had great respect with what Israel had originally tried to do with the law--a system much of it based on British mandatory civil law, which incorporated the Judaic laws and customs. He was very proud of what had been done. he had been educated in England and had been a member of the bar--Queen's Council--he had very high standards and felt very strongly about the problems.

We often run into charges of corruption of this once clean and wonderful society. One friend of mine had been a young man in Palestine before the formation of Israel and lived in a Jewish community in Tel Aviv. He said that there, even with all the frictions, people left their doors open and that there was very little crime. After Israel became a state, a police force had to be set up which very few Jews had ever willingly joined under the British mandate. Suddenly, there were crime waves which had been unheard of before. Jews became crime lords for the first time in this little idyllic Zionist-inspired community. All of a sudden, all the vices of the world descended on them almost overnight. I saw this even in the '70s or '80s when Israel was essentially a non-consumer of narcotics, although hashish and other drugs were easily available. Very few Israelis ever used drugs and rank only very modestly. Much of that change although Israelis by and large do not drink very much alcohol; it is not a major problem, but the use of drugs has exploded in Israel in part because of the partial occupation of Lebanon starting in 1978. The drug smuggling trade has moved in part across Israel in route to Egypt and other places. The country has changed. The drug use is a problem, not to the extent we have in the US, but is it pretty significant for a society that never had this problem before.

Q: Did you feel that there was ever a disinformation campaign, not only against you, but also against our Consulate General in Jerusalem?

DRAPER: Yes, but I had some historic perspective on this because I had watched the efforts to discredit the mission going back to late '50s. I recall that in 1981 it was the first time that an Israeli Foreign Ministry official showed up at the C.G., wishing to see me when I was working on the withdrawal of the Israeli from the Sinai. As part of that effort, we had to talk to Israeli officials in our offices which were in the Consulate General. It was the first time that an Israeli official walked through those doors because of the prohibitions that had existed until then. When I became the Consul General, I knew the whole Israeli Cabinet and most of the top officials in the army from my previous incarnations and therefore was able to invite some Israeli officials to my house that had never been there before because they had been prohibited from visiting the American compound. There are still prohibition against Foreign Ministry people and certain others like Mossad intelligence people, but I broke a lot of those barriers when I was assigned to Jerusalem. I saw Israeli Cabinet officials and politicians regularly; so the situation has eased. It would not have happened with some of my predecessors; no Israeli official would have been seen in public with the American Consul General except perhaps at a party. We also reduced some of our foolishness. We used to be very strict about officials visiting Jerusalem and not being in the company of Israelis. This got to be ridiculous when it came to someone like Teddy Kollek, the mayor, who wanted to show hospitality. So we altered a lot of rules as well to be more pragmatic. When Vice-President George Bush came, he wanted a lot of photographs showing him in Jerusalem and he was in the company of Kollek who escorted him around. That would not have been possible fifteen years earlier because of our strict regulations of what could

be done in Jerusalem. We did not recognize an Israeli Mayor of Jerusalem. There was clear prejudice against us; when I mentioned that I was the Consul General, it was quite clear that both the staff and I were viewed as automatically as anti-Israeli. That went with the position.

Q: Did you deal with Palestinian leaders? You were, I believe, not permitted to deal with the PLO.

DRAPER: We tried to deal with everybody across the board including the super militants. Many of the Palestinians would not talk to any of us. When the Intifada began, much of the leadership switched to the hands of young people--17, 18, 19, 20 year olds. Very, very few of them would come out of the woodwork to talk to us--very few. They were in the forefront of University students who were viciously anti-American. They were also very difficult to communicate with any young person in a refugee camp. Very few of the so-called refugees live in camps; most live in towns and villages. It was almost impossible to get to the people in the camps. It was very difficult to get to the real hot-heads in Gaza--which was both in and outside of the C.G.'s district. Ambassador Pickering and I had an arrangement; we often visited Gaza together to see particularly some of the old time politicians. I went to Gaza to talk to the people there, but most of the contact work there was done by the Embassy staff. That was an arbitrary arrangement which helped our consular problem. We had quite a few economic assistance projects in Gaza which were managed out of Jerusalem, so that we had to go there periodically. Some of the non-governmental organizations--the charitable organizations--operated in both areas so that we had to be contact for that reason. But we had a working arrangement with Tel Aviv and the coverage of Gaza was not a problem.

The other group that was almost impossible to deal with was the militant Muslim faction, with a few exceptions. That great Chief of the Political Section that I mentioned before had made real inroads with some of the relatively youthful mullahs--the non-traditional Moslem clerics--in various parts of the territories. I made a sort of a break-through with the Grand Mufti who for the first time ever paid a call on me in my residence in Israeli Jerusalem. It was the first time he had ever crossed the "green" line. But it was very hard to get into that Muslim faction. We had an insight in what was happening because people in contact with these groups would report to us what was going on. We used the newspapers, the media, the journalists who had a comradery with these groups. We didn't ask whether someone was a PLO or PLPF (The Palestinian Liberation Popular Front) agent.

We had one problem with the Mayor of Nablus who was assassinated the day after he had dinner with me. I was on lists of assassination targets, made by a couple of the extremist groups--one being George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine--, which effected my security. The situation was comparable in some ways to countries where we have a very difficult time being in contact with the young rebellious elements to the extent we would like to. For example, it was somewhat comparable to Turkey in 1970 when I was there; we didn't have clue about what the young university students were thinking or doing. Otherwise, the average Palestinian is a real talker and finds it difficult not have an exchange even with the "evil Americans". So we were able to keep our fingers on the pulse, except for those two groups.

Faisal Husseni, who is now the leader of the Palestinian group who seems to be in dutch now with Secretary Baker and others, was a difficult man; he didn't want to ruin his militant credentials by seeing Americans, but we were able to be in touch with him, but we had to be careful about his own security and his own credibility. We had to be careful about being seen with persons who were in trouble with their own people. The Mayor of Bethlehem was a good example. He was considered as an "Uncle Tom" by a lot of the Palestinians and then when Americans would show up at his house regularly that added to his woes. Sometimes that increased the threats on his life.

Q: What about AIPAC (American-Israeli Political Action Committee)? Did they visit you and view you as an agent for the enemy?

DRAPER: I don't think so. I was friendly with most of the AIPAC leadership and many of their major contributors because of my previous position as Deputy Assistant Secretary. The President of AIPAC and others when they came to Jerusalem would get in touch with me and we would speak very frankly to each other about what was going on. AIPAC is pretty professional; I was more concerned about people who were not so and were much more amorphous and super sympathetic to Israel, but not so knowledgeable about the Israeli domestic scene. Or people who had a load of prejudices. The people who were really venomous were the followers of Rabbi Meir Kahane; some I refused to have anything to do with. One was the publisher of a newsletter which was poisonous, vicious and racist. He wanted an interview with me and I didn't want to give him even that much respectability. That caused me a certain amount of problems among certain Israeli loyalists, but not the main-stream Jewish community.

Q: Were you asked to present the Palestinian side to American Jewish groups that visited Jerusalem?

DRAPER: No, not for that purpose, but I did make presentations to these groups; they wanted to know what was going on--how the Arabs felt, about the human rights situation, etc. I would tell them. Many first time visitors to the United States, after seeing Disneyland, want to go find militant blacks. So we had many American Jews coming who wanted to talk face-to-face with one of the opponents of Israel; they wanted to see one of those "killers". I mentioned that I had briefed a Jewish group during which I had criticized Meir Kahane in very graphic terms; I thought most of the people there were pretty sophisticated and not particularly secular, but I did get some of the group very upset because of my criticism of the rabbi. I called him "irrelevant" and that really bothered some. The person who was particularly concerned was a very secular minded Jewish businessman from Philadelphia. So you never know. If you criticize a Jew, you are liable to be called anti-Semitic.

Q: While you were Consul General between 1986 and 1988, the Intifada began. How did it look to you at the time?

DRAPER: I recently have reviewed an interview I had given at the time. I pointed out at the time that we had been tracing a rise in tensions, measured statistically by number of incidents, violence, etc that had taken place in the previous two years. There was unquestionably a steady increase. We had been predicting for some time in our reporting that there would be an

explosion. I also said in that interview that after the predicted explosion, the situation would stabilize but at a higher level of tensions than before. Frankly, we were a little surprised at the endurance of the Intifada. It was beginning to resemble what had happened between 1936 and 1939 when the Arabs rose *en masse* against the British and the Jews.

The uprising was well covered by the media. It took the form of demonstrations and rock throwing, fires, etc. by kids in grammar school and junior high school equivalent and high school. We watched fires and the closing of streets in part of Arab Jerusalem by young people 15, 16 and 17 years old. They got into big trucks and walked up alleys, etc. It was the young people who were taking charge at the beginning. Part of what was done at the beginning was the closing of shops by the merchants. There was a total boycott of business activity for certain hours, weeks and days which was only relaxed for the purchase of food stuffs and other necessities. There were boycotts against Israeli manufactured goods. Some of this was happening spontaneously in school yards where things like this always happen. The middle aged traditional leaders were dying to get a grip on the uprising. They didn't know what to do. The PLO was very slow to react; it didn't know what was going on. In fact, it is always slow; when something did happen in the occupied territories, it took it a week to make up its mind what to do. If a university were closed, there be no reaction from the PLO for four or five days; then it would come down on it. The PLO surrogates in the territories didn't have anything to say initially about the Intifada; I know because I was talking to them. Finally the PLO sort of embraced it and then the main stream PLO leadership in the territories also came along, after a week or two. The young people were quite clever; they were natural leaders--some better than their elders. These young people came from everywhere--private schools, camps, etc. the camps were more obvious because the troops would enter the camps more often for confrontations. The troops were told to tear down Palestinian flags; they would look at a refugee camp which was mostly a slum and they would see these flags and go after them. That is what created the major part of the confrontations. But there were just as many in private schools, religious schools--many were run by Christian organizations--and there was just as much uproar there as in the camps. The camps were simply more conspicuous because the troops were there and some are on main roads and intersections and the demonstrations could cause real problems for entryway. In Nablus, there are two main refugee camps which straddle the two main highways leading into the city from the East and North-South. The troops had to something just to keep the traffic flowing. Our mission cars were stoned regularly going through the gauntlet. These areas were point of confrontation, but the Intifada was very wide spread. It could be found in all sorts of places. The press told all kinds of great stories of what was going on because at times they would go into dead ends or little villages and find people who were shouting for the Intifada, particularly when they found out that the stranger was a newspaper man. There were a lot of narrow escapes. The resentment was very wide spread.

One very clever man that I knew--rich middle class who owned a business--, who might be called a PLO moderate said that he got very excited about what was going on. He thought the real stimulus came a few weeks before the Intifada broke out when a Palestinian guerrilla team from Southern Lebanon had entered Israel and had attacked an Israeli army camp with only indifferent success--they killed a few Israelis, but the guerrillas were also killed. This man said that as a Palestinian, he felt proud of these people because they were young, had never lived in Palestine and they had risked their lives and most importantly had attacked Israeli military

targets instead of schools or other civilian targets. He always felt embarrassed when the Palestinians only seemed interested in terrorism--bombs in city markets, killing school children, etc. For the first time, they had attacked Israeli soldiers. This was a team that was airborne--kites or balloons or whatever. He was very proud of that incident and felt that had helped to spark the Intifada because it showed that Palestinians were willing to die fighting Israeli soldiers.

Anybody who was familiar with the territories knew that something would blow. We didn't know how high it would blow. We in the Consulate General in Jerusalem were far more concerned about some nuts who might set fires or try to destroy some of the Islamic monuments, like the Mosque on the Temple Mount. We knew what had happened in 1968-69 when riots broke out all over the Islamic world if they thought Americans had anything to do with what had happened. We were always concerned with that kind of reaction. The real Jewish "crazies" tend to be from the United States. There is still a group, mainly of American born Jews, who do not recognize Israel as a secular state who have a Yeshiva--a religious school--yards away from the Temple Mount, Sherif, what the Arabs call the "noble enclosure". We were more worried about that possibility than a massive Palestinian uprising.

I think the Israelis were taken by surprise; their standard techniques of intimidation and control did not work, so they resorted to actions which drew vast criticism and justly so. They ordered the troops to break arms and legs and to beat up people. The Israelis have found it very difficult to get a handle on the Intifada; it is very difficult to know what to do when 8 year olds throw stones at you; it is very difficult for anyone to make war on children. One Israeli police officer described to me once a situation in which the police had to control a riot by the super-ultra-conservative groups in Israel, which came mainly from Brooklyn. The policeman told me about coming up against one of these bearded men of 60--very venerable, scholarly--and a person with very little physical strength because he spent most of his life behind a desk, studying. The policeman had quashed the riot, but found it personally difficult to move against this gentleman, because he looked so much like his own grandfather. So it was very difficult for young Israeli soldiers, even if they despises Arabs, to make war on children. They didn't know what to do and they still don't.

Q: Was your staff covering these uprisings and were they effected by what they saw?

DRAPER: In the two years I was in Jerusalem, there were quite few riots and disturbances of various kinds and killings. Our officers would cover these events to try to see if they could get in contact with various leaders to get a feel for what was happening. We had some success with that. We always got copies of the handbills; we monitored the media to see what the two populations were being told and what effect that might have on their attitudes. We knew the major trends and could describe those. But we did not go to see a riot for a riot's sake. Some visitors were interested in seeing some of the action. We had one Congressman who wanted to see some stone throwing. That somewhat upset me. One of our officers took him to the outskirts of a refugee camp in the company of the UNRA officials. Sure enough, some of the school children started throwing stones at an Israeli patrol that went by. One thing led to another and the Israelis threw back tear gas. The Congressman got a good look at what was going on, but that I had to tell him later that we were not in the tourist business for this sort of thing; it wasn't worth it and took too many of our resources and that I didn't want our junior officers out looking for

trouble. I am familiar with the process in the United States. If you want to get attention, you can manipulate a press attendance at an event; we did in Jerusalem get wind of a lot of upcoming incidents because the media was being notified by the perpetrators.

The Israelis, particularly Teddy Kollek, the Mayor of Jerusalem, did a lot of things to head off problems and to forestall events that might have gotten out of hand. He was trying to keep peace in Jerusalem; he instructed his municipal police on what they could and could not do and they were much better than the Israeli army at controlling disturbances. For a long time, Jerusalem was fairly quiet, besides the occasional stabbing. Many of the problems could be forestalled by not allowing or keeping control of religious demonstrations. For example, once a year, there were groups of Israelis who thought they had a right to visit Temple Mount; that can be done if you are very careful and you warn the Arabs that it would happen. Teddy would often let me know what was going on to see whether we could help in various ways. There are always people who want to exploit tense situations. Riots can easily get out of control, especially in the Temple Mount-Harash el Sherif area because there are loud speakers all over the area. It is has been a custom for the Mufti and others to shout over the speaker if there is any perceived danger. Before you know it, there are tens of thousands of people running to defended the Holy places as the Mufti has encouraged them to do; they drop whatever they are doing and are all running for one spot. It could have been a very innocent situation or a modest problem; when the police force armed with only a few shotguns watch thousands of people carrying knives rushing into their vicinity, it gets kind of nervous.

Q: What was your impression of Arafat's leadership in the 1986-88 period?

DRAPER: There were a few pictures of him around, but it wasn't much. Arafat had a lot influence; there is no question of that, but he was losing it with the younger people and the Muslim militants. His strength was in the refugee camps among people who didn't move out of the camps. There is a division in the Palestinian movement; there are some Palestinians who are in effect willing to forget going back to Haifa or any part of Israel proper and are willing to take the West Bank and Gaza and be satisfied with that. The other group who insist on returning to the same spots where they lived in 1947 and will never be happy until that happens. Too much time has passed for the latter group. Arafat, until about a year ago, always took the line that the Palestinians had to return to where they lived in 1947 and had to recover all the land they lived on then or at least he was ambivalent on the issue. A lot of the people who supported Arafat did so because at least he had not given up to returning to their former towns and settlements. On the other hand, the pragmatists, who wanted to make a deal with Israel would have been satisfied with East Jerusalem and the west Bank and Gaza. So there were always those tensions between the two groups. There were some of Arafat's deputies, including the ones that were assassinated in the last two years, let the word out that they wanted to destroy Israel. The pragmatists and those who finally got Arafat to move a little in his position were those who were willing to make a deal with Israel. But they did not have the charismatic quality that Arafat had. From an American point of view, that is of course mystifying because we don't see Arafat a charismatic; to me he looks like a druggist in Jerusalem. But he had a fatherly, avuncular quality; he has been a survivor--he has good luck; he has his tail dragging, but it is still wagging; he has gone through a lot of difficult situations. He is called the "old man" in an affectionate way by his cohorts and by the masses. The trouble with the Palestinians is that if they didn't have the PLO,

they would have to invent it. They haven't been politically sufficiently aware to make a difference. There is no home-grown movement in the territories; it is easier for them to owe quasi-allegiance to Arafat and the PLO, now stationed in Tunis, then to organize themselves. And why is that? Because the Palestinians themselves are balkanized--Christian Palestinians against Moslem Palestinians, people from Hebron against those others. These tensions are endemic. Even in municipal elections, families counts; it is a very traditional, old fashioned society and very tribal. People in the South end like Hebron are very conservative--no liquor, no beer. It is like Saudi Arabia--super conservative. On the other hand, 75 miles to the North, it is just the opposite. The Palestinians are very fragmented and they do not have any sense of unity. When we used to get together Palestinian groups to meet with Secretary Shultz or others, it was very difficult to get a group of less than fifteen because otherwise you couldn't represent all the Palestinian factions. Many of the ordinary Palestinians looked down on the refugees, especially those who lived in camps. In fact, some Palestinians felt that anyone who came to live in one of the West Bank cities after 1949, he was just a refugee and was not one of them. There were those splits. These tensions explain why the people in the territories have never been able to organize anything for themselves; they could never agree on their own leadership.

A start was made some years ago, with our encouragement, when there were free elections for Mayors of towns and cities. Some of the winners were strong critics of Israel--in fact, they were all strong critics--, but most were pragmatists and not radicals. But the Israelis couldn't even tolerate the moderates; so they expelled many of them, including one who is now the main PLO representative in Amman, who is about as moderate as one can get, but the Israeli have no tolerance for that kind of opposition and did not allow home-grown development of Palestinian leadership. The Israelis are now paying the consequences of that misguided policy; there are no leaders in the territories. The Israelis would argue that if the leadership had existed, the Intifada would have been much worse; they may be right.

Q: What happened to you after your tour in Jerusalem?

DRAPER: After my return to Washington, I did some short term assignments, such as a study of security problems in rehabilitating Embassy buildings abroad. That was partly related to the question of what we should do about our Embassy in Moscow. And I did some other studies. Then I retired.

Q: From your long time perspective, what do you see as the future of Israel and Palestine?

DRAPER: First of all, I agree with an Israeli journalist, who is a friend, that despite the changes in Israel's culture and politics and despite the fact that a lot of the elan has gone out of the Israeli national esprit, Israel will somehow prevail and survive the threat. A few years ago, I wasn't quite so sure, but I feel more strongly about that prediction today. As far as the resolution of the Arab-Israeli problem, I am pessimistic, but I am not despairing. I am intrigued by some of the signals coming out of the Middle East now--the hints that Syria might possibly make a deal with Israel, the desire of many countries to get on the good side of the United States. I believe that we never had a better opportunity to make some progress since the 1973 War in part because of this magnificent coalition the US put together against Iraq and in part because of our spectacular military success and in part because the Russians are no longer a major negative feature and in

fact are cooperating to a certain extent with the United States. They are not acting as a rival or as an opponent, for the time being. Finally, the opportunity exists because George Bush probably has another five years in office. It is a virtual certainty that he will be re-elected in 1992; so there won't be the same problem that arose in 1979-80 when President Carter was unwilling to put his prestige on the line for another major effort of the kind that had exhausted him earlier when the Egypt-Israeli treaty was negotiated and signed. We won't have the same problem we had at the end of the Reagan administration when Secretary of State Shultz was trying to do something, but the President was then a "lame duck" and wasn't putting any enthusiasm behind his Secretary's efforts. So there are a lot of features at the present which will be helpful assuming that we want to push. Also on the positive side, there are some Israelis who are embarrassed by the negative stance that Shamir and others have been taking for all these years; they would like to find a second best arrangement that would still protect Israeli security. On the other hand, there are more deep seeded negative feelings and features than we have seen for several years, including the wide spread support by the Palestinians throughout the world for Saddam Hussein. One of the consequences of the Iraqi SCUD missiles attacks on Israel was to heighten the Israeli feelings of vulnerability against future hostile attacks on their little, narrow country. This feeling is spread throughout the population; it can not be ignored. The Israelis took modest casualties, but there was a lot of damage, including the strengthening of the feeling of insecurity. After all, if the Iraqis had managed to put poison gas or atomic or germ warheads on the missiles, there would have far greater panic than there was with very serious consequences. That makes the Israelis want the depth; they don't want to be decompressed into a smaller country. That makes it very difficult for those Israelis who a few years ago were willing to trade "land for peace" with the Arabs; they no longer have the influence and their own enthusiasm has waned. It will be very difficult for any intermediary such as the United States, but we are stuck in the Middle East and it would be shameful if we did not press our advantage, such as it is. Even during this last week, we established refugee camps for the Kurds in North-west Iraq and that is a remarkable development. What are we getting into and how soon can we get out? We made a major morale commitment to doing something about the Middle East and that is not something that can be ignored. We should not forget that the emotions aroused by the Kurds' plight, as communicated to European and Americans, caused turns in our policy while similar disasters in the Sudan and Africa have not had the same results.

So I think it will be more difficult to deal with the substantive positions than it has been, but it will be easier to deal with the procedural situations. The Israelis are now willing to talk about the possibility of a regional conference, perhaps they are not that concerned about the Russians anymore. This would not have been possible a few years ago. The problem is permanent though for us in one sense; we always had the problem of how to arrange the substantive aspects of the Arab-Israeli problem--the procedural obstacles and problems we face getting there and combining these all with the American and Israeli domestic political problems. It is a very complicated approach. We have been talking about this during the last week at the Institute for Peace; one of things that we all agree on is that the Arabs by and large have regarded procedural matters as a means of protecting their substantive positions; Americans have often looked at procedural issues--where to hold the conference, how to organize it, etc--as a way through which substantive positions of one or more of the parties can be changed, which is a very ambitious concept. But let's face it; there will never be the kind of peace and stability that we need unless the substantive positions of all the parties change to some degree. Ambassador Hart, who is a

pretty savvy guy, said to me once that, with reference to Yemen in the early '60s after the Egyptians had invaded the country, if we can leave things alone in Yemen, they will eventually come out with some kind of workable solution which will allow them to live with the Saudis and maybe shirk off the Egyptians, but it will be very untidy and messy solution which we Americans and other Westerns will never understand; but Arabs can sometime put something together like that, however illogical. I think ultimately something like that will have to be developed in the Middle East because it is a society in an area which we Americans do not really understand very well--we have a feel for it, but no real deep understanding. It is basically a bazaar and the parties will have to work out an arrangement in the same way they reach a selling and buying price by haggling. If we forget that it is a bazaar and try to approach the resolution as if it were a labor dispute in Detroit, it will not be worked out. We will have to encourage the process at least through the haggling.

PAUL H. TYSON
Sinai Multi-National Force & Observer Mission
El Gorah, Sinai (1985-1986)

Mr. Tyson was born in Virginia into a US military family and was raised in army posts in the United States and abroad. Educated at Dartmouth College and George Washington University he entered the Foreign Service in 1974. As a trained Economic Officer, Mr. Tyson served in a number of foreign posts, including Bonn, Dhahran, London and Kuwait City. His Washington Assignments were primarily in the petroleum and international economic fields. Mr. Tyson also served with the Sinai Multi-National Force & Observer Mission. Mr. Tyson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

TYSON: It was a grudging type of thing and I ran across another econ officer who had virtually an identical experience and had done the same thing – just pulled the plug, and I think the Asia Bureau and others were going, “This is not good.” So I ended up going on to a year in the MFO in the Sinai.

Q: MFO stood for what?

TYSON: Multi-national Force and Observers.

Q: Let's talk about that. You were doing that from when to when?

TYSON: I ended up going out in April of 1985 to El Gorah in the Sinai, and stayed there until basically April or May of '86.

Q: Why did we have something there, and what were you doing?

TYSON: This went back to the Camp David Accords and the Israeli staged withdrawal from the Sinai. It was finally completed in 1983. Initially there had been something called the Sinai Field

Mission. Let me back up a bit. I think there had been an attempt to have a UN [United Nations] force out there, but the Russians were difficult about it. So we created the Sinai Field Mission, or maybe that came later, but the Sinai Field Mission was there to monitor...

Q: Also I don't think the Israelis would, having been burned by the UN before, they weren't going to take anything with a UN label.

TYSON: I think that's true, although they still had some vestigial UN observers present in the Sinai even when I was there. The Sinai Field Mission had been there and they had been running a lot of monitoring sites at Gidi and Mitla Passes. And then, I think at the actual time of the withdrawal, it reconfigured itself into the Multi-National Force and Observers. So we had the U.S., the Brits, the Dutch, the French, the Italians, the Anzacs, the Colombians, and the Uruguayans, and the Fijians out there all doing this. And the civilian observer group at that point was about twenty-six people. The process was that you resigned from the Foreign Service and you were employed by the MFO, but you had reemployment rights. The observers were commanded by a Foreign Service Officer, Bob Steven, while I was out there. His deputy was Lou Kachanic. About half of the people were retired or ex-military and the other half were Foreign Service Officers.

Basically what you did was monitoring and verification in the Sinai. You had a three kilometer long strip inside Israel along their border, and then the entire Sinai. There were different zones as to what the Egyptians were permitted to have where, and a number of other things. You'd look for violations like they had a tank here when they shouldn't or they had heavy artillery here when they shouldn't. That's what you did. You ran around in stunning orange uniforms - the orange jumpsuit was particularly fetching, which really made you stand out. It was interesting because the garbage sweepers in Saudi Arabia wore that. But you had your orange jumpsuits with your American flag on it and your MFO seal and stuff like this.

Actually it was one of the great adventures. You know, you were out there in sort of a paramilitary organization, you had a huge fascinating portion of the world, you had vehicles and aircraft at your disposal, and minefields and stuff. It wasn't all beer and Skittles. And a tough environment, but quite an adventure. Quite an introduction to the Middle East. You know you'd do the Israelis in the morning and the Egyptians in the afternoon, so you got a chance to see both sides. You had access through the border so you literally could drive into Tel Aviv or Jerusalem for the weekend. It was quite interesting. I think you had, I fit the profile coming off a divorce, but you had divorce-wounded or people paying for kids in college or this was a good way to get the hardship post requirement out of the way in the year.

Q: What was your impression of first, the Israelis, and then the Egyptians, and how they were reacting to the situation? I mean, was this really active or had we gone quiet?

TYSON: It was pretty much sort of quiet. Every now and then you'd get a hard-liner on the Egyptian or the Israeli side with a real hard-on about the other side and your presence there, and you'd sort of have to slap them down. But a lot of the Israelis, actually, were reservists. And also what happened is both sides tended to pick people with foreign language ability to deal with us. You know, Egypt had a draft and all of these poor French literature or English literature majors

from Alexandria or Cairo ended up in their equivalent of East Coffee Cup, Mississippi. You know, serving beyond the beyond, dealing with these foreigners. Some really nice, sweet kids, but there they were butting up against Gaza and stuff. And you know, they're all twenty-two. They're all far from home. That was the Egyptians who we tended to have more contact with. If you went into Israel you'd often get someone who is a diamond dealer in Netanya and he's got a branch office in New York and he's got the BMW in Herzliya. It was no real problem dealing with them.

Some of the verification was done in vehicles, some in helicopters. A lot of our ex-military guys were special forces. There was a tendency to do the macho thing of "how quickly can I do it from lift-off to touchdown at the airfield?" and the operations director was Andy Biotus. He was a retired army colonel, I think. One day he called me in and he said, "I will see you six hours from now. You are going to do the 'tea tour'." One of the reasons that they had FSOs along on this, was for the cultural sensitivity. There were some of these remote little Egyptian army units in the center of the Sinai that God had long ago forgotten and they were so pathetically grateful to see you that, they would invite you to, "Come sit, come have tea. What do you want to see? We'll show you everything." And Andy's point was, get there, shut the copter down, sit and have tea, chatter about this or that, and then go on. There was a real importance in terms of that contact and the familiarity.

One of the funniest incidents that I had was with my teammate on the day who was John Mayhew and is now working over in the Department. We had our Egyptian escort officer along and we were at a bakery near the Suez Canal. So we go in, and I mean it's a bakery, fine, sometimes they give you fresh bread, we had food with us so that wasn't the problem, but the major ushers us in and we sit down. We've got our twenty-two-year-old Egyptian there and the guy is very, very pleasant and what he wants to talk about is contraceptives. He's married, wife has just had a child or something like that, and he wants to talk about contraceptives and he's making this absolutely young Egyptian lieutenant who is probably a virgin and absolutely dying and blushing, translate - and fairly graphic translations. We basically said, "Well actually, what you should probably do is have your wife get in touch with a female obstetrician at the American University in Cairo. They'll be able to take her through all of the options," and stuff like this. At that point, okay, he asked both of us whether we were married and I said, "Well actually I'm divorced, but John's a father," and all of that, and this poor lieutenant was just dying. And of course we'd gotten the cultural training here saying the Arabs never talk about sex. Well, that's all they talked about.

Q: Were there violations that were playing games? You know, sometimes with troops they've got to do something.

TYSON: It was more than playing games. There were some times where there were even more than overt violations. The Egyptians were pushing the envelope now and then. The Israelis had a tendency to over fly Egypt. It wasn't just bored troops in some cases, although there was a bit of that.

Q: What happens if you found a violation?

TYSON: We wrote it up.

Q: Wrote it up. Both sides would respond, I mean if there was...

TYSON: Yes, pretty much. I think ultimately the best description I had is that we were the lubricating oil between the gears. Both sides needed some dead Americans there if anything ever broke out. But you know, if the level of complaint about our unfairness was about the same on both sides, we were probably doing the job that was needed.

Q: How about within your own units? How did you all get along?

TYSON: At first, not well. There was a real division between the military types and the State types when I first got there. And I think Bob Steven and Lou Kachanic worked on this. A lot was personalities. My perception of some of the State officers when I first got there, and a number of them are my friends, was that even though we were the same chronological age, they were just younger. The military guys, I think, tended to be contemptuous of them for that. There wasn't necessarily a lot of understanding on both sides, and then what happened is we got some retired military officers in who had done embassy duty and then FSOs like me who'd grown up around the military, or people who had served. So there was more of a convergence in the middle as to, "Yes, I know what you do, you know what I do," and I think it was just more of a change in the personality mix that, you know, you sort of respected your colleagues.

Also, when I first got there, you were supposed to make up your map and there was a lot of these games of, "I'm not going to tell you," from the military guys. Well I had taken drafting in high school so I went into the operations center and I knew how to use tracing vellum to copy maps, so the first time I did it, I did it on vellum and punched through various checkpoints and sites. I got criticized by the military because one location was wrong and I pointed out to them, "If it's wrong on my map, it's wrong in the op center, too." But I kept the vellum and after that when an FSO came in they'd get the drill, "You've got to figure it out," and I'd say, "Come on over to my hooch. Here's the overlay on the map. Punch it through this way, mark it up this way." But it was a lot of the "boys stuff," the macho type of thing and sort of once you "made your bones" and showed that you could do the stuff, you could write the reports and you knew what you were looking at, you were okay.

Q: I take it the units were essentially American units, French units, British units, what-have-you. They didn't intermix?

TYSON: Well, they had different functions. Actually, in a sense, there was a bit of a mix in the headquarters. The Brits were the headquarters unit, the Dutch were the cops, the Uruguayans were the truck drivers and engineers, the Fijians and the Colombians were the ground-pounders - the infantry troops manning the various outposts, the American troops that we had at North Camp were more logistical support and technicians for our headquarters units. South Camp was where they had the airborne units which were more our straight-leg troops, or infantry troops; airborne is not straight-leg. There was sort of a division of labor. The French had the fixed-wing aircraft; the Otters and the Transalls, the Anzacs did the rotary-wing. So I mean it all sort of fit together because we knew all the helicopter pilots because they were always flying us. We were

one of the reasons they were there.

The other unifying thing was the strip of bars on the base. The Dutch had a club, the Brits had a club, the Uruguayans had a club, the French had a club, and you'd go bar-hopping. The Anzacs had the Surf Club. So it was very interesting because Al Gorah which was an ex-Israeli airbase, and quite correctly the headquarters and the commander had very strict drunk driving rules and it was a small enough base you could walk. They never really said much about drunk bicycling, so everybody had bicycles. As a matter of fact, there was usually a rash of bicycle thefts just before the Anzacs went home. It was a small enclosed base with that and you tended to actually get to know people better through the bars.

Q: Were there problems with Bedouin going back and forth?

TYSON: The biggest problems we had with the Bedouin were them tapping into our water pipes periodically. The stuff about the Bedouin was very interesting because actually what we were hearing, and I don't know whether you've interviewed Chester Pavlovski, but you should on all of this - he's an ex-consular officer, but he was an observer and then sort of the resident archaeologist, the line was that actually the Bedouin, the real Bedouin, preferred the Israelis more. The Israelis basically stayed out of a lot of their internal family matters, but if you had a sick kid or something they'd take care of it. It used to be very interesting because the Bedouin actually knew a lot of Israeli products, food products, very well. We were trying to share the expenditures between Israel and Egypt. The only way the tally ever came close was when they bought a lot of gold in the market in Egypt. You know you could go to Israel and say, "I need ten cases of tomatoes six weeks from now, grade 2." "Fine." You know, you'd go to the Egyptians and, "I need tomatoes," "Well, if God gives us tomatoes, you'll have tomatoes." So a lot of the actual food on the camp was Israeli, including stuff like packaged yogurt - fruit-flavored stuff and all.

I remember you'd go out on the patrols where you had the vehicles and you'd get these big green Coleman coolers and the mess hall would make up meals for you. When you had the Egyptians along, they were very careful that it was "halal." But you'd have ice in there, you'd have bread, you'd have sandwiches, you'd have apples, you'd have oranges, and probably more than six people could eat. Sometimes the Egyptians officers who didn't like the Bedouin would throw the stuff away, because you'd be sitting there parked beside a road or on an overlook and a Bedouin would just sort of appear and be fifty meters, seventy-five meters away from you and just sit there. So you look at them and they look at you. That's fine. Very often what we would do was, having eaten what we wanted, we would then gather up the stuff, you know the extra bread, the this, the that, and the ice, and either leave it there or walk it over to them. The Egyptians always thought we were nuts for doing this. I remember in the middle of nowhere one of the Bedouins, because we had Israeli fruit-flavored yogurt, I think we had apricot and something else, through sign language made it clear that the next time he came he preferred the apple to the apricot. *(laughs)* Okay, fine. But we'd hand them the ice and stuff like that, and sometimes we'd also give the extra food to the Egyptian interpreters who lived right outside the gate.

Q: What was your impression of Israel? I take it that's sort of where you went for the weekends or R&R (Rest and Relaxation) and that sort of thing?

TYSON: Well, Israel was fine. That is where we went for the R&Rs. I tended to prefer Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. I'll fast-forward a bit by saying that my mother and sister came out in January and got to Tel Aviv a day or two before I did and then I came in and met them. There were three or four bars, one of them was like the MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] bar and the other was the Belle at the end of Dizengoff Street where the MFO and the UN guys and others all showed up. It's a typical military thing, you know, bars with girls and whores. My mother and sister were there, and you know my mother has been around army bases her entire life, so there we are in Israel and I said, "Okay, let's go out. I'll see some of my buddies at the bars," and you know, my mom and sister walked in and everybody is there including the working girls and I said, "This too is Israel. Tomorrow we'll do Jerusalem."

Israel was fascinating in many ways; the archaeology, the country, the people. It was a mix of things and I enjoyed it. Tel Aviv was fine, but I sort of found Jerusalem, as a city and a place, much more appealing. So there would be groups that would go into Tel Aviv and then groups that would go to Jerusalem. And then somebody was always going up to Tiberius or Yafo or something like that. So it was a chance to see the country.

ROGER G. HARRISON
Political Counselor
Tel Aviv (1985-1987)

Ambassador Harrison was born and raised in California. He was educated at San Jose State and Claremont Colleges, Oxford University and Freie University in Berlin. Entering the Foreign Service in 1967, Ambassador Harrison served in London, Manila, Warsaw, Manila and Tel Aviv before being named US Ambassador to the Kingdom of Jordan, where he served from 1990 to 1993. He also had postings in Washington, primarily dealing with Political/Military Affairs. Ambassador Harrison was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: But now we're coming back to your leaving.

HARRISON: Yes, '85 May off I went and left them in good shape. It wasn't my fault what happened later, but I had pretty much worn out my welcome, too. The things I had been sent there to do had been done. We had a new ambassador my last two years, and a new DCM my last year, Ray Seitz who later became ambassador. Whereas Ed Streater had been kind of rocking boat kind of guy. He liked to shake things up which was fun for me. Ray Seitz was not and therefore, much less fun for me so I was ready to go and did off to be political counselor in Tel Aviv working for a couple of weeks for Sam Lewis. I show up in Tel Aviv and we're in the middle of a transition government in '85 resulting from an indecisive election which had resulted in a coalition government between Labour and this peculiar arrangement where in the middle of the government five-year term, Peres agreed to step down and give his position to Shamir. The issue for the first year in Tel Aviv was really actually to do this, whether he'd adhere to this or

whether he'd try to break the government before that happened, go to the elections and win a mandate on his own behalf and Shamir couldn't win it. He had that and the economy because the economy had been stagnant at that point for five or six years and the currency was in precipitous decline. The labor unions there were powerful, too. The old socialist tradition, the terrible bureaucratic weight of the old socialist bureaucracy which had been imported on the back of the Ashkenazi, largely socialist immigrants from Europe, who made a settlement to form the original Labour party and who had sort of transported much of the terrible bureaucratic morass that they had been escaping from, brought with them to transplant into Israel. The burden of defense spending. All these things that added up to a kind of crippled economy and a crippled political system. In '85 I think we were seeing the beginning of the divisions in Israeli political life which had progressed at a pace, aided by their proportional representational system, which gave representation in the Knesset to even rump parties. Marginal requirement for seats in terms of votes, a percentage of votes, so you've got a lot of splinter parties and the number of splinter parties is increasing at this point. Two major parties are slowly shrinking and the need to build coalitions of parties in the Knesset is at a pace which all these trends have continued in a kind of destructive way in that society since and this transition government was the first expression of this lack of any social consensus in Israel of what to do. This is prior to the Intifada.

Q: You were there from when to when?

HARRISON: '85 to '87 and Intifada was at the end of '87, I left in December of '87. Intifada and the interesting thing then was...

Q: This was the first input?

HARRISON: The first Intifada. When I was there the occupation of course was in existence, but it was cheap for the Israelis. They did not have to station any people in the occupied territories in order to occupy them. They had roadblocks here and there, but I would guess a couple of hundred reservists would be all you would find on the West Bank and in Gaza on any particular day partly a legacy of the economic prosperity which the occupation had brought to these areas in the '70s, after Egypt and Jordan, who had been in occupation before the Israelis took those territories, had been awful -- both of them, in their treatment of the Palestinians and economically and politically in every other way. When the Israelis came in there was actually an economic boom in fact in high single digit and double digit economic growth which had taken a lot of steam out of the protest movements and because Palestinian nationality was not really developing. It was still developing then. Arafat was of course, already around, but he had been forced out to Beirut and then out of Beirut to Tunis without really much resistance on the West Bank and off he was in Tunisia with his small coterie, more or less irrelevant to the process. Things were going along in a way which was stable to the point that I could take my bicycle from Netanya on the coastline up to Tulkarm on the West Bank, right across the border without realizing that I was and suddenly being in an Arab city and riding around there and riding back. People would go and buy oranges and stuff and they'd move freely around the West Bank. The settlement movement of course was already in existence and proselytizing energetically in the suburbs many of whom -- American Jews -- had come over. Meir Kahane, who was the head of, was already there, the Kahane movement was in place. The notion of expelling all the Arabs from Israel to Jordan, Jordan is the real Palestine, all these things were already in existence.

Q: You talk about expelling the Jews not just from the issue of the West Bank, too?

HARRISON: Oh, yes, from the West Bank in particular. The question of expelling them from Israel was always more ambiguous, but I think that if Kahane had had his way he would have done that, too. They were Israeli citizens so that's a little tougher, but certainly the West Bank -- just push them all across the river, and that solves your problem -- which is an idea which has never died and is still current in the Israeli political debate. All this is coexisting with stability in these areas, very few incidents and those incidents that broke out were mainly rock throwing and you know, then the Israelis would overreact. Sometimes a lot of ammunition and would kill some Palestinians, but that never had the knock on effect that it was to have later. I used to talk about the flying Palestinian because the Israelis would always be claiming the fire over their heads would always hit them. The Palestinians said well we must have levitated to intercept the bullets. All the irritations, all the implicit discrimination against the Palestinians, all the contempt for them which is also so much a feature of Israeli political life now, also very much in evidence then. No Palestinian national identity strongly enough established to create the kind of opposition movement that exists now. As in many things in life, although this jumps ahead a couple of years, I think that there's an old psychological theory, that you don't run away because you're afraid, you're afraid because you run away. I think the same thing is true in a sense of this Palestinian movement. It didn't necessarily precede the Intifada, but maybe the Intifada preceded the national consciousness. At any rate, in '85, '86, and '87, the dirty secret of the occupation is that it's cheap. It's easy and there's no real political impetus to do anything about it.

Q: The ambassador for a while was Sam Lewis and then who took over?

HARRISON: For a very short while. Tom Pickering. A very short while -- Sam Lewis was just leaving. He gave a press conference in which he revealed that Sharon had lied about the invasion of Lebanon which had taken place five years before. The Israelis had gotten involved with Sharon's instigation and it was very ill advised attempt to put a Christian Maronite prime minister in power in Beirut. Completely antic idea, which showed this profound ignorance of anything going on in the Lebanese political scene. Wasn't going to happen under any circumstances, but it was a rationale, which Sharon used. He lied to us, they were going to clean out people, you know, go up 50 kilometers they said, but they were going to go to Beirut from the beginning, did go to Beirut, set off the civil war which was so destructive in the years afterwards and gave rise to Hamas and all these things were created by this Sharon adventure north, which they're now having so much trouble with. It really is a Frankenstein problem, which they created out of their arrogance and profound ignorance and the two things go together because if you're arrogant enough, you don't realize how ignorant you are. Often a problem of ours as well. By '85 the security zone had been established in southern Lebanon and we have built the SLA (South Lebanon Army) with the Lebanese army in the south, under Israeli tutelage in the south of Lebanon, in their security zone. The attrition of Israelis up there has begun which would eventually lead to the removal of those people there. One of my early cables was debunking the idea that the Israelis were going to withdraw from there anytime soon because no Prime Minister could stand the consequences of withdrawing and having rocket attacks. It would be a "Who's to blame?" issue, would he be to blame for taking the troops out of there? At that point, the rate of casualties wasn't high enough. That created a political backlash if there's the

presence, so there was no political push to leave and so they were going to stay and of course, they did stay for another 15 years to their great regret and I think to the great detriment of Lebanon as well. Sharon had mounted this thing, Sharon was out of favor in this period, Peres is prime minister, Rabin is minister of defense in the transition government and then stays on, which is one of the great things for me, when Peres leaves. The great political issue was, after the economy was stabilized by devaluation although it remained stagnant for another five years, until the peace process really got underway, whether this transition government was going to take place. The other issue was the activism of Tom Pickering in a number of areas but in particular on the peace plan in collaboration with Peres and a guy named Nimrod Novik who was one of Peres's advisors and to a degree Yossi Beilin -- although Beilin always played a more ambiguous role and who was another advisor to Peres to bring about a peace plan which could then be the subject of an election which would then prevent Shamir from coming to power. The idea being that Peres could not simply declare that he wasn't going to leave office, but he might by proposing a peace plan that was acceptable to the Arab side, the Palestinian side, he might then put that to referendum which would have the same effect. Peres was continuing promising Pickering he could deliver the Knesset for this which was the key issue of course, the prime minister can't do it on his own, he has to have the Knesset along with him. But the notion was that if you came to the Knesset with a fait accompli with the Palestinians' signature on it, and even though the Likud was opposed to it and hard over and ideological and so forth, the Knesset would accept it and therefore or if they turned it down you could take it to referendum in the country as a whole and win. Pickering was conspiring and he's also trying to because on one hand he's playing a quasi-partisan role in the political equation, dealing a lot with Peres's people, not very much with the Likud and especially not with Shamir, because you couldn't deal with Shamir. Shamir was impervious to being dealt with. Shamir had been the guy in the revolutionary period who had known all the secrets. He had been the guy who knew, he was the walking archive of Irgun. Because you needed somebody who knew, but you couldn't have more than one person who knew, because you were penetrated by the British and so they chose Shamir because of the confidence that he was not going to tell anybody. He was a man entirely bereft of personality. He had no affect. He was the perfect guy to tell your secrets to unless they were of a political advantage to him to tell them. So, you couldn't deal with him. I mean, he was not, Pickering was this huge dynamo of a man and would be activist wherever you put him down, whatever you told him to do and sees in that situation the possibility of writing Peres who is desperate to hold onto power to compromises with the Palestinians, which then could be incorporated into a movement in the peace process which in those days and we weren't talking about a Palestinian state at all. I mean it was a much milder form of Palestinian control over occupied territories, and withdrawal. It would have done something about settlements, which not yet you know, would have already been a huge problem, but not yet the problem that it was going to become. I thought it was all nonsense because I thought that Peres could not deliver. It was my view that he was over promising on what he could do. You could not ram this down Kahane's throat, because Kahane's represented a greater percentage of the population than Peres did and that there was no peace without Kahane. Whether you didn't like him or not, whether you could deal with Sharon or not, or Shamir or not, and Sharon of course is already around, but now he has been marginalized because of Sabra and Shatila. You just simply couldn't override their wishes as Peres hoped to do and ram it down his throat. So, I sent in a dissent message or tried to, but Pickering held it up for 24 hours because he realized that the 24 hours were the period in which this decision was going to be made in Washington. My dissent message, this was

on the London agreement as so-called later, never got into the process before the London agreement had already been turned down in Washington because the Reagan administration decided not to go ahead with it. I think they took my interpretation of the facts without seeing my interpretation of the facts, although I was congratulated in some corners for the futility of my gesture afterwards. So, that was part of what was going on. We had very good contact. I saw a lot of Rabin, although not on my own. I was the political counselor, but it was not a good job because I had been working for Dan Kurtzer who is now ambassador there. He's a very smart guy and was already wired in and was kind of a peace process guy. I had an activist ambassador who was also retentive and an activist DCM and in that circumstance.

Q: Who was the DCM?

HARRISON: It was Bob Flatin the first year I was there. In those circumstances the political counselors were always ambiguous at best. From my point of view and because Pickering didn't ever feel in need of political counsel, least of all from me. I mean, he was not a man tortured by self-doubt, so he essentially didn't use the political section. He'd talk to Dan, and he had some input because he was dealing with people like Nimrod Novik and that was a conduit to Peres, but the rest of us kind of did our thing in isolation from the front office and indeed sometimes in contradiction to what Pickering was sending in, as I was discovering occasionally once when I was chargé and sometimes when I was acting DCM and I would poke around in files and I would find out what he had been saying to Washington -- because he never volunteered to me and I didn't know what he was trying to do most of the time. We went on doing our thing. He never asked us to do anything in my two and a half; I guess two years with him. He never asked the political section to do anything and as far as I know never read any of the stuff that we did do. A couple of times people would come in from Washington and comment on our reporting in his presence and he would not be aware that these reports had been sent. It was a little of like operating your kind of own little mission in orbit around the great planet, but out of radio contact with the home base. Difficult, from a lot of points, it was awful, of course, to have supposed responsibility, but no authority which was the situation I was in, but also because I'd show up for meetings with people and he'd be on his way out. I was literally in waiting rooms waiting to see somebody and Tom Pickering would come out and walk by me and say hello and go out the door. It became a kind of a standing joke in Jerusalem that this was the case with us, so a very uncomfortable position to be in.

Q: Then, of course, it being such an intense political place, everybody understood, I mean the people you were dealing with understood your position?

HARRISON: Yes, they understood it. I was the object of sympathy, but of no particular respect. It wasn't, I wasn't the man you had to see, I mean I would be somebody you could see just to be polite, but I wasn't the player and the political section really wasn't a player either except for Dan, who was. We were just kind of doing our thing, sending in our reports. Dealing with and meeting a lot of interesting people, I think the key thing for me was watching Rabin operate because I would go over as note taker when Pickering went over to see him, which he did a lot. I got to know him pretty well.

Q: Rabin, at that time, was what?

HARRISON: Minister of Defense. Then in his 60s he had been ambassador to Washington, he'd been Prime Minister, there had been a scandal about money that he and his wife had taken offshore in various stringent currency regulations they had enforced. He had been forced to resign, forced out and of course, was to come back in great glory later, but then was in relative eclipse at the ministry of defense. He had this great basso profundo voice with 40 years of cigarettes he of course, smoked three or four packs a day of cigarettes. The great thing about him was there was absolutely no bullshit to him at all. There was no pretense. Dealing with him you brought home how much pretense there is to most of us, you know, because he had a very straightforward view which I know a lot people claim to have in my life, but he was somebody who genuinely saw the world very clearly, saw people for what they were and knew his own mind, knew who he was and dealt in a very straightforward way. He would do what he said he was going to do. He thought what he said he thought. He had contempt for what he had contempt for and would not try to candy coat that for you. He had a sneaky, fast sense of humor and I had enormous respect for him then and later, more than anyone I ever dealt with in any of my jobs. For all those qualities, it was quite a spiritual journey that he made from being the most effective of the old Arab killers to being a man who finally reached out in a genuine... I mean we have all these guys like Netanyahu and all these slimy people who have in essence affected Israeli politics. We have people like Sharon who have never shifted gears from the '53 mode or the '48 mode where he'd grown up; he had actually been a little junior to Rabin and always been junior to him militarily, but they fought side by side. Then Rabin had begun to understand the need to bestow respect on the Palestinians, essentially it comes down to that, some human self-regard, some recognition of the legitimacy of the Palestinians as human beings.

Q: I take it that was something that was really lacking in the body politic of Israel at that time?

HARRISON: Lacking then and lacking now. I mean he unfortunately didn't start a movement in that direction, he was unique I think in that way. I mean, there are certainly Israelis who understand this, but not Israelis that had his credibility as founding father of the state who had also been in the front lines so often beginning as a very young man. He's given his life to the state, but then on that basis still made that transition, but not on -- I don't think from my experience in life, I don't think there are any unmixed motives. I think that looking for purity is feckless in life. I think Rabin also had political motives for what he did. I think he saw certain political requirements. It was genuine in the sense that was beyond the political. It was a genuine acceptance of the humanness of his antagonist. Now you see the handshake on the White House lawn. This is now skipping forward ten years, eight years, six years. The first time he shakes hands in public with Arafat. You see him leaning away. It's the most tortured position physically. It reminded me of Rosemary Woods in the Nixon administration trying to describe how she erased those tapes by stepping on her eraser button over here when she was typing over here. So, there's Rabin shaking hands, but trying physically as far away from this guy as he could. The journey, the spiritual journey he made, written in his posture in a way that was very graphic for me.

Q: I think it was Phil Brown who in an interview was saying that he was talking to Rabin I think shortly before the handshake where Rabin you know, put out his cigarette and says, "Well got to go now, showbiz."

HARRISON: You know there's a great story in Rabin's biography about he comes to Washington for Carter and he's Prime Minister and Carter says after they're talking at the White House, he's staying there, "I'm going to go and kiss Amy good night. How about coming with me?" Rabin says, "No." The only world leader who would have said no and Rabin, I think the contempt he always had for these army drill teams and which he expresses in his biography, too, which is pure Rabin, you know, the chrome headed, aqua cravated, rifle throwing groups of performers which he...

Q: I always feel uncomfortable around those.

HARRISON: Yes. He said that you shouldn't make them circus performers like this. They're fighting men; they should be treated like fighting men. He thought it was demeaning and it's true, but nobody says it except Rabin. A great joy of my professional life was being able to see him up close and to know that he came to kind of like me. He came to one of my going away parties for example, which for me was, you know, I was political counselor, that's not something you normally see, but he did it which I thought was a great vindication of what had been a very difficult service for me there. You had this dichotomy. Peres was this slick name-dropping autodidact who thinks he's smarter than he is. He is kind of a pretentious guy who was the bureaucrat at the defense ministry when they were fighting all these wars and for whom Rabin has this healthy contempt. Coexisting, the two great fathers of the Labour Party, coexisting with Rabin who is a man of action, but really, not the bullshit thing that people claim to be without pretense, and Peres is all pretense. Pretense on this peace process thing, too which is the key to the political relationship the first year that I'm there because he's selling a line to Pickering who, because he's an activist ambassador he wants to make a difference, wants to bring about things that Sam Lewis couldn't do. Sam Lewis meanwhile was hanging around by the way, showing up every month or two and spending weeks in Israel and doing all kinds of things that he shouldn't be doing as an ex-ambassador there because he'd been there seven or eight years.

Q: Seven or eight years. It must have driven Tom Pickering wild.

HARRISON: Yes, although Pickering never would have admitted it, but I'm sure it did. It was just bad form for Lewis. Lewis never cared much about what people thought about his form, bad or good. At least he didn't by that stage of his career. So, I'd keep seeing him. He'd show up at something there and Lewis would be there. By the way, I was very -- I think it was two or three weeks after I got there, Lewis left -- so I never really suffered under the lash. I heard all the Lewis stories about chewing the scenery, but I never had that problem because I wasn't there long enough and he didn't care at that point, he was transitioning out. Good luck. Then Pickering came in and we began this very strange association which was no real association at all, kind of running my own little independent.

Q: Was there any, I'm not sure what the right word is, I won't say warmth, I mean, friendliness?

HARRISON: No, no, no warmth at all. He's doesn't have warmth. That's not one of his characteristics. He doesn't have a sense of humor. He's just this huge depository of information and energy. He is a phenomenon. I've never met anybody like him. He's kind of that he, when I

would bring people in to brief him on whatever subject you care to name; people would come to the embassy and would want to brief you on this. It would never be more than three or four minutes before Pickering would be briefing them on whatever they were the experts on. He knew more than you. There was an old radio program, Doctor; no he was a comedian in the '40s and '50s who billed himself as the world's foremost authority. I always thought of Pickering that way. The world's foremost authority. He knows more about it than you. A lot of it he certainly did know more about it than me, but I had a lot of qualities, I was able, that's why I was there. I'd been promoted to the top of the list from 3 to 2 on the smallest list there had ever been and so you know, hey why don't you use me for something useful? He used me for nothing at all and I didn't even actually see him that much and he was off doing his own thing, which I didn't know about much of the time.

Q: Roger, I'm looking at the time. It's probably a good place to stop and I'll put at the end here as usual where we are. You're in Tel Aviv from '85 to '87?

HARRISON: Okay. Yes, '85 to '87 and I have talked about, I haven't talked about Lebanon yet, so we have to talk about Lebanon, what the Israelis were doing there because that was one thing that was in my portfolio. I don't think we've talked about the political situation very much as it unfolded, Shamir, the prime ministry, haven't talked about that; Ronnie Melow who was the deputy over there at the time and all of that stuff.

Q: I'd like to ask you about how you saw political influence from the Jewish lobby and other lobbies on our policy, our relations with our consular general in Jerusalem at that time and the nuclear developments there if that came up?

HARRISON: Yes, that was the period in which Vanunu was captured. If you knew of Vanunu that was, yes.

Q: And other things, but what you have talked about was how your relationship was with Tom Pickering; how you were essentially frozen out and all. I would like to talk about the embassy staff, how it fit in, was there an Israeli bias to it because in a way, now it's much more evident that you can be one side or the other, but in those days was there sympathy for the Palestinian cause.

HARRISON: I want to talk about Pollard, too because Pollard was on...

Q: Yes, the Jonathan Pollard spy case. Okay, so that's great. Talk a little bit about what happened in-between Rostow, the head of ACDA and Secretary of State Alexander Haig when he was in London.

Okay, this is the 10th of September, 2002. Roger going back a bit, do you want to talk a bit about Rostow and Haig?

HARRISON: Well, the incident there, we may have talked about it before in which the editors

will have to do us both a favor of taking it out. The incident that I recall involved the editorial staff of the Economist magazine. Rostow was a frequent visitor to London. He was an Anglophile as many of the Republican Party stalwarts were in those days and probably are. Weinberger was another who was constantly thinking of excuses to come through London. I would be the control officer for Rostow who was head of ACDA at the time and ACDA the Arms Control Disarmament Agency, now disestablished was always a stepchild in the bureaucracy, had been established at the behest of Hubert Humphrey as an advocate for arms control within the administration, but as the case with many congressional initiatives to change the way the executive branch does business, it had miscarried. It turns out it is very difficult for legislation to control the way bureaucracy functions and there was no institutional interest in arms control other than the one the State Department always has to maintain good relations with allies and credibility internationally. ACDA ended up being simply another agency in government whose position on arms control and any other issues really depended on the ideological leanings of its director and conservative president acts to take an anti-arms control position. To maintain its independence, the legislation had left a very ambiguous relationship between the director of ACDA and the Secretary of State, to whom the director of ACDA was subordinate in some respects, and from whom he was independent in other respects. Secretaries of State always dislike that ambiguity and directors of ACDA usually made the most of it they could. If you had two strong personalities as Gene Rostow and Al Haig it was a formula for conflict, in fact they were constantly in conflict. Haig never quite being able to bring Rostow under control and Rostow never being able to make himself into the arbiter of arms control policy in the State Department that he would have liked to have been, since there were many other pretenders for that throne and because he really didn't have the bureaucratic position to do it. The incident that highlighted this for me was a visit by Rostow out of London in which we met, I as his control officer, at lunch with the editorial board of the Economist, very influential group of people since the Economist is probably the most influential news weekly in the world. During which Rostow did his best to convince the editorial board that Haig was insane and not just nuts in the normal bureaucratic sense as a lot of people are, but clinically insane. He did this by indirection. He didn't say that, but he talked about the medication that Haig had been taking since his bypass surgery which then had taken place a couple of years before and how unpredictable Haig had become because of it. The word that I remember -- the sentence that he used which I thought was at once a nice stiletto and good example of hypocrisy of his presentation -- was "his friends don't recognize Al." Then he gave a lot of examples of Haig ricocheting off the furniture, which I guess Haig in fact, was doing. They weren't necessarily untrue stories, but the fact that the director of ACDA would try to convince the editors of the Economist that the Secretary of State was not responsible for his own actions I thought was an incredible thing. As a young naive, Foreign Service Officer, not so young then, I guess I was 40, I went back to the embassy and talked about this with Ed Streater who was the DCM, with a canny old history here and he said we ought to report that in back channel to Haig, which we did. If there were any consequences I never heard of them and Haig at any rate was not long for his job because he was heartily detested by the White House staff and not a likeable guy in general. I think he'd been more effective in that rigid hierarchical military structure than he was in the looser bureaucratic structure that he came into. He had tried to form the bureaucracy so that in foreign policy terms it was responsible to him at the beginning of the Reagan administration.

Q: He used the term he was the "vicar of foreign policy."

HARRISON: He was and he tried to organize the national security system so that it funneled through him taking what had been Kissinger's role in the Nixon administration, but it turned out that it couldn't be done from outside the White House anymore. There were simply too many pretenders to power and too many agencies who felt they had equities in the foreign policy arena to allow State to play that role. In fact, I noticed that presidents have stopped even paying lip service to the notion that the State Department Secretary of State is the leading voice of foreign policy, it is certainly not true in this administration, but practically I don't think will ever be true again. In fact I think it's a relatively weak bureaucratic position now so that even someone like Powell who comes with a constituency and a great deal of savvy and knowledge I think is disadvantaged by being at State especially vis-à-vis national security advisor. If you were in that job it would be a much different world than it's going to be. But, we were on Israel and there was a list of things there.

Q: Well, you were mentioning Shamir.

HARRISON: Well, this was a period of a divided government. It was the transition government, the election result had been more or less an even split between Likud and Labour and so the coalition, grand coalition, had been formed a couple of years before, '83, I believe by the provisions of which the head of the Labour Party, Shimon Peres would be prime minister until midway in the five year term of government at which point he would cede that office to Shamir who was head of Likud, and so they would do a kind of peaceful switch with Peres moving to the foreign ministry as foreign minister in the Shamir government with Rabin at the defense ministry for both. So, it was an odd kind of situation. The politics of the process from Washington's point of view was that the peace process was more benefited when Peres was in office because he was more flexible on land for peace and in dealing with the Palestinians, whereas as Shamir was seen as having no flexibility at all on those issues which proved to be true. In the first two and a half years of this government, the focus was on intrigues to keep Peres in office, that is he would break the government before it's two and a half year transition point and go to elections which legally and constitutionally in Israel you could do. He was the Prime Minister so he could dissolve the government and then call for elections. His interest was in positioning himself so that that would be politically acceptable to the country since it would also be going back on his agreement with Shamir and not a step easily taken. Tom Pickering was interested in the peace process prospering. He also saw Peres as a much more flexible partner on these issues than Shamir was and, therefore, was interested in devising with Peres a peace proposal which would be attractive domestically, but unacceptable to the Likud, the notion being that that would be an acceptable basis to break the government to call elections on grounds which would be beneficial to Peres and by that means to pave the way to a settlement with the Palestinians. Seems a little naive now 14 years later as we struggle with these same issues. That was the focus of the political battle. At the same time, the economy in Israel was in bad shape, so there were other bases on which Peres was being judged by the electorate, but this was the major point of political exchange I think between the embassy and between Washington, the focus of Washington policy. It could not be done openly since that would alienate the Israeli electorate aside from being inappropriate for the American ambassador or for the American government to be conspiring with one party to disadvantage the other in Israel, never something they could openly do and probably had it been openly done, it would have backfired. There was still a sense that

this would be a good outcome. Peres who was also trying to achieve this kind of proposal, therefore, consulted closely with Pickering through this period and eventually came up with an idea which he put to Washington. This is now three or four months before the point at which the transition would have to take place to see if he could get Washington's approval and that was occasion for great debate in Washington and I think by the way, I'm being anachronistic here because actually that debate came to a head in Washington after the transition had taken place between Peres and Shamir. By the time that that proposal was put to Washington it was an attempt of Peres to break the government with Shamir as Prime Minister rather than prevent the transition. The parties in fact, in the end that was a damp squib, that went forward as agreed -- the transition. Then Peres as foreign minister, began working on his proposal: the idea again being that he could present this to the parliament it would be reason for the government to dissolve and go to the country. Labour would win and Peres would be back. This is now '87 and the period I was talking about was late '85. I'm sorry, go ahead.

Q: Did you find yourself pulled into this by, I mean, by indirection in talking to political leaders and all that?

HARRISON: Oh, no, not really. Pickering was running this out of his vest pocket. This was throughout this period. He certainly didn't solicit my advice about it or keep me informed about what he was doing. But you know, you hang around the embassy and you see and hear things and you can kind of put two and two together. At the same time, Dan Kurtzer who was working for me as one of the political officers there, and is now the ambassador in Israel, had very good relations with key members of Peres's staff, so he was involved in the process more than I as political counselor was. He had been there when I'd showed up. Dan was a man of great qualities, not just expertise in the region, but keen analytical ability and intelligence. So, not someone that I would have thought would have been taken off that portfolio, even if anyone had agreed I should do that. So, it was not really the main thing I did.

The other initiative in those days was to do something on the aid legislation for Israel, which had been frozen. I had worked on this at the White House at the previous incarnation between their civilian and military aid. This had been pegged at \$3.2 billion at that point for oh, I guess for seven or eight years after a lot of to-ing and fro-ing about this in the Ford administration. The Israelis were, because their economy was doing very poorly, very eager to get that age level up and because their weapon systems that they wanted then to purchase were increasing in price and so they would lobby to get their aid appropriation increased, but at the same time the economy in our country, this was the first couple or three years of Reagan was not doing well. Inflation and unemployment were up; budget deficits were skyrocketing, so the notion of increasing foreign aid -- never popular domestically -- would have been even less popular. By the way, I think the case that foreign aid, no matter for whom, is never popular domestically. Israelis don't get an exemption from that once it becomes a public issue. An effort was made to keep it from becoming a public issue and yet increase it and the idea was, which I think was Pickering's idea, he certainly promoted it was to index Israeli aid to inflation. Running about 6% or 7% a year by which Israeli aid would go up every year by whatever inflation index I guess we measured our inflation by denominated in dollars which would have meant over the 15 intervening years, probably doubling that aid request. Pickering was working on the finance committee the Senate side who was a firm supporter of Israel, but what scuppered that idea was that Pollard -- in

driving up to the driveway of the Israeli Embassy: Jonathan Pollard, naval intelligence analyst who in fact was being run by Israeli intelligence and had I guess transferred truckloads of classified information. This goes back to an old dispute with Israel about how much intelligence we were willing to make available to them. They always felt that we were being too restrictive on intelligence.

Pollard was about to be arrested, got wind of that and packed his wife in the car and went over to the Israeli Embassy seeking asylum. Well, the Israelis were not about to bite. Eventually the Secret Service came and collected him from the Israeli Embassy and he was put in jail where he remains, thank God, to this day. There was much speculation Clinton might be provoked to pardon him.

Q: Yes, well when Clinton left office there was thought that he might pardon him, but he didn't.

HARRISON: No, the intelligence community has always been extremely opposed to that. When Mark Rich was a relatively uncontroversial pardon compared to what Pollard had been at least among the professional intelligence community.

Q: Was it apparent at that time, I heard Seymour Hersh on the radio once saying this was obviously some years later, but on the Pollard case that Pollard had been tasked, he was a naval, he was working for naval intelligence and he had been tasked by the Israeli handlers to supply up to the minute information on American nuclear submarines, the ones with the missiles on it which could have been of absolutely no interest to the Israelis whatsoever, but of great interest to the Soviets. The theory being that the Israelis were taking this information, peddling it to the Soviets in order to get more goons out of Russia or something like that. Did that come up?

HARRISON: I heard the story. I don't have any reason to think it's true, but it was certainly true that they were beginning to work on the immigration of Soviet Jews at that point -- it didn't begin in earnest in '88 and '89 which is the timeframe, which is a couple of years after Pollard. Whether that played, I certainly wouldn't put it past them to do that, but I don't have any reason to know that they did. Anyway, what Pollard pretty much scuppered was that inflation index idea, because the Israelis were in high odor there for a while. It cost them a lot of money. I mean, if they had gotten that through then that would have been several billion dollars on their aid bill that they would not have gotten or it would have been very difficult that they'd been inflationist off there.

I was going to talk a little bit about Lebanon. One of the portfolios I did have was Lebanon. Oriel Brawny was the coordinator for Lebanon. I would go see him and he would speak elliptically.

Q: He was the Israeli coordinator?

HARRISON: Yes, the Israeli coordinator. At that time the Israelis had their security zone in southern Lebanon this always to the incident of the '82 invasion of Lebanon where the Israelis ended up in Beirut-- after assuring us that they had no such intentions -- with the notion that they were going to put a Maronite Christian government and by that means would pacify Lebanon and albeit to pacify the northern border. A completely antic idea, which got a couple of people,

killed in Lebanon for collaborating with them. I think it showed how completely ignorant they were of the politics of their neighbors which I think is something, although they are also supremely confident in their ability to analyze what's going on next door, so their disasters never daunted their confidence in that regard. By '85 when I arrived that Lebanese adventure had resolved into a strip in Southern Lebanon called the security zone where Israel had some troops together with something called the Southern Lebanese Army under a general named Lahad who is now I'm sure in Paris or somewhere. He used to spend a lot of time there at the time. A local militia, villagers from that area who were out of sympathy with the people in Beirut anyway and had ethnic differences and they created this enclave in which they were taking casualties at a relatively steady rate. Brawny was in charge of that and, in general, of the Lebanese policy. I would go talk to him and I became convinced early on that they were going to have to stay in that security zone forever because -- in fact they just left under Barak a couple of years ago -- because of the fact that the answerability of any politician who decided to withdraw if they were then deterioration in security of the Northern areas of Israel because of that withdrawal, whoever withdrew would have a heavy price to pay. It was potentially a lot heavier than the price politically of losing three or four or five soldiers a month up there in ambushes and land mines and so forth. It seemed to me that that situation would continue and it did for a long time although the casualty count mounted and in the end it was absolutely in vain. They achieved nothing in particular and a couple of years ago the Israelis were finally ready to admit it and withdrew giving rise to then this what they called the Hezbollah. The Hezbollah claimed that they had forced this withdrawal and it showed that the Israelis could be forced to make political concessions and therefore was the support for the suicide bombing campaign and bringing pain to bear. There has been sufficient pain in that case and therefore argued you could create sufficient pain in other cases to give you the same result. It had a kind of a dual negative impact on Israel at first by this long accretion of casualties over the years, and then by encouraging their enemies with the misconception that force would be a useful tool against them. Therefore, it was all together a disastrous policy, as the initial force in Lebanon had been disastrous and became the founding event of the Hezbollah movement which is now such a problem for them. A fair going case from beginning to end of miscalculations, stupidity, mendacity and all the other human vices that one can imagine. There was not much actually happening in that area. I was basically monitoring that situation. The Israelis had given up by that point any notion that they could mix successfully in Lebanese politics and had ceded to the Syrians surety in Lebanon, but were very careful about maintaining the military borders of that sovereignty. There were informal agreements brokered by us between the Syrians and the Israelis about where Syrian forces could be stationed and in what form in Lebanon. We would be the intermediaries when the Syrians would push against those limits. We would come in and talk to Rabin. This was always with Pickering and me as note taker and Pickering, Rabin would tell us where the Syrians had violated this informal agreement and that the Israelis would have to destroy those installations and then we would transmit this to Washington. It would go out to Damascus and a demarche would be made and those installations would be abandoned, plowed up, but others would be somewhere else. They were constantly dicing like that with the Syrians and also in the air. The Syrian MIGs defense of the Israeli airplanes over Southern Lebanon taking threatening maneuvers and then breaking off and so forth. There was a miscalculation in '85 resulting in a shoot down of three of the Syrian MIGs. Both sides were interested in keeping that from escalating. There was a lot of fulmination from the Damascus, but no particular consequence. There was I think a lock-on of Syrian radar on some Israeli airplanes and they shot the Syrians

down, but it was already evident. There had been an air war at the time of the original invasion of Lebanon between the Syrians and the Israelis. The Syrians had lost 110 aircraft I think to two Israeli losses, some ratio like that. It was already fairly clear that the Syrians did not have a credible air force to contest the Israeli air force. Assad knew that as well as anyone and also had begun to see by the mid-'80s that the Soviets were no longer going to be a reliable resupplier of his losses. They were already insisting on cash on the barrelhead and, of course, soon thereafter the communists were going to disappear altogether on their own. It's one thing to lose an airplane, but somebody else is going to replace it, if it costs \$25 million especially if you have this crack brained economic system as the Syrians had then and have now. All in all, that kind of maneuvering went on, but it never seriously threatened to escalate into war. By then as well the Egyptian peace treaty was institutionalized, there was not going to be a two front war for the Israelis, and the Syrians had known all along that they had no chance in any one front contest. Indeed they had no chance in a two front contest either. It was a question of maintaining a certain tension by not allowing that to escalate. Both Assad and Rabin knew each other and had been dealing with other for a long time by proxy, of course, but were similar in the very jaundiced views they took of humanity. They were both realists. I think there was a kind of grudging respect on both sides that and also an understanding that Rabin would do what he said he would do and had the capability of doing it. He's not a man you could bluff. Rabin I think understanding that essentially Assad was going to exercise a restraining influence on Syrian ambitions in the region even though the Israelis had by then incorporated the Golan Heights into Israel and that was something never accepted by Syria that there was no practical possibility the Syrians were going to try to retake that by force as long as Israel remained vigilant and determined to keep it. That was going to be status quo and indeed it was, but the Syrians could bring pressure to bear on the Israelis in Lebanon by supporting those elements in Lebanese society that could attack the Israelis from the northern border and also in the security zone. Rabin was always intent on having an address for the attacks on Israel. It had its origin in Lebanon and so his determination was to make Assad the address -- the Syrians would be responsible for it ultimately and, therefore, since he realized the Syrians could have a restraining influence if they wished to have on what was happening in Lebanon. I think generally a foreign policy principle is that it is more difficult to hold the proxy responsible and there are diplomatic inhibitions against doing, not the least of which is that you can't go attacking the masses all the time or at all. That takes a large commitment force and a large commitment of international diplomatic credit as well and you can't do that for pinpricks, which is what these were. So, as long as it stayed an irritant, but didn't escalate beyond that, the outside could be relatively sure that the Israelis could not massively move against him. They would, by the way, mobilize the tanks every so often and huff and puff around. Assad knew he could keep that situation from escalating from shooting the odd Lebanese when he had to which of course, he was perfectly willing to do.

Q: Did we have any stand on this— what do you call it— the protective zone, were we telling the Israelis at least to get out or were we winking at them?

HARRISON: We were winking at them. We accepted the necessity of the security zone and at the same time our position was for the unified sovereignty of the Lebanese government over all its international territories, so we played both sides of that street, but we were in the same position really as the Israelis I mean you could not urge a withdrawal if we could not also do something about insuring the security in Israel would be guaranteed, and we couldn't do that so

nobody was about to get on their case about the security zone.

Q: What about Jerusalem, and the West Bank and how about the Gaza Strip? What were your views on them?

HARRISON: Well, you asked first about the relationship between the embassy and the consulate in Jerusalem in those days, which was interesting. Actually they weren't bad. They had been awful in the period before that when Brandon Grove had been consul general in Jerusalem and Sam Lewis was ambassador down in Tel Aviv. Both men of massive ego. Theoretically, the Jerusalem consulate is subordinate to the embassy in Tel Aviv, but in fact it has always been the de facto embassy to the Palestinians and the consul general in Jerusalem prospers by having good relations with the Palestinian authorities of various sorts. In those days of course, the PLO was verboten but there were all sorts of quasi PLO people you could meet and representing their interests in this interagency battle. The embassy had no interest in that at all. There was a natural friction between the consulate and the embassy, which exacerbated because Grove and Lewis were not best of friends. But Wat Cluverius had come in to be consul general and he was much less assertive of the consul general's prerogatives than Brandon Grove had been. Meanwhile, Pickering was much less interested in subordinating everything Jerusalem did to the embassy than Sam Lewis had been. Although Pickering certainly took the peace process and all those issues for himself, although with Cluverius' input. I think Wat always found he had a role to play there and so in our time, in my time after '85, the relationships were good. Doug Kean was the number two guy there and later was my DCM in Amman and had very good relations with the Palestinian community. The embassy did not have good relations with the Palestinian community because it was concentrated in that consular district and there was a division of labor there. Gaza, on the other hand, was in our bailiwick. We had a Gaza officer, not a very good one in my time. He didn't go down there much. I never could quite figure out what he did, but finding out about Gaza was not among the things that he did and so we didn't have as good coverage as we should have even with Gaza. That relationship was okay. Your sympathies tend to lie in the Foreign Service with those who are your clients, certainly it works out like that.

Q: Where you stand is where you sit as they say?

HARRISON: Yes, so it was natural that if you were in Jerusalem to see the justice of the Palestinian cause in sharper relief than Washington did or the embassy did in Tel Aviv. My view was always that, and is still, that people who can discern a moral superiority of one side of an issue or the other have a finer moral compass than I do and that anyone who thought that the bullshit quotient was higher on one side than the other had a finer bullshit protector than mine, that we ought to be very skeptical about both sides and ought to realize that our interests were separable from the interests of either, but that I don't think has been the prevailing opinion in our government. Since then it certainly is not.

Q: Did you find the embassy staff, I'm particularly thinking of the officers, with their biases there or not?

HARRISON: No, none that I ever saw. I mean, you know, it really always was in the days before political correctness that Jews assigned to Tel Aviv would have a natural sympathy for Israel and

one focus of that on the Arab side was Dan Kurtzer who has been ever since. The accusations as he has become increasingly responsible that this is someone who would be biased toward the Israeli point of view. I never saw any hint of that and I had the highest respect for him. I always felt that his analysis was always based on U.S. interests.

Q: What was his job?

HARRISON: He was political officer, was he a second secretary then, he may have been whose portfolio included the peace process. Joe Sullivan who later is ambassador now in Namibia I think was my deputy and his portfolio was the Knesset internal political scene. I had a labor officer guy who did the defense portfolio. We had I think six or seven people. It was a big section and of course, a lot of interest in Washington in what was going on and we reported it. That's one thing about Israel, you always knew what was going on. There were no more secrets in Israel than there are in Washington. Fewer if anything -- very active press, voluble politicians.

Q: Well, I've talked to political officers there and you can tell they had fun. I mean because they could talk to people as opposed on the Arab side where you never really got beyond a certain veil.

HARRISON: That's right. On the Arab side, you could talk to everybody, but they all had the same opinion. There was no purpose in talking to everybody. Talk to one guy and go sit by the pool. In Israel there were as many opinions as there were people to express them. In fact I've always found that the debate about Israeli policy toward the Palestinians is much more honest and lively in Israel than in Washington, including now. They were nothing, nothing was hidden. The whole thing was just an open book. It was like being a surgeon with all the organs exposed, you know, you didn't have to guess at anything. It was about as far from my experience 20 years before in Warsaw as it's possible to imagine. It is for a political officer, it's a good place, it's very fraught, everything is fraught, you know, all issues are a crisis. Everyone's a news junkie. There's always news. A lot of exaggeration in the media, a lot of the newspapers means a lot of funny stories, so a part of what we did -- the real from the phony. But I thought there were some standards you could use to understand Israeli politics which gave you some compass through this morass and one of them was the understanding that it was a brokerage system, again much like our system. That it was a system that abhorred political outcomes which were a zero sum, in which one side contesting something achieved all of its goals and the other side achieved none of its goals. That would always be the way that the issues were framed, as absolutes and there would be a huge rhetorical battle. This still goes on between the one position and the other and then it would reach a crisis very quickly in a day or two as the rhetoric escalated and finally someone would accuse somebody else of a blood libel which seemed to be the signal for people to sit down and begin parceling out the goods very carefully. I always thought the beginning resembled the civil war and the ending resembled the negotiation between General Motors and the United Auto Workers okay, a little of this and a little of that. You get this and I get that, we all live to fight another day. So once you understand not to take the rhetoric seriously, but to understand the positioning that was going on and the system was essentially moderate in the sense that it did not want absolutist outcomes and was designed to avoid them and in that way to accommodate these very wide differences of opinion within that society. It all made sense and I think that's still true.

Q: How about the religious parties, I would think they would be the most difficult ones to reach compromises with?

HARRISON: No, I don't think necessarily. I mean they had things that they wanted from the political system as well and they had things to barter for what they wanted. Knesset votes were one of the things that they had, but also, support for the peace process since the ultra orthodox, I think this has changed a little bit in the meantime, but the ultra orthodox believed that the Israeli state is illegitimate since the Messiah has not returned and, therefore, in those days took no particular strong view of land for peace. The land was not important to the ultra orthodox point of view and, therefore, could be counted on from other coalitions on the peace process as long as you could accommodate on the social economic side. What they wanted for example, was exemption for their yeshiva students from military service and that was granted. They wanted a lot of money to build yeshivas and that was granted. There were all sorts of things from the political system, which they were lining up to receive. Where the rubber met the road; and that could be accommodated, too, because it was just a question of money. Where the rubber met the road was in the socially restrictive laws that they wanted to pass to impose a kind of orthodox social system on society which had a large secular component to it and a militantly secular component. So, there were areas in which they was societal agreement. For example, Shabbat should be respected, no commercial activity during Shabbat, there were people who wanted to engage in it.

Q: Shabbat, we call the Sabbath?

HARRISON: Shabbat, sundown on Friday and Saturday. But there was a general societal consensus that that could be accommodated. That in hotel restaurants and the kosher restaurants they all had to be kosher and that you have to have dairy restaurants and meat restaurants so that the mixing of dairy and meat which is contrary to kashrut, so religious loss would not take place. There would be some area of basic consensus, but there were a lot of areas of friction on the edges of that consensus. For example, if the religious parties tried to push these social restrictions then the secular community would push back. One dispute when I was there was about the starting time for soccer matches after the ending of Shabbat, sundown on Saturday. If the soccer match began too soon after sundown the orthodox argued it would be necessary for people to travel before Shabbat ended in order to be there when the football game began, but in summer to meet the orthodox requirements you would have had to begin those soccer matches at 9:30 or 10:00 at night and the next day was a work day. There was a great pushback against that. In those cases the orthodox would come out in their thousands to demonstrate and the police would wade in and just beat the crap out of them. This would all be broadcast on television and it was a part of the kind of social contract, that is the vicarious whacking of the orthodox community publicly broadcast was a great source of satisfaction to the secular community and social stability in the countries as a whole. I always thought that the whacking which was usually from the mounted policemen and with great enthusiasm, so there was kind of public ritual about this which was stabilizing I thought. Already then and even more now you could see the division of the community into smaller and smaller political groupings which unfortunately was encouraged by the same political system which had been devised to accommodate the different interests, and that is proportional representation. It was a great system in that you have this

brokerage system, proportional representation. While having that impact it also encourages even further division of opinion and the multiplications of the parties and therefore, increases the need to do what proportion representation does. That has continued, so the society is divided to a point where the second Intifada began, that the existence of the state was being called into question and indeed, I think, one could argue that Arafat and the radicals who have been the savior of the Israeli political system which really is now -- aside from being unified in opposition to the suicide bombers and so forth, it gets pretty difficult to identify where any consensus at all exists in that country -- but they're absolved from the necessity of having to find one by what is currently going on. I think and it is often said even then that if the Arabs really wanted to destroy Israel they'd make peace and made the Israelis to contest with each other about the future of their state and its Jewishness. There are some contradictions there that were evident already, well been evident for 50 years.

Q: Did you ever see the change with the Soviet Jews coming in at that point?

HARRISON: After my time when they began to come in in numbers, that was seen by Israel as demographically a saving grace because it postponed the date at which the Arab population was going to exceed the Jewish population in most territories claimed by Israel. Probably put it back 10 or 15 years, a million Soviet Jews or so. Of course, not all Jews, as is well documented now. A lot of people who the orthodox had not considered Jewish, which was then another source of conflict in Israel because the orthodox claimed the right to decide who was Jewish and who was not. A lot of the Soviet immigrants didn't meet the qualification, but politically it was impossible to disqualify them. A lot of reasons not to do that. That was another source of societal division. Now, as I understand it, what's happened, of course, the assimilation of Soviet Jews is a great achievement. Luckily it coincided with economic upsurge which coincided with the beginning of the peace process in the early 1990s after the Baker mission. Israel began to grow very rapidly and that made all the difference in terms of assimilating Soviet Jews. Now course the army is the great engine of assimilation in Israel since everyone has to join up except for the orthodox. Universal draft still in effect so everyone goes and everyone has their unit, units are mixed and as in this country, a great social solidifier. The Soviet Jews then still identify themselves as a group, still have grievances they want to address. Sharansky is the head of the party who came in my time. Israel is the kind of forerunner of this immigration in '86 I guess he came. He becomes a considerable political figure in his own right. What happened -- of course, the expectation was then that the Soviet Jews would be in play politically and could tip the balance between the major parties. What actually happened was that the Soviet Jews consulted their own interests and became another party altogether and the two major parties in the mid '80s had begun to erode anyway and it went off to the point where Labor is on the point of extinction altogether and the Likud is no longer a party so much as it is a coalition of convenience, which, when they'd lose power, would break up into constituent elements again. All those trends that were already evident in the mid '80s continue.

Q: What about -- the term gets loose, you know you call it the Jewish lobby and the Israeli lobby, in the United States. At the time you were there, did this effect your reporting, did it affect the operation of the embassy?

HARRISON: No, it had no effect on us and they tried to have no effect on us. They concentrated

on Washington and indeed were independent of the Israeli government, especially the Peres government who disapproved of some of the things they did, would have been more open to. The major benchmark for the Jewish lobby in the '80s was arms sales to the Arabs, and that's an issue on which the Israeli government was much more relaxed than the lobby was. The lobby proved its worth to its own members by working against those sales and so the lobby interest really was to keep the donations coming in. You had to show to the American Jewish audience who were supporting you financially that you were effective. One way to do that was to block the arms sales and that was a very clear issue and a politically doable thing and the administrations in this country, Democratic and Republican alike were always running uphill to ease that pressure. Gradually making inroads because they had formidable allies who had formed the companies that wanted to sell those things. Congressmen representing the districts in which those companies were -- increasingly more and more of them. It gradually made progress. But that was where the fault line was; it was certainly not true in Tel Aviv. The Israeli lobby in Washington didn't care what the embassy was reporting, didn't care much what the State Department felt. It cared what Congress thought, and there it could be very active and so we never saw that influence at all. The influence on Israeli politics came from Jewish organizations, which were separate from AIPAC (American Israeli Public Affairs Committee), which is the major Israeli lobbying group. There is the organization of presidents of major Jewish organizations, in those days a moderating influence on Israeli policy. They would come -- these various rabbis and men of import and they were, these were substantial men politically and economically in our community and also in the Israeli community because great contributors and organizers of contributors to the state of Israel. They had a hearing and they had a moderating influence. They tended to be inclined toward Labor in those days and would come sometimes threaten to withhold their contributions under certain circumstances. I think that's all gone now. The American Jewish community has been radicalized too many times, so the restraining influence that they used to exercise is no longer there.

Q: I'm looking at it, could Israel really exist without American financial support, both government and?

HARRISON: Yes. The Arabs tend to exaggerate the impact of that. It used to be a lot greater than it is. It has stayed relatively stable. It's drifted up a little bit, but the Israeli economy in the '90s has increased six fold. It was a period of very rapid; not six fold in real terms, but tripled. At the time it increased with a very rapid growth and the Israelis have become a \$100 billion economy, in which of all the contributions externally are probably 5%. Also, they have a self-standing arms industry, although they certainly get better stuff from us. If all of that were to be removed they would still be miles ahead of any combination of their neighbors. You know, there would be some belt tightening and economic austerity, but there would also be some unification in Israeli society if that money went away. The place that it could have been effective was in forcing them to make some hard choices on settlement activity and that's what Bush used. The housing guarantees for settlement as a way of forcing the Israelis to look at their settlement policy and toward peace with the Palestinians. But that pressure is gone now, too. There is no pressure at all on the settlement policy, which is kind of the original sin of Israel now. They have a much stronger political, ethical and security position without the settlements, but it's the tail that now wags the dog in Israel. We're not in that business anymore. I think we'll have to come back into it at sometime.

Q: The current Washington commentators that say that the end game is kind of known to those and that is the Israeli settlements will have to be dissolved and a part of Jerusalem will have to be, you'd given some status and the Palestinians will have a little hunk of Jerusalem and that's the way you're going to end up.

HARRISON: Yes, I think that's Camp David, too. Someone said we have the light, now we have to dig the tunnel. Yes, that's where it's going to end up. Everybody knows what the political outcome has to be and the issue is whether the political will exist to get there and what role we will play in bringing it about. There was some thought early this year that we would do it, as the price of Arab support against Iraq. But that has been successfully countered politically in Washington among those who count, by the argument that regime in Iraq will have a special impact on the peace process. That argument has been turned around and right now all is on hold with regard to that dispute waiting for the other deck to be shuffled by this invasion of Iraq.

Q: While you were there, were nuclear developments an issue at all?

HARRISON: No, they weren't. The only issue was Vanunu, the man who was at the Israeli nuclear site at Dimona who leaked the information details about the Israeli nuclear program. He was picked up in a honey trap, he had a woman, he fell for it, they arrested him and brought him back to Israel where he still sits in jail, but meanwhile had given details of that program. It had been an open secret for some time, but the Israelis had never admitted to it. Washington had no hope of affecting the program already decided so as far as I know, so that issue, except for that brief flurry of activity, didn't come up. The other area in which it played was in nonproliferation efforts, which we were hot to strengthen in those days because of the argument that we had a double standard. We were trying to keep the Arabs from acquiring what the Israelis already had, which weakened our nonproliferation efforts, but in my view, our efforts in that regard would have been useless in any case. Certain Arab countries were determined to get nuclear weapons and they were going to do whatever is necessary to achieve that whether or not we entered the fray. Others saw that as a bad option, the Egyptians didn't pursue it for example, the Iraqis did, the Iranians -- not an Arab country -- were pursuing it from the beginning of Khomeini's time, so we weren't going to effect that outcome.

Q: Were you there when the Israelis bombed a nuclear facility?

HARRISON: No, no, that was four years before I arrived, something they'd take great pride in now. In fact, interesting that the Iraqis just took the newsmen to that facility the other day to show them that it was still destroyed and keeping with Saddam's inherent maladroitness in public relations he takes these newsmen to show them how the Israelis [operate] by preempting and preventing nuclear weapons. I just don't understand who was advising him on that issue, but it's true. Saddam is an opponent right out of central casting. If you could choose a guy to move against in the world, you couldn't construct him from identikit any better than Saddam has been constructed by nature or nurture. He suits our every purpose. He does and seems to, whenever he seems to be gaining in some way in public relations terms, he's careful to screw up something so that he loses that again. Really a complete moron in many ways, but obviously crafty in terms of making power ruthless, but in international terms that guy is such a bozo as is hard to imagine.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss about Israel?

HARRISON: Well, let me see, were there any other big issues of the day? There's always the usual coming and going. You know the Pickering thing with the London agreement as it was called, was trying to put a piece of the puzzle under the Knesset which would bring Peres back to power, that failed. Washington wouldn't support it. The personality of Shamir, Shamir had been the guy in the Irgun who had told all the secrets. Of course, they didn't want to write any down, this was back in the Palestinian mandate days.

Q: He was a killer, wasn't he? In a sense?

HARRISON: No, he wasn't a killer actually he was the guy back at the home office who ...

Q: Maybe the Stalin who kept the records?

HARRISON: He was never a front line guy. He was the recordkeeping guy. He was told all the secrets. He knew where everybody was, who all the operatives were, where all the bodies were buried because everyone trusted Shamir to keep his mouth shut and that is absolutely true. Shamir never said an unguarded word in my hearing and I'm sure outside my hearing to Pickering. He was absolutely a man who could talk without communicating. He was not susceptible to flattery. He was not susceptible to argument or anything else, blandishment. He was entirely a self-contained individual who knew what he thought and had the wrong sense if he'd ever any doubts, put them aside. I doubt he ever had any. He knew what you wanted and was determined that you wouldn't see it and he was actually comfortable with that. A remarkable guy in many ways. Certainly Pickering, who is a remarkable man in his own right, could never make a dent. Pickering always counted on being able to overwhelm you with eloquence of fact and argument and force of personality. He was kind of the LBJ of the State Department and that tide rolled in and there stood Shamir and the tide broke against the rock and that was it. I watched a lot of that interchange. There was that, the Intifada was still in the future while I was there and it would have amazed us to think in our time that it was going to take place because our assumption was that the Palestinian community was quiescent. The joke that I used to make about it was that as opposed to the radicals elsewhere in the Arab world, the Palestinians always wanted to know, when you wanted them to make a suicide mission, what the getaway plan was. The occupation had been cheap for the Israelis for a long time. They could do it with very few people. There was the occasional demonstration and the occasional Palestinian would be shot, but the economic cost to Israel was small, the personal offering was small and there was no reason to rethink in the summer of '87 when I left that that would change. Certainly we didn't see it coming. Nobody at the embassy and nobody in the intelligence community predicted that this would happen, which is true by the way of almost all the major departures of international relations of which I'm aware. The analytical community in Washington is not equipped to deal with revolutionary departures. They're equipped to deal with nuance in situations, which we all accept as immutable. That was certainly true of the Soviet Union; it was true of each of the individual countries.

Q: There's also a straight-line projection.

HARRISON: Yes, it's the safest thing to project and therefore, the thing the bureaucracy is most likely to project and all the individuals occasionally can be heard as crying in the wilderness but they're almost universally ignored because their supervisors are not willing to take the risks that would be necessary to promote a point of view which depends on things tomorrow being absolutely different than they were today. There is a 90% chance you look foolish and only 10% chance you look prescient and that's a no brainer in the bureaucracy.

LEON WEINTRAUB
Israel Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1986-1988)

Mr. Weintraub was born and raised in New York City, educated at Hunter College, Brooklyn College and the Universities of Pittsburgh and Wisconsin. After service in Liberia with the Peace Corps he entered government service, first with the Navy Department and then with the State Department Foreign Service. His service in Washington and abroad involved him with a variety of countries and issues including African Affairs, International Organizations, Narcotics and Peace-Keeping operations in Africa. His foreign posts were Bogotá, Tel Aviv, Lagos, Quito and Geneva. Mr. Weintraub was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Today is the 31st of August, 2005. Leon, 1986, you're at INR as analyst for Israel. Is that right?

WEINTRAUB: That's correct.

Q: And you're doing that from '86 to when?

WEINTRAUB: It was a two-year Washington assignment, '86 to '88.

Q: Okay. I would imagine that this would be an interesting but difficult assignment because you're probably swamped in intelligence from the Israelis and from ourselves and all. Anyway, I mean, how did you find, sort of the intelligence side of dealing with Israel?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I think I certainly gained a great deal of respect for the intelligence function and the importance of the intelligence function as an aid to the policymakers in the department. I had expected it to be a bit more- let me try to describe it - maybe I expected it to be a bit more academic, a bit more leisurely than it turned out to be. The word research in there, in INR, that kind of implied for me "research," what I knew coming from an academic background. This was, you know, you take time to do some research and then you put out a product.

In fact, like much of the other bureaus in the department, we were driven by a daily agenda that I discovered once I was there - this was the secretary's "briefing book," if you will, and every day

we were potentially liable, depending on, of course, what information was available in the intelligence stream, we were potentially liable to have one of the items for the secretary's briefing book. These were the so-called "front of the book" items, the shorter items that may be only be two paragraphs long, but just picked up on some intelligence, and this is what it may mean relative to this particular issue. And then perhaps once a week, maybe for a country like Israel, you might be expected to do what was called at that time an item for the "back of the book." This would be a longer piece, maybe a page-and-a-half to two pages maximum, a more in-depth piece trying to pull together either some items that had been reported about separately in the past or a new area that was worth that much of the secretary's reading time for him or her to be briefed on.

So it was not the leisurely, feet-up-on-the-desk thinking about things that I had obviously erroneously thought it might be. There were deadlines and you were driven to meet them just as you would be in a regional bureau, for example. But, obviously, we were supposed to think about not so much the immediate policy-driven agenda but, instead, what else was out there that could affect the policy. Obviously I enjoyed the interaction with the regional bureau. This was an assignment that was involved, of course, with the Israel affairs desk. The ambassador in Israel at the time was Tom Pickering, who I had worked with earlier when he was ambassador in Nigeria when I was stationed there. He made a few trips to Washington during this time and I had a chance to meet with him for some policy discussions and intelligence discussion, and it's always nice to meet again with a senior official like that.

I found that in certain cases INR, like other bureaucracies, tends to be driven occasionally by anniversaries. Occasionally, you find out it's 10 years since this or 15 years since that, and it's worth while to write about what has happened since that time. So, for example, in my case 1987 would have been 20 years since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank since the Six Day War. In fact, this is when the initial, the first of the so-called "Intifadas" began in the territories, in the West Bank and Gaza. So there's always a lot to do when you're dealing with a country like Israel that has such a high profile in the department, in the White House, and in the Congress. Almost anything of significance will be accepted as a submission for the secretary's briefing book, assuming it's well written, of course. There's an editorial staff in the front office of INR to go over these materials. Overall, it was a valuable experience for me to get the other side of the policymaking apparatus, to get to the intelligence side, and to work with people in the same office who were doing similar work on Jordan, on Syria. The office had the whole Middle East as our portfolio to draw upon. So I really learned in very specific ways to appreciate the value, the function of intelligence, the reason and why it needs to be kept independent from the policymaking apparatus in the department.

And I personally felt a certain amount of satisfaction and appreciation when, in more recent years, talking about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or what would happen after the invasion of Iraq, apparently the consensus in the media at least was that the little, small State Department INR analysis far outclassed the work of the CIA and the military intelligence machines. There were the questions of was there WMD (weapons of mass destruction) in Iraq and what would the situation be like after we overthrew the government? And I think it confirmed my suspicion that it's less a matter of sophisticated equipment - although, obviously you need some sophisticated apparatus, and technical capabilities, and whatever else may be available to the intelligence community - but above all you need smart people, intelligent people

who know a subject or an area very well, and who know how to put the pieces together. And I think that the consensus seemed to speak very well of the comparatively very, very small INR capacity in State compared to other intelligence agencies in the government.

Q: What sort of impression did you get of what you were getting from the CIA?

WEINTRAUB: Well, basically the materials we got- obviously we got the raw materials and then we eventually got to compare our own work with what was being produced as well by the CIA. And, you know, they had an ability to come up with no doubt a more polished, a more slick-looking product, they had the equipment to do the fancy graphics and the maps and the satellite photos and everything else in their production, and we were using our Wang word processors at the time. And you know, none of us at State had the opportunity to learn anything really sophisticated on this machinery, and the CIA finished products -- by the very nature of the way they looked -- seemed to carry, I would imagine, a certain amount of "respectability" with them. I could just imagine that when all these competing products were received at the White House, or at the different levels of the Cabinet, that one would have to really look beneath the surface of the finished product and would have to have a feel for what a society was like to really appreciate the value that was inherent in the State work.

I'm not sure that -- you know, it's hard to remember now, it was 19 years ago, I can't remember ever seeing an analysis by the agency that did little more than push forward something incrementally. I can't remember seeing a product that went against the so-called conventional wisdom, that would make me say, wow, this is really interesting, another whole new way of looking at this. I thought it was seen to be somewhat what one would expect. Typically material, I thought, materials were over classified. I think that's a suspicion a lot of us in State have of what the agency does. And obviously, you know, they have a larger budget to take care of this kind of thing than we do. Overall, however, it was obviously helpful for us to read the work of others, and it expanded our horizons, but I can't say I remember being particularly impressed by any of what I saw.

Q: Well, you mentioned the first Intifada. What was happening on your watch, '86 to '88? I mean, including that but what developments were happening? Who was in power?

WEINTRAUB: I'm trying to remember. I think it was Likud. I think it was Yitzhak Shamir in the Likud party. And, obviously, there were always stories about fighting between the Labor and Likud parties. There were always stories about the tensions within Israeli society between the orthodox and the more secular groups, competitions for budgetary resources, for influence over the government. We had the so-called, kind of a peace process with Egypt; there was an exchange of ambassadors for some time. There was always a lot happening. I can't remember particular events, other than the Intifada and the "uprising," if you will, of the Palestinians. I think the major political action -- as far as the occupation of Lebanon, when Israeli troops went all the way up to Beirut -- had already receded by that time; that happened about the time I was leaving Israel.

Q: About '81, '82.

WEINTRAUB: Right, when I was leaving Israel. It was 1982 when the Israelis went in full strength into Lebanon, and this period of mine in INR was four years later. So by this time the evacuation of the Palestinians from Beirut and Lebanon had occurred. The PLO, Yasser Arafat had gone into exile, into, I think it was Tunisia or Morocco.

Q: Tunisia.

WEINTRAUB: It was Tunisia, yes. And, I can't say, other than, again, the Palestinian uprising, that there's any one thing that stands out such as when we were stationed there, when we were on the ground: the assassination of Sadat, the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, the invasion of Lebanon. I mean, these were major activities.

Q: Well, how were we seeing the first Intifada? I never could pronounce that correctly.

WEINTRAUB: In-ti-fah-dah.

Q: Intifada. Because as I recall, this one was one the Israelis had a hard time dealing with since it was mainly kids throwing rocks and so you had soldiers shooting maybe rubber bullets or something but armed soldiers shooting at kids with rocks, which is not so much as the whole Arab-Israeli thing as based on public relations and perceptions in the world and this certainly was not a good time for the Israelis.

WEINTRAUB: It was difficult to handle and I don't know, looking back in retrospect -- I'm not sure if that phenomenon marked the start, maybe, or the turning point, in how much of the rest of the world viewed Israel. Israel at the time of the Six Day War was kind of lauded around the world as the hero, as the David against the Goliath, and its influence, if you will, its ability to conduct international relations, you know, might have reached a peak. And I'm not sure if that whole scene of, as you say, soldiers confronting youngsters throwing rocks was the start of a point that eventually reached the point where we are now.

At least in the United States and much of Europe, I think, the left wing often respected Israel against the so-called reactionary Arab states around it, and now that's almost reversed. Typically now in a lot of academic circles and the American left wing Israel is reviled as the occupier, if you will, and the Palestinians are now seen as the underdog. And maybe that was, now that you mention it, maybe that was the start of the public perception changing. Also in the first OPEC oil embargo after the 1973 Yom Kippur war I have no doubt that the ability of OPEC to amass this wealth, to spread resources through a lot of Third World countries had significant results -- no doubt they were able to influence at least the sub-Saharan African countries that then broke relations with Israel. Israel had a lot of pretty good friends in sub-Saharan Africa; they had a lot of agricultural experts there. I mean, they could make the desert bloom, so to speak, and they had a lot of aid programs and agricultural support programs. Not a great deal in the amount of money they could spend. Of course, they were not a wealthy country. But they had a lot of valuable expertise, which was really appreciated in a lot of the sub-Saharan African countries. I think after the Yom Kippur War, OPEC and Arab wealth and influence was just able to undercut that. Arabs sending a lot of money for development projects and I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of that was conditioned on the governments shutting down the operations of these Israeli embassies.

Q: Well, do you recall seeing, particularly the Palestinian cause, as being a much -- you know, at one point it wasn't considered a big deal. I mean a big threat. But do you recall, were we looking at this now from another perspective of saying we've really got to do something about this because the population is growing and the settlement process is not going to help the situation at all?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I think I remember we were starting to get concerned when the settlements on the West Bank were approaching 100,000 people. I think now the latest figures I've seen are 250,000 on the West Bank. I think there was a consensus among most of the analysts I was working with on the Middle East that this probably would be unable to be sustained indefinitely, that Israel needs to come to terms with the Palestinians. I think there was a recognition of the demographics of the situation as well, that this was working against Israel. There was another analyst who wrote particularly about Jordan and the Palestinians. We often did work together or discussed things together. I think we were aware of this happening but it was hard to know where the dynamics were going. I think Jordan had not- maybe it did- I'm trying to think when Jordan under King Hussein had officially renounced his claim to the West Bank -- a claim which was not recognized by anyone in the world, not even the other Arab countries. Of course, once that happened then the West Bank was truly up for grabs. There was a time within Israel when one of the solutions would be to negotiate with Hussein of Jordan and work out some situation on the West Bank. Once that was off the table I think we were aware of it, that this was an issue that Israel would have to address. I can't recall though, enough of the materials that I wrote about.

ARTHUR H. HUGHES
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tel Aviv (1986-1989)

Ambassador Hughes was born in Nebraska and attended the University of Nebraska in 1961. He entered the Foreign Service in 1965 and served in Germany, Venezuela, Denmark, The Netherlands, Israel, and Yemen. In addition, he held several posts within the State Department.

Q: In '86?

HUGHES: In '86. He went there, and I went to Israel.

Q: That was a new area of the world for you, it looks to me. You had spent a lot of time in Europe and Venezuela, but the Middle East was new area, new terrain.

HUGHES: That's true.

Q: Who was Ambassador there at the time?

HUGHES: Tom Pickering was Ambassador, and Arnie Raphel was the principal deputy in NEA

[Bureau of Near East Affairs]. This was basically an idea that Arnie had. I said that I had met him earlier on when I worked on the seventh floor. I had actually met him earlier but got to know him only then. It was something that Arnie basically engineered. I had met Tom Pickering before, didn't know him very well. He was a Deputy in PM when I worked for Bill Macomber, and we'd come into contact on various things, not very intensely or profoundly. Well, you're right, that just changed the whole direction of my career. I was blessed with having a couple of options. I had always wanted to go back to the Germanic world, and I was asked to go to be DCM in Vienna, which was very attractive in some ways, particularly since the East-West conflict was still on. Vienna had some real significance in that area, not in the bilateral sense, but to go to Europe on one of the major political issues of our time and to work for someone of the stature of Tom Pickering was just too much to even hope for, too great an opportunity to pass up.

Q: The DCM in Vienna really wouldn't have been all that different from being in Copenhagen and The Hague - the size of the embassy and some of the same issues.

HUGHES: Not at all.

Q: It wasn't an opportunity to get into something new and challenging.

HUGHES: That's right.

Q: So, this was 1986. What was the situation? This was a little bit after the Lebanon period, but it was before the peace process got underway, before Madrid certainly.

HUGHES: The peace process had been in the doldrums. There was a national unity government in Israel. I arrived there in August of '86, and this was toward the end of the first half of the national unity government. The agreement had been reached in '84 between Likud and Maraf, labor, to form a national unity government, the first two years under the prime ministership of Shimon Perez and the second two years under Yitzhak Shamir. I arrived in August of '86, and in November '86 the national unity government transition took place.

Q: So Shamir became the Prime Minister?

HUGHES: Shamir became the Prime Minister. But the political process in Israel was pretty much frozen as part of the peace process. The major issue really domestically in Israel up through a little bit earlier that summer was the economy and hyperinflation almost, and new policies which brought inflation into control. There had been daily devaluations of the Israel economy, and they went to the shekel, of course. But the peace process was basically frozen. There was a lot of thinking going on about it, and a little bit of probing behind the scenes and so forth, but nothing was happening. I can remember in August two things specifically in my first days - well, three things. First of all, Tom Pickering and Alice Pickering came out to the airport to meet Pat and me personally, which I thought was a wonderful thing for them to do. And then Tom said, "Well, I've got to go to Jerusalem," so he had another car take him, so in his car Alice took Pat and me to our temporary quarters, which was a wonderful gesture, wonderful way to be welcomed to a post. It was not only a human thing, but I also think it was a very nice signal to the rest of the staff that Tom Pickering said, "This is my guy."

Q: "And I think enough of him and his position to make this gesture," and all the others saw that.

HUGHES: Let me digress right here. Something happened in Venezuela that was very important. The ambassador, who was Maurice Sprandow, a career guy, a wonderful guy - we were on the Maracaibo. There was a lot of contempt, I'm sorry to say, for Maracaibo and Puerto La Cruz in the Embassy in Caracas.

Q: Contempt of the American consulate in those two places.

HUGHES: Yes, well, these are kind of second rate places, and probably the people that are assigned there weren't good enough to get assigned to embassies. I'm sorry to say that. I still feel this, you know, 25 years later or whatever it is. So I would go to Caracas occasionally with the bag, with the pouch, of course. We rotated. And I would have a hard time getting anyone to talk to me. I would go to the front office in the embassy. I'd go see the DCM. We'd talk about what was going on and I'd buy Western staples at the commissary. And I always tried to make sure I saw the Ambassador personally. Well, if the Ambassador was there at all, he would say, "Art, have you got time for a cup of coffee?" And I'd say, "Yes, Sir," and we would go down to the cafeteria of the Embassy, Ambassador Birnbaum and Vice Consul Hughes or Vice Consul the other guy, and sitting there with the Ambassador having a cup of coffee, and I thought that was tremendous, that was tremendous. Anyway, I digressed a little bit, but the second thing Tom said, "I'm going on home leave in three weeks. Learn fast." And the third thing, he said, "Anytime I go up to Jerusalem up the hill, I want you to go with me so I can introduce you to all these people I'm dealing with." So we did, and Tom had a habit which, I must say, drove some people in the embassy crazy, because sometimes it left them little work to do. When he'd go to Jerusalem, he'd see everybody from the Prime Minister, the Second Deputy Assistant, U.S. Desk Officer in the Foreign Ministry, and take care of all the business.

Q: In very capable fashion.

HUGHES: Well, with his intelligence, his energy, his imagination, his creativity - all of that, you know. But that was one of the issues that I found I had to deal with. Then what are the roles of all the other guys? And to try to insure that the others understood that this was not a vote against them, that there was real work to be done, that there was plenty of serious work for everyone, but how to deal with that.

Q: At least he wasn't secretive.

HUGHES: On, no, not at all.

Q: He was very open that he was doing these things, because that's a problem sometimes, when you don't know what the front office, what the Ambassador is doing.

HUGHES: Well, he had another great habit that I learned from him, and I carried it on when I became Chief of Mission later on, and that was he would do cables, and he would say, "Art, read them through, and if they make sense, go ahead and send them. If you need to fix a few things,

fine. If there's anything really consequential, let's talk about it." But he never sent anything out without saying somebody else ought to get it. And I did the same thing later on when I was a DAS at Defense, Chief of Mission and a DAS at State. I'd say to somebody else, "Take a look at this. This is what I've done."

Q: Look at it seriously. Don't just...

HUGHES: What Tom Pickering was doing was not pridefulness or anything. It was, "Hey, these are opportunities. I can get some stuff done." But anyway that became something that I had to deal with as a DCM and make sure that the rest of the mission also understood that. So we went up and we called on then Foreign Minister before the rotation, and Shamir. And I can remember getting a little bit of business. The RP was just arriving and the Deputy and I'll be gone. I hope you'll treat him as you treat me in my absence. We got into an argument about whether or not Israel would ever go to a peace conference. For Shamir it was a matter of Likud policy never to go to a conference, because they would be overwhelmed, they would be outmaneuvered, they would be outnumbered - all kinds of reasons they did not want to go to conferences. I said, "You're going to need to go. It's the only way things are going to work." "Well, I don't know." We went back and forth. Tom was about a foot and a half taller than Shamir. They were sitting there, Tom and Shamir sitting on the edge of the chair in the Foreign Minister's office. The first meeting I went with Tom and Dick Murphy, representative in Israel for the peace process. That was the result of Secretary Schultz's urgings to Murphy to somehow try to do something more with the peace process. They had walked [and] went down to Tel Aviv. So we went up to see Prime Minister Shimon Perez, who had just been over to Cairo to see Mubarak, President of Egypt. So Tom was leaving the next morning for home, so we went up there, and the Prime Minister was feeling very good. He was very responsive and, of course, one of his objects in life was to try to figure out how to break the national unity government to go to elections before the transition when he would go back to being Foreign Minister. He was trying to figure out ways to use these meetings with Mubarak and what the Egyptians had said to break the NUG, the National Unity Government. That was his objective. So he started talking about these meetings. I don't know if you've ever met Shimon Perez, but he's very loquacious, very articulate.

Q: I've read his book.

HUGHES: Very smart. Goes off to all kinds of literary illusions and refers to people and so forth. I'm a notetaker, right. I've been in the country about three weeks. I've done a lot of reading and studying, but there were some personalities I didn't know, and he would name somebody and sometimes he'd use their first name and sometimes their last name. I wasn't sure if he was talking about one person or two people. So the next morning Tom said, "Okay, write this up. Wat Cluverius will help you, and then get it off. I'm going off on a five a.m. flight, or a four a.m. flight, but go to the house. I'll be doing some work. I'll leave you some notes in the safe. So I go to the house and want to get in the safe. The first thing on the top of that was a note said, "Arnie Raphel called. You've been promoted. Congratulations." But I thought that was also really very nice of Tom. So anyway I worked on that cable. Unfortunately Wat, of course, knew all the people and helped me put it into shape to send it in.

Q: Let me understand a little bit more what his position was. He had been Counsel General in

Jerusalem. I know he was there in '84, because I visited him. And this is now '86. What was his position?

HUGHES: Well, how I understand it is that Secretary Schultz had told Dick Murphy that somehow we needed to beef up something regarding the peace process.

Q: Murphy, then the Assistant Secretary.

HUGHES: He was the Assistant Secretary. In talking with Tom, Tom is like a brigade in himself, so it wasn't really necessary to do anything. I seem to recall at some point there was even a mention that maybe Dick Murphy should go and set up camp in Israel to be the Secretary's personal representative to the peace process, which would have been an awful idea. So Murphy managed this request by Secretary Schultz by saying, "Okay, I've got a good guy who's been Ambassador after he's been a DAS in NEA, he's been consul general in Jerusalem, he understands both sides of the issues, he's *persona gratis* to both sides, so we'll have to put him in Israel, but he will be my representative to the peace process."

Q: And he came under Pickering?

HUGHES: He came under Dick Murphy.

Q: But he lived in Tel Aviv?

HUGHES: Lived in Tel Aviv, had an office in the embassy, and he was also a good friend of Tom's and a good friend of mine, and so it all worked quite well, partially because of the personalities involved, I guess.

Q: Would he travel in the region? Would he see the Palestinians?

HUGHES: See the Palestinians and see the Israelis, and try to just see where there was any overlap.

Q: How long did he do that?

HUGHES: He retired, I think, in '88 to become the Director General of the MFO [Multinational Force and Observers].

Q: Maybe two years or so?

HUGHES: It must have been. I think he had just come down in '86 before I got there.

Q: And he's still in Rome?

HUGHES: Still in Rome.

Q: I heard him speak recently.

HUGHES: Yes.

Q: Yes, it was last fall. You talked about relationships with the embassy in Venezuela years earlier. The relationship between the embassy and Consulate General in Jerusalem is unique.

HUGHES: Jerusalem is one of only two Consuls General, the other in Hong Kong, with direct reporting authority to the capitol, to Washington. But, again, I think from my perspective there were very good relations, both personal relations and policy relations, because we all understood what the issues were, we all understood what the principles were and what we were trying to achieve, and what the limits were on us.

Q: As you said, the Ambassador, you, other members of the embassy staff from Tel Aviv were in Jerusalem leading the government people all the time.

HUGHES: Constantly. We'd often go by the Consulate General to talk about what was going on or to use their secure telephone or between meetings to go and write up notes in a secure environment. Also, somebody from the Consulate General is always welcome to join the big staff meeting.

Q: Otherwise the people in the Consulate General, the Consul General and the staff, were primarily concerned with the people in Jerusalem as opposed to the government as such and certainly the people on the West Bank at that time. Now this was before there was any kind of Palestinian authority.

HUGHES: The division of labor with respect to the Israeli occupation of the territories was the Consulate General in Jerusalem was responsible for the contacts reported on the West Bank. We were responsible for contacts reporting to Gaza, which took me to Gaza fairly frequently. An aside there: I'd like very much to have Gazan and Israeli politicians both right and left at dinner, breaking bread at the same table. That was interesting, our discussions.

Q: And you were able to do that?

HUGHES: I was able to do that, yes. I don't think there was any kind of strain or misunderstanding in the relationship between the Consulate General and the Embassy, and I think part of the function of what we were trying to do and the fact that good people tried to go to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, so the Bureau in staffing requests usually has the pick of the best.

Q: You had a very good staff in the Embassy at Tel Aviv in the time you were there. Who was the Consul General in Jerusalem?

HUGHES: Phil Wilcox during the second two years, and Maury Draper the first.

Q: Any other major issues involving U.S. and Israel at the time?

HUGHES: Well, maybe two things. My main substantive area of responsibility as the DCM

there was working with the defense establishment. So I worked directly with then Defense Minister Rabin and Dr. Melman and we became personal friends. He was very gracious to me when I left and had events that were hosted for us. And also his people in connection with the occupation. We dealt with Israelis. The Consulate General did not deal with the Israeli government. I dealt with them also in the context of the opposition of the West Bank as well as Gaza.

Q: On issues including settlement, for example?

HUGHES: Settlements, human rights.

Q: From the Israeli government point of view, all those issues?

HUGHES: All those issues, intelligence, military intelligence. I worked with the Prime Minister as a terrorism advisor along with the station on some of those issues. But that was very intense, and rewarding in some ways. I think we were able collectively to make some progress on some things. One specific project was getting the Jordanian banks reopened in the West Bank, a lot of their work. I was in a sense a go-between between the Israelis and the Jordanians on this particular issue. I went over to Jordan and talked with the central bank and finance minister and prime minister about traditions and personalities and so forth. But the whole question of human rights and the occupation and so forth was very depressing. On the mission management side, there were a lot of problems, understaffed on the American side, long-term problems.

Q: In the embassy?

HUGHES: In the embassy at that time. Major fraud. The biggest disappointment there was, I think, the fact that visa fraud was more broadly known among the Israeli employees in the mission, who took no action to report it.

Q: This is a continuation of a oral history interview with Arthur H. Hughes. Today is the 6th of May 1998. We're conducting this at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center. When we finished last time, Art, I think we were talking about your assignment from 1986 to '89 as Deputy Chief of Mission in Tel Aviv. That was obviously a big job with management, security, lots of issues, political, peace process, and the relations in the defense area, trade. I guess I would suggest you first maybe remind us who was the Ambassador at that time and what were your most difficult challenges and main responsibilities?

HUGHES: Well, thanks, Ray. The ambassador was Tom Pickering, and he had been there a year before I arrived. The other senior officer there was Wat Cluverius, who had been assigned there by Assistant Secretary Dick Murphy, to be his personal representative for the peace process. Wat had been in Jerusalem as the Consul General, and at the urging of Secretary Schultz to Murphy to become more actively engaged in the peace process, he asked Cluverius to come down. So it was Tom Pickering and Wat Cluverius supposedly reporting directly to Murphy, although they had a very close and good relationship, and then myself. I had been in Europe as DCM in Copenhagen and The Netherlands, and actually the Tel Aviv job was worked out between Arnie Rafel and Tom Pickering. I knew Tom only slightly from some times in the Department. It was

clear to Tom, of course, and to Arnie that I had no deep background in the peace process or the Middle East. I had never served in the Middle East. And I think he was looking to me mainly initially to do the traditional inside job of DCM. But I remember when I arrived, he and Mrs. Pickering, Alice Pickering, very graciously met Pat and me at the airport and picked us up on the tarmac from the airplane, and he said, "Learn fast. We're going on home leave in four weeks."

Q: Learn about everything.

HUGHES: Learn about everything. He was great in making sure that I was involved in everything including, between my arrival and when he left on home leave four weeks later, his almost daily trips to Jerusalem included me, to introduce and present me to all the players, all the Israeli players, in which he always said, "Art's my new deputy, and when I'm gone, he acts for me, acts for the U.S. government." Those meetings included people like the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, Defense Minister, and everyone else in Israel with whom he was meeting between those times. When Tom did go, Wat was wonderful in also giving me advice. We talked as actually colleagues, and so I think I was able to "learn fast" as Tom had enjoined me to do. But the issues were across the board, of course. The peace process was pretty moribund at that point. As usual, Tom Pickering was chipping away, working at all angles, pushing wherever he could. Secretary Schultz at that point, I think, had decided that there was not much progress being made, and so he was not very active himself at that point. But we had, as you indicated, the full gamut, defense relationships, the question of security, terrorism, economic relationships. We had the free trade agreement with the Israelis, who were very slow in implementing parts that would have opened up their market to us. This continues a bit to this present day. Of course, they had a very protectionist economy, a very statist economy, which they still do to a very large extent. And managing the mission, which is a very large mission with a lot of agencies and a lot of technicalities regarding the occupied territories, regarding who we dealt with in various places and who we did not deal with, where did we not go, and that took a good bit of coordination and keeping track of what was going on and, if necessary, making sure that the various arcanery were in fact followed. We had a good staff and leadership by Tom Pickering, of course. I think the embassy was a darn good embassy.

Q: The staff, I see on a note from you, was about 390 at that time. I assume that's American staff, or American and Israeli?

HUGHES: American and Israeli, yes.

Q: One of the other coordination aspects of the DCM in Tel Aviv is dealing, I suppose, with the Consulate in Jerusalem. Do you want to say anything about that?

HUGHES: Well, that was really a coordination role and a collegial kind of arrangement, because, as you know, there are, I think, still just two independent Consulates General in the U.S. Foreign Service, Hong Kong and Jerusalem, so Jerusalem reported directly back to Washington, although we had excellent relations. Almost always when I would go to Jerusalem, and very frequently when Tom would go to Jerusalem, we would stop by the Consulate General to consult with the Consul General and other people there, and actually we'd use their secure phones and use their place to do up notes and write cables while we were waiting between meetings with the

Israeli authorities in Jerusalem. There were differences of perspective, of course, to a certain extent borne by with whom one was talking and the kind of information one was getting, but there was no disagreement about the independence of the Consulate General and the basic policy lines that the U.S. government was trying to pursue at that point.

Q: It was certainly always clearly understood by the Consul General and others in the Consulate General in Jerusalem that, where it came to dealing with the government of Israel, which happened to be located in Jerusalem, in most respects that it would be the embassy, the Ambassador, your responsibility.

HUGHES: That's right, and during most of the time I was there, Phil Wilcox was the Consul General, who was a close personal friend and also an excellent man.

Q: How about the whole issue - you mentioned security and terrorism. Was that a particular problem in this period of '86 to '89 for you?

HUGHES: No, it wasn't, as a matter of fact. It was something that we always had to keep on top of and keep ahead of. A major concern we had was the location of the building, which is fronted between two main streets along the shoreline in downtown Tel Aviv. Of course, it was just a few years before that - I don't remember the exact year - when the Palestinian terrorists blew up a truckload of bottled gas near the American Embassy in Kuwait City. Every time I would see a truckload of bottled gas - they'd come down the street literally ten feet from the front of the embassy - I couldn't help but having a certain thought in my mind. But, of course, as history showed, nothing did happen. The Israelis understood that it was very important that nothing happened, not only for us but in their cities. Of course, later on there were a number of terrorist incidents but not directed at U.S. facilities.

Q: It's a location that is very cramped, very tight, but also, as you say, between two main streets which, unlike Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House, could not be closed off.

HUGHES: No, the way Tel Aviv was laid out, to close off either one of those streets would have just caused chaos in Tel Aviv. Let me maybe just interject here. One of the specific and special responsibilities of the DCM there had been to maintain the relationships with the Ministry of Defense. That was really a fascinating part of my portfolio, because it ranged from Ministry of Defense activities in the occupied territories to Defense relationships including various kinds of cooperation, materiel, training, coordination, joint exercises, and all those things, and that brought me into almost everyday contact with people in the Defense Ministry and probably every few days with Defense Minister Rabin. That was a particular, interesting, and maybe important and also enjoyable and very stimulating part of my job there.

Q: Was the Defense Ministry also in Jerusalem?

HUGHES: No, Tel Aviv. When the state of Israel was declared, the government initially was in Tel Aviv, of course.

Q: Which is why the Embassy was there?

HUGHES: And that's one of the reasons why the Embassy is still there. When the government moved to Jerusalem, the Defense Ministry, for national defense reasons mainly, was kept in Tel Aviv. Other ministries have offices in Tel Aviv, and at least in the days when I was there, there were periodic, if not Cabinet meetings, intergovernmental intradepartmental meetings in Tel Aviv almost every week, the Prime Minister and the members of the Cabinet.

Q: In terms of your liaison responsibility with the Ministry of Defense, you also, of course, had to work with the Defense attaché and other U.S. military people who were part of the mission.

HUGHES: Right, and we were blessed almost entirely with really first-rate people, excellent people who were very sophisticated, very well trained and just good, solid people as human beings as well. So that was an enjoyable part of my responsibilities and, I'd say to a very large extent, a successful one largely because of the kind of people that we had in the Defense attaché and the individual attaché offices.

Q: Did you anticipate that Rabin would become the prime minister? You probably did.

HUGHES: Well, he had been Prime Minister before, of course. The problem was that Shimon Perez controlled the party apparatus and Rabin, given his personality and his own inclinations, had a lot of contempt for party pacts, apparatchiks, and he did not suffer fools gladly. He wore his feelings on his sleeve to a certain extent, I think, as everybody knows. So it was really problematic at that point whether or not he would ever become prime minister again. As it turned out - just to jump ahead to make a comment - the main reason that he did become Prime Minister was that people in the Labor Party were able to push through a rule change to require a party primary for their prime ministerial candidate, and in that primary Rabin did win, then became the candidate and won. In the general election the reason he won was because the body politic of Israel trusted him with the future and the security of Israel, whereas ironically the public did not trust Shimon Perez with the security of the country. They saw him as being a little bit too intellectual, a little bit too remote from certain realities. I say it's ironic because Shimon Perez was the father of the Israeli military industry and even of their nuclear program when he was Director General of the Ministry of Defense early on during the days of Israel. So in spite of all the history of having done those things for the security of Israel, he simply wasn't trusted. Of course, he's got a perfect record of never winning an election. But to go back to your question, it was just a real unknown in that period.

Q: Was there already congressional and other pressure that the embassy ought to be in Jerusalem instead of Tel Aviv? That certainly has been the case over many years.

HUGHES: Yes, there was indeed, and it was successfully managed. I know that Tom Pickering spent a good bit of time on that before he went to Israel and then when he would go back on consultations to go to the Hill and talk with folks there and try to hold things off. Interestingly enough, we went through a period of trying to find a new location for the chancery in Tel Aviv. That was a task that Tom and Washington basically gave to me to manage and to be very active and involved in, and we spent maybe a year working with the Israeli government in trying to find a new location. The reason that it relates to your question about the Hill is a deal had been

reached under which we would find locations in both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem for new buildings, and the new building in Jerusalem would be constructed so that it could become an embassy, a chancery, at the right time. That deal basically fell apart. My suspicion is that at the end of the day the Israelis decided they had no interest in following through because they showed us some awful properties in Tel Aviv. At one point I told a senior Israeli with whom I was on very friendly terms, I said, "Look, I don't think it's the job of the U.S. government to build an embassy to be a part of an urban renewal project in blighted areas of Tel Aviv." But at the end of the day, as I said, I think the Israelis decided that it wasn't in their political interest domestically to follow through. So finally a lot of money was spent on rehabing the building in downtown Tel Aviv, where it still is.

Q: Was there also a problem perhaps on possible location sites in Jerusalem?

HUGHES: No, in fact, I looked at property that was located in Jerusalem, and there was apparently clear title. There was a claim later on by some Palestinians that they still had title to the land, and frankly, since the deal fell apart, I lost track of what eventually happened to that. But my understanding at the time was that there was clear title to a quite attractive parcel in Jerusalem.

Q: In East Jerusalem?

HUGHES: No, my recollection is that it was kind of south central, southwest Jerusalem. I think it was a part of a British military camp originally.

Q: When did Tom Pickering leave? I think he left late in '88 maybe, early '89?

HUGHES: He left at the end of December of 1988. Let me come back and just mention the Intifada [uprising] before that, because the Intifada did change that political dynamic among the Palestinians on one hand and among the Israelis and the interaction between the two. Again, another point of irony was that the Intifada was totally accidental as it started, as a traffic accident down in Gaza in which some Palestinians were killed. It was clear it was a pure accident, but it sparked off local demonstrations, rage, and they continued on. Why it was important at the time was that what eventually happened was that the Israeli strategy of preemption and intimidation to create the psychology among the Palestinians that they were incapable of really acting on their own behalf, acting to have an impact on their own future, fell apart. That strategy fell apart, because events as they unfolded showed that the Israelis were not ten feet tall, that the Palestinians were not totally incapable of having an impact on their own future, and it caused some rethinking on both sides about how to proceed. It also had some very unfortunate consequences, of course, in the deaths that were occasioned and the new life it gave to splinter groups of Palestinian terrorists. But I think one can say that in overall terms of history it was a very important event and it maybe had a positive impact on the political dynamic because it caused people to rethink their strategies and their situations and resulted in movement in the peace process.

Q: At what point at the embassy did you all sort of see it that way? Obviously it must have taken a little while to realize that this was a significant change, and to what extent did it impact on

embassy operations, activities, perspectives?

HUGHES: Well, in operations first, it made Gaza a little bit more difficult place to go. Coming back to the division of labor between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the Embassy and the Consular General, the Consular General had responsibility for the West Bank with respect to aid programs, relations with the Palestinians. The Embassy had responsibility for Gaza for the same kinds of things, and, of course, the Embassy had responsibility for dealing with the Israeli government on all of the occupied territories. Initially nobody was sure what the impact was going to be. What did it mean? Was this another incident that was going to be tamped down and then go back to the business as usual before. But because of our contacts with the Israelis across the board and the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces], the MOD [Ministry of Defense] and private individuals, individual military people, and analysts on the Israeli side and also the Palestinian, I can't say, from this remove without having thought about it too much, exactly when, but it became clear that this was a different situation. One thing that sticks in my mind is - well, two things: one, because of my own age when I was there, I had a lot of private Israeli friends about my age whose children were just finishing high school and about to go into the IDF, and they began to talk among themselves about Gaza. When we'd spend time with them, go to dinner or lunch, play tennis, whatever, just in a normal friendly relationships, they'd talk about their concerns about their kids and the purposelessness and the worthlessness of occupying Gaza and the fear that their kids would be sent to Gaza for the occupation. They would rather have them go to Southern Lebanon or be in an elite unit up in the northern part of Israel as opposed to going to Gaza. Then as it went on, they also began to fear the change in the psychology. It was clear that Israelis were being put in a position of true occupiers and oppressors because of the way they had to deal with kids, not in an occasional incident as had been the case for many, many years, but in an ongoing day-to-day basis. I can remember one Israeli friend saying, "You know, it's not what we ought to be doing." And editorial writers started to write that Israelis should not be occupiers. We have been oppressed for centuries. Now we should not be put in a position of being the oppressors. One friend said to me, "I can imagine my son or daughter being down in Gaza and just simply losing an eye from the stones. For what?" There was all of that going on. Then I can remember talking to an Israeli major who was in Gaza, and he came back and he said, "One of the problems we have is that we cannot get any officers of quality to be willing to go to Gaza, so we take the bottom tier of officers, and that compounds the problem." You have people who are not as competent or capable on the one hand dealing with a difficult situation, so you get into over-reaction. Morale is down, so everybody is in a basic hair-trigger kind of psychology.

On the other hand, the Palestinians started taking heart. They also had contacts with certain Israelis. They could read the Israeli press. Everything is always in the Israeli press. There are no secrets in Israel, or maybe one or two. They started to take heart. How could they organize this? Because this happened by the people in Gaza, not by the leadership. So the leadership started to think, how can we take control of this and organize it or shape it into bigger political ends. This was all a gradual process, but it became clearer as days went by that this was a new situation. Plus, just to go back, there was one other point. Toward the end of the first term of the National Unity Government in the latter part of 1986 - the change-over took place on November 1 when Shimon Perez passed the baton to Yitzhak Shamir - Shimon Perez was trying to figure out ways to change the political dynamic in order to break the National Unity Government-enforced elections. Of course, Likud understood that and they were not going to have any of that, because

they wanted their two leaders in office. So one of the things that Perez did was to try to work out deals, to see what he could do with President Mubarak of Egypt, but also to try new ideas.

One of the things obviously was Gaza first, which met with some degree of ridicule. Of course, this was way before the Intifada. Gaza first, Gaza first. Historically Israelis, Israel, the biblical Israel, had never really had ongoing control of Gaza, and so forth. This is not a part of the historic part of the land of Israel. We can give it up. Plus, it's nothing but problems. What do we gain by it? And there was a mixed reaction, but later on, of course, we know what has happened just in the last few years.

Q: You mentioned before that the Embassy had the responsibility for Gaza as opposed to the West Bank, Jerusalem. To what extent did you as DCM have contacts with the Palestinians before the Intifada, after the Intifada began? What difference did that make? Was that taking up much of your time, or how did you handle that aspect?

HUGHES: Well, I traveled to Gaza periodically. We also had two officers in the Embassy, one in the economic section to oversee all of the aid programs, because we had no aid people in Israeli-occupied territories. We did everything through NGOs [non-governmental organizations] and PVOs [private volunteer organizations], and then there was an officer in the political section who was responsible for Gaza. I would go down with them periodically. Ambassador Pickering went down occasionally as well. I would invite Gazans to the residence actually to attend receptions and dinners in which I would have people from Gaza together with Israelis, and that made for some very interesting conversation, needless to say. But I thought it was a chance to bring Israelis and Palestinians together in an environment that might be conducive to some thinking and some talk and just to get to know each other for perhaps future purposes, to raise the comfort level in dealing among certain people. I don't know to what extent it had any impact on later events. It's hard to tell. But it was important to go down to Gaza to show the presence, and then eventually before I left we were able to open a small storefront kind of office down there under the Economic Section.

Q: No flag?

HUGHES: Just a little storefront.

Q: At that time, though, Arafat and the leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization were still in Tunis. To what extent was there real leadership being shown by the Gazan Palestinians, and to the extent there was leadership being expressed in the occupied territories, was it primarily in Gaza as opposed to the West Bank?

HUGHES: No, it was in both places, and the names, which have become prominent now, as far as the insiders were prominent names there, but in Gaza probably the leadership wasn't as strong as it was on the West Bank, because there were other West Bankers and Jerusalemites. When we would go to Gaza, when I would go around and talk to people, for example, the head of the lawyers' association and other people, it was clear that these people were PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. There was absolutely no doubt about it. We knew it, but we'd never talk about it in those terms, because we were forbidden from dealing with the PLO, but these

were local personages who had influence on the situation.

Of course, even then there was some difficulty, but not to the extent as later on, between the insiders and the outsiders. Of course, today this is one of the real grievances of the people on the inside, the Palestinians who had stayed in Palestine, stayed in the territories. When Yasser Arafat did come back, he brought people with him whom many Palestinians believed were second and third rate people and to the exclusion to a certain extent of people on the inside. But this reminds me to come to your question of a few moments ago. As I mentioned, the peace process was more at the beginning of my time. Secretary Schultz was not active, but he was actually present. As I understand it, Murphy had become more active, and that is why he's quavering about Tel Aviv as a way - if I can say this - to a certain extent to manage Secretary Schultz, because Murphy understood that if the Secretary of State was not going to be active, for the Assistant Secretary to be active had no particular purpose. Tom Pickering was actually indefatigable regarding trying new ideas, trying to move, trying to press, trying to move things ahead - just always a million ideas in his mind. Finally when Secretary Schultz did come to Israel a couple times toward the end of '88 or '89, I always thought of Tom Pickering as George Schultz's conscience on the peace process, because he would almost badger him about doing things, trying things. Schultz didn't like that very much frankly. Now, it's got to be said historically Schultz left a wonderful gift when he did depart office, and that was his actions that made the PLO a legitimate discussion partner. That was a tremendous breakthrough, a tremendous gift. But before that, he didn't like Tom's pushing, and I often thought that was one reason that Schultz insisted that Tom leave exactly on his third anniversary as ambassador to Israel. You asked when Pickering left. I remember when he left, because I was on leave in the States for Christmas, and I left Wisconsin on the 26th of December to arrive back in Israel the 27th of December to talk with Tom, to take him to the airport, accompany him to the airport on the 28th of December to leave, and later that day to meet Bill and Helen Brown, who were coming in as the new ambassador, who was a recess appointment, by the way.

Q: So you were not chargé for more than a moment.

HUGHES: Not on that occasion. But my point is I think that was Schultz's way of telling Pickering he hadn't appreciated this being badgered, and even though Schultz was leaving, the administration was changing, he insisted that Tom leave after three years.

Q: But he also went to New York?

HUGHES: Well, but that had not been arranged. But I was coming to that. Before I had gone on leave for Christmas, Tom was winding up things, and one of the things he liked to do was drive in the desert. He is an accomplished amateur archaeologist, and he was off in the Egyptian desert with the Army attaché and two four-wheel-drive vehicles out wandering around taking a look at things. So I as chargé got a call one day, "This is the office of Vice President George Bush. He'd like to speak to Ambassador Pickering," and I said, "Well, he's in the Egyptian desert. I'm Art Hughes. I'm the chargé. Can I help you with something?" He said, "No, no. The Vice President wants to speak with Ambassador Pickering. Can you find him?" I said, "Yes, it might take a little while, but we can track him down." So I called Jack Coby, who was the DCM in Cairo, and I said, "Can you find Tom?" He said, "Oh, yes, the Egyptian Army knows where he is." I said,

"Well, he should call this number." Well, it did take him a day and a half, I think. In my mind's eye I see Tom pulling up to a phone booth in the middle of the Egyptian desert and going in and dialing. But he did tell me that they were basically off in the boonies somewhere but did have a phone, an Egyptian Army phone, I guess. He did call, and the Vice President offered him a job in New York. From his experience in New York he thought more could be done, he wanted somebody who had energy and was bright and would like Tom to do the job.

Q: But this was after he was already committed to leaving?

HUGHES: He was already on his way out, right. So then they talked and agreed that Bush would notify him in a few days or a week definitively. At that point he was taking soundings with him. We happened to have CODEL [congressional delegation] in town, and there was a reception at the residence. The phone rang in the library, and I went in and picked it up, and it was the Vice President's office. So I went out and found Tom, who was mingling with his guests, of course, and I said, "Tom, there's a phone call." So he went in and it was the Vice President, who said, "I'd like you to do this job." So Tom came out, and I said, "Is it a go?" and he said, "Yes," and I said, "Do you mind if I make an announcement since it's official?" He said, "No," so I asked everybody's attention and I said, "I'd like to present to you the next American Ambassador Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Thomas R. Pickering," and people were just stunned for a moment and then everybody grinned and applauded and said, "Gosh, when did this happen?" He said, "Well, that was the phone call from Vice President Bush."

Q: You didn't scoop the White House on that announcement?"

HUGHES: Well, I don't know how Bush dealt with the White House. That was his. Washington deals with Washington.

Q: You mentioned that there was a congressional delegation visiting. Certainly probably more visitors, high level from the Executive Branch, Congress, go to Israel than anywhere else in the world. Was this a major dimension of your time there, or was it something that was fairly routine?

HUGHES: No, it was a major dimension. Not only the official CODELS but also the number of congressmen and senators who were invited privately by Israeli organizations. Israel very astutely organized over the years what they called study missions and study visits to Israel, basically to tell their story to American opinion makers and politicians. And they were very, very effective in it. We would almost always be invited by the Israeli sponsoring organization, which was usually a quasi-governmental organization, to attend a dinner or make a presentation or so forth, either at the embassy or at a hotel where they were meeting, and usually that task fell to me. And that was very interesting, also seeing the reaction of various American groups and hearing their questions and so forth. I thought it was important that we be very honest about the American commitment, the American support, and also the problems that we had with Israel on certain areas of human rights, the differences in our legal positions regarding the territories and so forth, and to be very comprehensive and very honest and very straightforward, but to give a comprehensive picture.

The fact that the Israeli organizations kept inviting us back, I guess, meant that they felt we were doing it in a fair way, and the questions that we got from many Americans, I think, also showed that some of the things that we said were new to them, were things that were not always covered in the American press or not covered in other briefings while they were in Israel. But, of course, there's no doubt about the American commitment, and that's where one always began. On official CODELS, you're right, an enormous number. I can't remember that a congressman or senator ever came to the embassy in Tel Aviv. They were always in Jerusalem. They had come down maybe to deal with the defense ministry, but I cannot remember that a single one ever came to the building. I take this back. There was one, who's now active in the Seeds of Peace, from Utah.

Q: Wayne Owens.

HUGHES: Wayne Owens.

Q: How about the President or Secretary of State? Did they come during this period?

HUGHES: Well, the Secretary of State did, but again, he never came to Tel Aviv. He was always in Jerusalem.

Q: Did you always drive back and forth between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem?

HUGHES: Oh, constantly. In fact, a couple of times I actually ate both lunch and dinner in the car on the way the same day.

Q: Back and forth.

HUGHES: I always carried my lunch because I never knew when I was going to have to go to Jerusalem, even if it was scheduled sometimes. I'm in the car for almost an hour. Why don't I use it? I'll take stuff to eat, and I'll eat lunch in the car, which was just a way to save time. Then, as I said, a couple times I actually ate two meals in the car.

Q: You never used to helicopter?

HUGHES: No, no. When there were visitors, if they were landing in Tel Aviv, or coming in at Ben Gurion, they may take a helicopter up to Jerusalem to the helipad by the Knesset or maybe to the MOD just as a time saver for a visitor. One of the interesting visitors we had was Senator Gore. He was one of the most serious and well prepared visitors that we ever had. He came alone, not as a part of a group. I happened to be chargé at the time, so I accompanied him to see Prime Minister Shamir and the foreign minister and others. That was the first time I had ever met him, and I must say I was really impressed with how serious, because frankly a lot of the visits were basically domestic politically oriented and were not very issue oriented at all.

Q: You also had many governors come, I suppose.

HUGHES: A few governors, yes, but they were usually a part of a private study group, so they were taken care of by the Israeli organizations. If we knew they were coming, we'd try to reach

out and call them and say, "Would you like a special briefing? Come by." Usually their schedule was so full, they didn't. They just were included in the other briefings.

Q: Did the governor of Arkansas come while you were there?

HUGHES: No, no, unless he came as a part of a private group which was not announced to us, but I know that he did go to Israel as part of a study group, but I don't remember the dates. I remember just reading it later. One of the interesting asides on the domestic politics. I won't mention - well, I will. It was Gary Ackerman from New York. He came with his mother and his aunt. I happened to be chargé, so we went up. We arranged an appointment with the prime minister, Shamir, and so we went in to the prime minister's office and Congressman Ackerman said, "Mr. Prime Minister, I know you're very busy. I don't want to take much of your time, but I really feel honored and delighted to be here. Would you mind if we took a photograph?" He pulled a camera out of his pocket and handed it to me. So I took photographs, about three or four snapshots of the Ackermans and the prime minister, and then the Congressman said, "Mr. Prime Minister, I want to thank you very much for your time. It's been delightful. I know you're very busy, so thank you very much. I won't bother you any longer," and left. But he got mainly what he was there for. He got photographs of himself with the prime minister of Israel.

Q: By a semiprofessional photographer.

HUGHES: Actually Ackerman came back later too. And he's a serious guy. He knew the issues. He had certain well known views, but he was a serious guy, and I also testified before him later on the Foreign Relations Committee. He's, as I said, a worthy congressman.

Q: I think we're probably coming to the end on Tel Aviv, but is there anything you want to say about your period with Ambassador Brown and the beginning of the Bush Administration in '89?

HUGHES: Well, I was not very happy that Pickering was - his term was held to three years, let me put it that way. I thought it was unnecessary. It was clear there was a change of administration and so forth. But as it turned out, of course, Tom went off to New York, where he did great things including the Gulf War. And Bill Brown was a quite different personality and had a quite different kind of approach, but I also enjoyed working with him and I learned some things from him as well. So the seven months or so we were together - six and a half months, I guess - I found personally interesting and personally rewarding as well, and very useful. Bill, of course, had been DCM under the long reign of Sam Lewis, and so Bill had great familiarity with the players. In fact, we'd made arrangements for him right from his arrival to get in the car from the Ben Gurion airport and go to Jerusalem to present copies of his credentials to Misha Aarons, who was the foreign minister then. We had arranged the very next day for him to present his credentials to the president.

Q: Only in Israel would you do both those.

HUGHES: Well, they wanted an active ambassador, of course, and we knew everybody and everybody was accommodating. It was wonderful of them to be accommodating, and there was a mutual interest in getting going. But in the car on the way to Jerusalem Bill reminded me that the

last time he had seen Misha Aarons was when Bill was chargé, and Aarons came to him to renounce his American citizenship so he could be appointed ambassador to the United States. All kinds of histories, all kinds of histories, all intertwined between ourselves and Israel.

Q: The interconnections are myriad. We're at the end of your time in Tel Aviv. Is there any sort of general reflection you want to make on the assignment or anything that we haven't covered, before we go on to your next assignment?

HUGHES: I think probably in many respects the most interesting part of my time there was watching up close and being a part of discussions with Israelis about how they grapple with really fundamental question that they're facing, which are existential questions, and talking with people across the whole range of political and philosophical thinking and even theological thinking about where they are, how they got there, and what do they do about the future. That was a real education for me not only on the facts of the matter but into human psychology. One can't help but be impressed with what they've done, be empathetic with their situation, and also very frustrated at times. People ask me often how I look back, what my assignment in Israel was like, and I say, "It was a total experience, a total experience in every way, emotionally, intellectually, physically, stresses and strains, inspirationally from enormous admiration on one hand to pure frustration and irritation on the other." But it was a great experience and great time.

Q: One of those existential issues certainly involves how they relate to their neighbors, the Palestinians and the West Bank, Gaza, and so on, but another relates to who is an Israeli.

HUGHES: Who is a Jew.

Q: Who is a Jew, the whole question of the secular, orthodox and so on. I don't know to what extent that was...

HUGHES: It was very much. This was the first time the issue came up in a very direct way, because the compromise that Ben Gurion had achieved and the concessions - some people call it concessions now - that he made early on, which he apparently thought would wither away over time, that the secular Jews, secular Israelis, would completely overwhelm the religious group, has turned out not to be true, and the compromises that were met are actually being expanded by the religious. But when I was there, there was legislation introduced or discussed to define who was a Jew, and basically they were very, very rigorous rules. I can remember talking to American Jews who came to Israel and particularly understood Jewish law, and only children of a Jewish mother are Jews. "My son married a non-Jew, but these guys are going to tell me that my grandchildren are not Jews." I can remember several elderly Americans, grandfatherly types, talking in this vein. Now, of course, it's come around again. But it was already clear then - and this was 10 years ago - that 12 to 14 percent of the religious Jews had an inordinate degree of influence. Among some secular Jews there was an acknowledgment of the importance, because I often heard from secular Jews that if it had not been for the real religious Jews, maybe Jewry would have been lost over the centuries in time. It was the more religious Jews who kept the main thinking of Judaism alive and Hebrew and so forth, although cultural traditions are still very strong and very rich as well, of course. But there was a lot of argument then about if you're in the study, you're exempt from the military. Secular Jews had the feeling that there was abuse

of that, a disproportionate amount of funding to religious schools and to religious purposes as opposed to other purposes. There's quite a bit of antipathy in Israeli society and not much communication. I can remember a fellow who was a deputy minister, a very important guy in the Labor Party - I won't mention his name - who said once to me, "We don't know these guys."

Q: Okay, we were talking about the whole question of who is a Jew in that debate. Finish off your thought on that.

HUGHES: As I was saying, this individual said, "Who are those guys with the black hats? We don't know them." And my reaction to that was, yes, one of the problems is that Labor had never really made an effort to get to know them, and how you can deal with them and how you can reach accommodation or agreement or understandings or compromises if you don't know them.

Q: If you think of them always as the other, the opponent.

HUGHES: Us and them. You're quite right.

Q: Had the great surge of immigration into Israel which, of course, certainly occurred as the Soviet Union ended - was that happening in the late '80s?

HUGHES: No, and another irony: I can remember talking with Prime Minister Shamir, and it was clear that his idea of the demographic ace in the hole was American Jewry. The last untapped reservoir of Jews in the world, largely untapped, untapped to a certain extent, were American Jews in his view. When we were in Israel, there was a lot of study regarding the demographics and birth rates and so forth, and even then there was the projection that maybe by the turn of the century there would be more Arabs between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean than Jews, so they'd be a minority in their own territory, so to speak. I can remember Prime Minister Shamir thinking, boy, American Jewry, work on American Jewry, and that's the ace in the hole. There was almost no thinking at that point that I'm aware of, or discussion, about Soviet Jewry. Of course, there's the discussion now that maybe some of these folks are not Jews really, but that's another problem.

Q: Shamir's thought at the time as expressed to you was that American Jewry would increasingly come to Israel?

HUGHES: Would come to Israel as the economic situation improved, as the national security situation improved, and so forth, that he could attract more American Jews to Israel.

Q: Not just send funds but actually come?

HUGHES: Right.

Q: But there were a large number of U.S. citizens in Israel at the time you were there. Was that an issue for the Consular Section of the embassy, a major problem, or not really?

HUGHES: No, not really. A lot of them were dual nationals, and because of court rulings, the

technicalities of dual nationality went away. When you and I started in this business, there were very strict rules about how you retain or how you could lose your nationality, but because of a court ruling in the United States - actually it had to do with an Israeli - it's almost impossible to lose your American nationality now, so those questions basically disappeared. We had a couple of cases of people committing crimes in the United States, and in Israel as a rule they will not extradite one of their own citizens. A couple were even wanted for murder, and they got complicated too, because in one case they were off in one of the settlements in the West Bank, and so what was the jurisdiction and a lot of complications in that regard. Those were fairly few although we did have another one in the aftermath of the spy case, Pollard. Some of the people who had helped Pollard with his spying were in Israel, dual nationals, and we were trying to get access to them for either depositions or one thing or another, or try to get them back to the States, but there was no inclination on their part to go back to the States obviously and there was very reluctant cooperation or engagement by the Israelis on these cases regardless of what was said publicly.

Q: Okay, anything else? A fascinating, great assignment for three years.

HUGHES: Well, just one other thing: One of the things that I think that the embassy could take credit for was the coordination that we did between the Palestinians, the Jordanians and the Israelis on the issue of defense to reopen the Jordanian banks on the West Bank. I had scores of meetings with the head of the civil administration in the ministry of defense for the West Bank and Gaza to help work that out. I'd say that I think the Embassy can take pride and satisfaction, and that is because it did change to some extent the economic dynamic in the West Bank.

Q: Were the issues primarily technical, banking, economic, or was it at least in part political in the sense of what should Jordan's role be?

HUGHES: It was more political than anything. There were always questions or objections raised or sometimes even delays caused by the technical things, but it was basically political issues.

Q: But that served also to in a sense re-engage Jordan a bit?

HUGHES: Yes.

WILLIAM A. PIERCE
Deputy Public Affairs Officer, NEA Bureau
Washington, DC (1987-1989)

Mr. Pierce was born and raised in Georgia and educated at Davidson College and the University of Georgia Law School. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, he was first posted to Surabaya, Indonesia, followed by a tour at Damascus, Syria. After completing Arabic language studies in Washington and Tunis, Mr. Pierce was assigned as Political Officer to a number of Arabic speaking posts, including Khartoum, Jeddah and Riyadh. In Washington, Mr. Pierce dealt

primarily with Middle East Affairs. His final post was Surabaya, where he was Consul General. Mr. Pierce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: This was the first stone throwing, particularly of young people, against Israeli troops within the Palestinian area.

PIERCE: That's correct. The problem with the Intifada was stones being thrown and the response by Israeli troops first with live ammunition, then with rubber ammunition. Frequently we would try not to become involved in condemning one side or the other, or in a human rights situation or in response to specific situations. In other words, we didn't want to condemn Israel for excesses, but at the same time, as the Palestinian side became more and more amenable to peace and was more interested in taking constructive approaches, we did not want to condemn that side on its own. It's a complicated issue. Generally there was the perception that we were reluctant to push Israel in a public way.

With the Intifada we would try, when it became obvious that hard ammunition was being used against what, in essence, amounted to teenagers throwing rocks, we started pushing for guidances indicating that there was something wrong with using live ammunition in these instances. Our language would get neutralized but we kept pushing and ultimately I think it was obvious that we became far stronger in our public affairs pronouncements on the use of live fire, and also of time to time arbitrary use of rubber bullets, which also can kill.

One of the things that we had to do was to look at the media all of the time. We had CNN (Cable News Network) in our offices. One day at about four-thirty in the afternoon CNN broadcast the story of Iraqi gas attacks against the Kurds in Irbid and there were bodies in the middle of town. After we looked at that it took us a while to get across to a very preoccupied level above us in the hierarchy that this was important. Ultimately – it took some time – by seven o'clock that night we had begun to fashion our guidance basically expressing our extremely strong reaction against the use of gas on the Kurds. When something like that happens you're responsible to make sure it gets to the front office; you're responsible to make sure they, who are normally preoccupied with a host of other issues, know that this is a cutting issue and that we need to respond quickly and decisively in reacting to it. You'd get to the front office and you'd get the statement cleared there. Then you'd get that up to the press spokesman, even at seven o'clock at night. You'd do that.

Q: Well now, going back to the Intifada, this was in a way the first time I suppose you were up against I don't want to use the pejorative term but, basically the influence of the Israeli lobby on our policy wars.

PIERCE: No. It's not the Israeli lobby so much, but understandably when you're involved in promoting dialogue and trying to move towards some type of negotiation between two sides, you don't castigate one side and not the other. You castigate both of them equally – that's the cycle of violence argument – or you are more muted. Given our relationship with Israel there was always a predilection to give the benefit of the doubt in terms of Israelis on the ground calling the shots, or to look carefully when the facts suggested there was some egregious issue that our attention needed to be called to. A good example of that is the Security Assistance Act, where

the issue of self-defense was always a factor in what we supplied people or foreign countries. Whenever Israel would make aircraft raids into Lebanon, by and large with our aircraft...

Q: And with our bombs.

PIERCE: And with our bombs, the question that would always come to the press spokesman was, isn't this a violation of the...

Q: It was an obvious violation, wasn't it?

PIERCE: I'm not going to make a judgment.

Q: Okay. (laughs)

PIERCE: That was not an issue that we had to work during my time in Public Affairs. Those issues happened primarily in the early '80s.

Another interesting area was Lebanon; I worked very closely with the Lebanese desk. In terms of internal Lebanese politics, one side or the other – mainly on the Lebanese Christian side – will always attempt to show themselves close to the Americans. This is a prominent political dynamic in Lebanon. Quite often we would learn about manipulation involving one side or the other, each trying to position oneself to become president or to have a better policy or to gain an advantage over an opposing side. Quite often I, with the Lebanese desk officer, would work up guidance which did not address a specific issue, but which would emphasize our position of basic neutrality and that we supported no one parenthetically; lack of preference for any simple person or group – like this guy who is exaggerating his ties with us. Now this type of guidance would never be asked for, so what you would do is call up one of your favorite Lebanese journalists and you would say, "If the question, whatever it is, were to be asked today, I think you might have a story."

Q: Yes. (laughs)

How about the tanker business – was that during your time?

PIERCE: Yes. This was one of the first times that we started a program of trying to bring out a public affairs policy that could be endorsed wholeheartedly by the front office, by the U.S. government, well in advance of actual events. We had very close coordination with DOD and worked out strategies to advance our views.

Q: Was the Stark incident?

PIERCE: Yes, it was. *(laughs)*

Q: How did that hit us? Could you explain what I meant by saying "the Stark" and its repercussions?

PIERCE: The Stark, as you know, was an American ship that was patrolling...

Q: A destroyer.

PIERCE: A destroyer that was patrolling in the Gulf. We got word of the Iraqi planes dropping a bomb that hit the Stark on a Sunday...

Q: Actually it was a missile.

PIERCE: Oh, yes. It was an Exocet. We got word of the incident on Sunday, and I was called in to the task force, starting I guess about seven o'clock that night. We worked for the next 18 hours on Stark, in essence trying to craft a public affairs strategy to use on Monday morning as well as to field queries. Information was quite sparse throughout the early part of the night – well, quite sparse throughout the whole night. At around two or three in the morning I was able to begin to craft what we needed to say to answer press queries and to have a framework for dealing with this. I'm an FSO-2 at the time, thinking about what we ought to say and what the people who will review it will accept. By say six-thirty in the morning someone – Chuck Redman for example, who was the spokesman at the time, or the deputy assistant secretary - will wander in to the task force and ask what's up. You'll have this in front of them so that they can begin to consider what other aspects to this issue, or other approaches, you need to take into consideration. You make changes, so that by seven or eight o'clock in the morning you have something fresh that the spokesman can begin using, though not in any official briefing. Later in the day, you're going to have official policy that addresses the issue.

Q: Well, I think it points out one of the interesting and often overlooked things about American policy. I mean long-term policy is long-term policy, but so much of what we're doing is reacting.

PIERCE: That's right.

Q: And you're really at the raw cutting-edge of starting the policy process in Public Affairs.

PIERCE: That's true. The interesting thing is that you start with the short-term but you always have a long-term premise in mind. Now that long-term premise may be one that you inherited from statements that go back into time. Our approach to Jerusalem, our basic idea of dialogue in the Israeli-Arab peace issue. Or one that is just beginning, but will have a long future – and that could be our two flag policy, that could be our approach to the Iran-Iraq War. Often you will begin to think these things through and then you'd go and talk to the deputy assistant secretary involved in the issue, or the desk director, or the person you think has the initiative. You began to get maybe a different nuance and incorporate that into the way you want to work things. But yes, you'd begin to slowly evolve the policy, in a way that interacts, obviously, with how the principals want to deal with the issue.

In terms of producing a long-term policy I got the impression that it's very difficult to say on any given day what our policy is on anything. You've got a good feel for it, but until someone in authority actually says it, that's not our policy of the day, because there may be a nuance change.

Q: Just the way that we were sitting around reading who was standing where in the Kremlin and so on in the announcements in the Soviet newspapers, I mean it's got to be quite hard to figure out what the Soviets were up to, but there were other people who were looking at us trying to figure out what we're saying about things.

PIERCE: You have a general idea. The advantage of our approach is that we're consistent; we don't change.

Q: Yes.

PIERCE: I mean, over a period of time you can begin to inject a nuance or the deputy secretary can inject a nuance, or you can have an event that will change things dramatically, but our blessing here is that there is a basic consistency, a basic tenet, in almost all aspects of policy. It will change visibly if it's going to change. I mean it's not going to be subtle – sometimes it happens that way, but... And then the nuance issue or how things develop, as in the Intifada, or as in the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) becoming more and more open to dialogue and ultimately a partner in the peace process in the late '80s – I saw that happen. These are significant shifts, but they're all grounded in the continuity of our policy in supporting peace, in trying to get a dialogue going and in trying to get terrorism out of the equation.

AUBREY HOOKS
Economic Counselor
Tel Aviv (1988-1991)

Ambassador Hooks was born and raised in South Carolina and educated at Brevard College and the University of South Carolina. He entered the Foreign Service in 1971 and served abroad in Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Ankara, Port au Prince, Tel Aviv, Rome, Helsinki and Harare. He also had several assignments at the State Department in Washington, DC. In 1995 he was named United States Ambassador to the Republic of Congo at Brazzaville and served there until 1999. He subsequently served as Ambassador to Democratic Republic of the Congo (2001-2004); and as Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire from 2004 to 2007. Ambassador Hooks was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: You went to Israel and served there from when to when?

HOOKS: I went to Israel and served there from 1988 to 1991.

Q: OK, 1988 when you went there; what was the situation in Israel?

HOOKS: There were two things that I think were important at that time. First, Israel was coming out of a deep economic recession from the mid-1980s. The United States gave more than a billion dollars to bail them out of that problem and get the economy back on track. As a result, we had yearly economic discussions with the Israelis to try to keep track of where they were

because they don't rely on the IMF. They rely on the United States in times of economic difficulty.

The second thing is that the intifada started in May of 1987, just before I returned to Washington to study Hebrew. In fact, the intifada dominated our discussions throughout the year that I was at FSI.

Q: Could you explain what the intifada was.

HOOKS: The intifada is the Palestinian uprising in the Occupied Territories against Israeli occupation. Not the Arabs in Israel but the Arabs in the Occupied Territories, in the West Bank and in Gaza. The intifada started in May of 1987 and it continued throughout the years I was there. Prime Minister Rabin commented at the beginning of the intifada: "We need to break their bones in order to bring the intifada to a close." The Israelis could never quite understand what was going on. This was something new, they weren't accustomed to it, and they didn't know how to deal with it initially. They were caught between trying to suppress it and trying to maintain their image as a benign occupier. However, the intifada became a major force that ultimately led to autonomy for the Palestinians as the Israelis came to understand that they simply could not continue the occupation and taking over Palestinian land as before.

Q: In a way they were up against a significant number of children who were involved.

HOOKS: Well, it was a popular uprising against the Israeli occupation and it was something that had broad support. I think the Palestinians were maturing politically. They had already been under Israeli occupation since 1967. As you recall, I mentioned before that I was in Israel from 1971 through 1973. Israel's golden age was from 1967 to 1973. It was after the euphoria of the Six Day War, the old generation of pioneers were still around, but Israeli had not yet experienced the trauma of the Yom Kippur War.

The second time I was there, the Israelis were struggling with the phenomenon of the intifada. At the same time their economy was starting to take off and they were becoming like Southern California in the Middle East. So on the one hand, economically they had made gigantic leaps since the early 1970s. On the political side, on the other hand, they were struggling with a phenomenon which they did not understand, which no one understood fully and which was creating a new paradigm. It was putting the Palestinians on the map, politically, in a sense; not as a terrorist organization but as a popular organization looking for self-expression, self-determination.

Q: Quite different from setting off bombs and having young people throw rocks. There was that horrific picture that I can recall of a Palestinian man caught in crossfire sheltering his son with his body and the kid was killed.

HOOKS: That event came much later during the difficulties in Gaza. That occurred about five, or six or seven or eight years later. When I was there it had not reached that stage and Gaza was not autonomous although it had some sort of self government.

I think the intifada was a phenomenon which led ultimately to some degree of self-determination on the part of the Palestinians. While Arafat was alive, the PLO was important. The intifada was a phenomenon which was not PLO-controlled but sprang up at the grassroots level. Obviously, all the political organizations tried to make the most of it. It was very much a popular expression. I think because of that the Israelis were baffled as to how to deal with a new phenomenon involving young children in the streets throwing rocks.

In some cases rocks were defined as lethal weapons but for most people it is a disproportionate response to shoot people because they are throwing rocks, unless of course, they are endangering someone's life. It was a new phenomenon and it was therefore a change in the political equation in the Middle East to a certain degree; not radically but to a certain degree.

Q: The Israelis had always been portrayed as the good boys and now they are coming out as bullies.

HOOKS: They came out as an armed, trained military dealing with young men with just rocks, basically. Israel's image suffered from this situation but Israel was facing a serious dilemma. What could it do in such a situation? It could not just walk away and withdraw unilaterally from the occupied territories. On the other hand, Israel had to deal with it in such a way that does not lead to condemnation in the world community. The Israeli Government struggled with this situation and still does.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you arrived there?

HOOKS: For the first six months or so after I arrived, Tom Pickering was the Ambassador. He was replaced by Bill Brown.

Q: When you got there, how would you say the embassy officers were dealing with our position because we were so imbedded in the Israeli cause, you might say. Was this causing strains or what?

HOOKS: The intifada obviously led to a certain strain in our relationship with Israel because the United States was caught between wanting to be supportive of Israel's security and Israel's existence as a state, but at the same time not wanting to be seen as insensitive to human rights abuses. For example, in the United States if young people were throwing rocks, it would be unacceptable for the police to fire live ammunition into crowds. Sometimes the Israelis responded to the intifada very forcefully, sometimes less forcefully, but it was a conundrum for the whole time I was there.

Q: You had been there before during a time of euphoria, you might say. Was this really a different embassy, a different officer corps, a different situation? I mean the atmosphere within the embassy, was this you might say, looking at Israelis and saying, "You know, they are an occupying force and they are not handling this very well." I mean a distancing from the Israeli cause or not?

HOOKS: Given the pressures in Israeli society and the pressures of Israeli politics, the American

embassy in Tel Aviv is the most intense embassy I have ever worked in. Obviously there is very close scrutiny by Washington. The popular expression in the State Department is that the president of the United States is the desk officer and therefore whatever is said and done gets amplified.

Israeli society is also very intense, very dynamic and I think people either love it or they tend to hate it. You find very few people who are just indifferent to Israel. There was no great divide in the embassy; it was just that some people felt the Israelis were over reacting and riding roughshod over the Palestinians, although there were those who felt the Israelis were under intense pressure and had a serious security problem to deal with. However, the killing of people demonstrating for what many Americans regard as a national right, which is self-expression, led to a serious quandary in a moral sense and a political sense.

Q: What was the government like when you went out there?

HOOKS: I think most of the time I was there the second time it was Shamir who was the prime minister. Israel had changed a lot since my first assignment. The first time I was there the old leaders from pioneer days were still around: Ben-Gurion was still alive although no longer in power, Golda Meier was prime minister when I was there the first time, Abba Eban was Foreign Minister. All of these personalities had moved on, either having passed away or basically retired by the time I returned the second time.

Shamir was never in the category of the early pioneer leaders. Begin had a great deal of respect, although he was really on the margins when I was there the first time because of his extremism during the War of Independence and his smuggling of weapons into the country to maintain a military force alongside Government forces after independence. His party Likud had never been in power. Likud came to power after the Yom Kippur War, but Begin was seen as somewhat of an intellectual and a man of a certain stature. He agreed to withdraw from Sinai, among other things.

Shamir was seen as a guy with very little vision and a much more difficult character to deal with. I think even pro-Israeli Congressmen found him difficult to deal with. He was not open for dialogue. He would speak of greater Israel, which is a curious expression to use. He was a hardliner; he was not a great statesman but he was in power and had to be dealt with.

Q: Had the Israeli government opened up the economy, or was it still sort of the heavy hand of orthodox socialism?

HOOKS: Israel had a kind of East European socialism, which is not surprising since all the early leaders came from Eastern Europe. The state for historical reasons was very much involved in the economy when I was there the first time. The economy was very closed and very protected.

I recall a discussion once with the head of the Chamber of Commerce about the requirements for importing refrigerators. The requirements were such that foreigners could not export refrigerators to Israel because they could only be a certain size and the market was too small to justify producing a model that was just that size. This was obviously an effort to protect the market for

Israeli production. The state was involved in many things.

After the events of the early and mid-1980s when the economy was really in crisis and inflation was skyrocketing, the United States stepped in with a huge economic aid package in return for serious economic reform. That is when the Israeli economy started taking off. When I arrived in the late 1980s, the economy was already starting to boom. A large number of government enterprises were privatized and the market was opened up to more imports.

The first time I was there of course the kibbutzim were in their glory days. Kibbutzim were located around the airport and in many of the areas around Tel Aviv that are now residential areas. It was still very much a rural society in some respects. That had changed by the time I came back. Starting in the late 1980's Israel began to foster the development of high tech industries oriented towards exports.

Q: What were you doing? I talked to Sam X who was an economic counselor there. We talked about his frustration because you report on the economy and suggest means of helping the Israelis and the Israelis and those in power would almost laugh at the economic section for bothering to do this because they'd present their own requests almost directly to Congress, which caused great annoyance and frustration. Was that going on in your time?

HOOKS: Of course this sort of thing did occur because the Israelis obviously had very powerful friends back here in Washington, but I think you also have to put it in context. Sometimes American embassies have perhaps an exaggerated sense of their own importance. As I mentioned earlier, the desk officer for Israel is the President of the United States. Bear that in mind. Just because you are in the economic section at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv and have some very good ideas, it's a rather inflated view of your own importance to think that those policies have to be adopted.

Israelis had their own sense of what they wanted to do and they knew they had powerful friends in Washington. They could do many things that no other country in the world could get by with. They knew when it came to political support they could go around the American embassy very easily and go around the State Department, for that matter. I think people working at the embassy had to keep that in mind. I know when I was there, I did an analysis of the budget, with particular focus on the amount of money spent on settlements in the Occupied Territories. Of course, this is a very sensitive subject. One of my cables was leaked in Washington because I had detailed the sums of money being spent on settlements. The following year the Israelis tried to put those expenditures in the budget in such a way that they were not readily apparent.

The American Embassy in Tel Aviv is in a very sensitive situation. It plays an important role but it is only one aspect of a very intense relationship between Israel and the United States, and Israelis can and do go around the embassy on many issues. For example, defense issues were often dealt with directly with the Pentagon, not forwarded through the embassy. The Israelis have direct access to members of Congress and various other organizations, so it is a very broad, very intense, very deep relationship that goes far beyond the embassy. The embassy is an important part of that but it is not an exclusive channel of communication.

Q: I assume the Israeli economic statistics were first-rate, weren't they?

HOOKS: The Israeli economic statistics were very good as far as they go. Of course, they don't always take on certain sensitive issues like defense and the Occupied Territories. Some expenditures are not very evident; sometimes it takes a little digging to find them.

Q: I'm sure the nuclear program was . . .

HOOKS: Was another sensitive issue.

Q: Was there much Israeli-Egyptian economic movement?

HOOKS: After Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in the late 1970s, the door was open for trade to start. It was not a major factor when I was there, but ties were starting to be built. It had not reached the proportions that it became later on, today for instance, but the groundwork was being placed for an economic relationship.

Q: Was there much with Jordan?

HOOKS: There was very little with Jordan. Even in those days there was the official trade and there was unofficial trade. I didn't see it myself but I recall getting reports that in Dubai you could buy Israeli products like jams and preserves. Sometimes you could even find Israeli liquor, shipped there by some means, so there was the official trade and the unofficial trade. The extent of unofficial trade by its very nature is difficult to know.

Q: Did the religious sector have an impact on the economy?

HOOKS: In a society like Israel, religion plays an important role in everything, although not everyone is religious. No more than 25% and probably more like 15 - 20% of the population goes to synagogue. However, religion permeates the culture. There are some people who have a kosher home although they will eat non-kosher outside the home. There are all sorts of gradations. Then of course there are those who are totally unreligious and so forth. Religion had an impact on government policy, especially on the budget. The electoral system in Israel favors the religious parties because any party receiving one percent of the vote could get into the Knesset. Because there is no majority party, the largest party had to form coalitions with small parties, many of them religious. The religious parties have a very well defined agenda: they want money for their school systems, and they were willing to go along on other issues as long as the Prime Minister was willing to throw money at their school systems.

However, the religious parties were very adept at playing politics. For instance, when I was there, the rabbis threatened to withdraw the kosher certificates for any hotels organizing New Year's festivities. New Year is not a Jewish holiday. It is basically a Christian holiday. We don't regard it as a Christian holiday but it is determined by a calendar established by the Pope and therefore it was a non-Jewish holiday. That sounds like silliness to an American, but in Israel it is a factor. If your kosher certificate is withdrawn, that puts you in a different category of restaurant. It has an economic impact.

Q: It shows you might say that the religious powers that be know how to twist the lion's tail from time to time.

HOOKS: I would say more than from time to time. All the religious parties have been very clever at playing the system and getting money for their favorite projects.

Q: How did Washington, the Economic Bureau, impact on your operation? Were you getting all sort of requests or were you pretty much following a routine?

HOOKS: The Econ Bureau was very much involved in the annual economic talks that I mentioned earlier. Ever since the mid 1980s when we had provided extraordinary assistance to help get the Israeli economy back on track and bring inflation down from triple digits, we met regularly with the Israelis to keep not only a sense of the pulse of the Israeli economy which the embassy could do, but to have very high level talks with the head of the Economic Bureau about where the Israeli economy was going and to keep them on track in carrying out the needed reforms. Washington was very closely involved in that. It was led by the head of E who came to Israel annually when I was there.

Q: Shamir sort of having been an ex-terrorist was a rather dour character. You mentioned he was difficult to deal with, but I would think on the economic side, did he have a hand in setting economic policy?

HOOKS: Shamir was not a charismatic figure. He was anything but. No one ever accused him of being a charismatic figure or of having a great vision of moving Israel forward. He basically wanted to keep Israel intact as it was and to keep the Occupied Territories for Israel. The dilemmas for him, as it is for many Israelis, is how to carry out the Zionist dream of the homeland for the Jews versus the reality of the world that you live in. Now, you can argue that you have to be unrealistic to start with. After all, the idea of taking Jews from around the world, bringing them back to Israel, sounded farcical even to most Jews in the early days of Zionism. It was the stuff of legends. However, Herzl's philosophy was that if you want it, if you can dream it, you can do it.

Shamir was not an economist and his focus was not on economics but rather on politics. He did not focus on the economy in terms of reform. The reforms that were introduced were part of the discussions between the United States and Israel in the 1980s, which focused on getting Israel to open up its economy more, focusing more on trade, etc. Those reforms were not driven by Shamir but were accepted as the cost of American aid to keep the economy afloat, although many Israeli economists knew there was no alternative in the long run.

Q: Was there much impact of Russian Jews coming to Israel at that point?

HOOKS: The Russian Jews were coming in large numbers and the question was absorption. The United States provided funds for housing and absorption. However, the Russian Jews were not yet playing the political role they started to play in the 1990s. They began to play a greater political role as their numbers increased. Their presence in Israel was already being noticed in

the sense of newspapers and advertising in Russian.

Q: Were you seeing during the time you were there as a plus or was the process of integrating the Russians more of a problem than a plus?

HOOKS: I think it was seen by the Israelis as a very strong plus. After all, the mission statement for the state of Israel is basically to provide a home for Jews from around the world. The arrival of Russian Jews shows success of that mission statement, and I think they were seen as critical for having a larger Jewish population in Israel. After all, the concern was always a large Arab minority with higher birthrates. So the Russian Jews were seen as critical, or extremely important, let's say, in terms of carrying out the Zionist dream, which is an ongoing dream.

The Russian Jewish issue is a sensitive one because many Russian Jews came to the United States or went to Germany or elsewhere, so for Israel to get them to come to Israel was success of the Zionist dream. Those that went to the United States, while they can be helpful in the long term as part of a Jewish lobby, in a sense they were lost to Israel. There were times when more Russian Jews going to Germany than going to Israel which again was a rather curious phenomenon given recent history.

Q: What were you getting from the political officers in the embassy but certainly on the economic side, what was the role of the Arab Israelis? Were they seen as a plus, a minus, a contributing, were they seen as a potential menace or what?

HOOKS: The Israeli Arabs constitute a very interesting phenomenon. They are an important minority. They are over a million. In fact there may be close to two million so it is a very significant proportion. They have a high birthrate and for Israelis thinking in long terms, the long range, would they become such a large minority at one point to even constitute a threat to the Jewish majority in a political sense.

They play also an important role in the economy. They too have benefited from the growth of the Israeli economy. The United States had contacts with Israeli Arabs in Gaza and the West Bank. There was obviously sensitivity during the intifada as to whether the Israeli Arabs would become participants in the intifada. By and large they have not. Obviously their sympathies lie in many cases with the Palestinians, with the people in Gaza and the West Bank. However, they also realize that the Palestinian political leadership is extremist at times and that getting themselves involved in the intifada would be very dangerous to the Israeli Arab community. With the exception of a few individuals, by and large they have not been involved in the intifada.

Q: What about American Jews coming to Israel? Did they have much of an impact on your work? Did you end up escorting a lot of people?

HOOKS: There used to be more congressmen in Israel than in Washington, particularly during recess time, but I think they travel less today than what they used to do. The Israelis always put out the red carpet for U.S. Congressmen. Many visiting American Jewish groups came to the Embassy for briefings. Tom Pickering and Bill Brown led these briefings. It was part of the broad and intense and deep relationship I was referring to earlier, a relationship in which the

embassy was an important part but only one part of a very deep relationship.

Q: You were there until when?

HOOKS: I was there until 1991. I was there for the first Gulf War. We all have fond memories of spending time in sealed rooms with our gas masks on. The embassy initially planned to evacuate all dependents and many employees. However, Washington did not support that for political reasons. I was among those slated to leave. We were put together on a group of busses and traveled to Jerusalem to pick up people from the consulate before heading to Eilat in the extreme south of Israel. Actually we were going to an airbase down in the south because the airbase was out of range of SCUD missiles and therefore U.S. Air Force aircraft could fly in and pick us up.

While we were en route to Eilat, Washington back pedaled on this issue. Mandatory evacuation was out of the question because of the message the evacuation would send to American citizens living in Israel. If the Embassy evacuated American embassy staff, the Embassy would be under the obligation to offer the same option to all American citizens living in Israel, of which there were quite a few thousand. We were therefore informed that those who wished to leave on the plane could do so, and those who wished to stay would be bussed to Eilat for the time being.

We went down to Eilat and then were in limbo for almost two weeks while the embassy and Washington tried to decide what to do with us. Of course, you can imagine there were all sorts of administrative issues; who should pay for hotels and food. Staying in a hotel in Eilat was quite an expensive proposition. Ultimately they brought us back to Tel Aviv because Washington did not want to continue paying the hotel bills in Eilat.

Upon our return to Tel Aviv, we faced the SCUD attacks. It was quite an interesting experience for all of us because we all had to have a sealed room with plastic even over the electrical outlets, gas masks even for children. We had to teach children how to use the gas masks and make sure they could breathe properly. Initially we were in our room, preferably above ground as it was assumed that the gas would remain at ground level. That policy would change. We were advised to give up the sealed room because the SCUD missiles did not contain gas. Instead, we were instructed to take cover in our bomb shelter, which most houses had. Our bomb shelter was basically a stairwell down in the basement area which afforded greater protection in case of a direct hit. The children were initially terrified but, children being children, they quickly adapted. My children would count the explosions when Patriots were launched from the domestic airport located not far from our house. They could then tell how many SCUDS were coming in. It became a game, a way of coping with stress.

Initially they were scared as kids are and sort of whimpering when we went through this. The siren was blowing and not something too many American kids are used to, but they began to adapt to it. There is some psychological impact there but I think they learned to cope and then to turn the experience into a game. Obviously we wanted them to not be terrified but to make the best of the situation: the siren is blowing, we've got to put on our gas masks. We'd all head downstairs and put on our gas masks. They'd count, you know. It is a little bit difficult to talk with these things on but they would hold up fingers for each Patriot fired and each SCUD hit. So

they adapted to it, but it was an interesting experience to go through.

Q: Were you aware of the battles of the gas masks? I understand both our embassy in Riyadh and in Tel Aviv, there was a shortage of gas masks for a while.

HOOKS: I am not aware of a shortage of gas masks at the embassy in Tel Aviv. We all received gas masks. I have six children, and we received a total of eight gas masks without any delay. We also received tape and plastic sheeting and instructed on how to use them to seal a room. I know in Israel there was concern about getting gas masks for everybody in Israel, but that issue never came up for American Embassy staff.

Q: Maybe it was more down in Saudi Arabia where there was a problem. I've heard accounts of Bill Brown and Chas Freeman, Bill being in Tel Aviv and Chas being in Riyadh, having exchanges on the subject of keeping the Saudis in the war and the Israelis out of the war because if the Israelis got involved in the war, it would screw up our alliances, strange alliances with Egyptian and Syrian troops as part of the greater war effort.

HOOKS: You recall Larry Eagleburger was sent to Tel Aviv to meet with the Israelis. The Israelis have always felt they had to respond to any provocation in order to maintain their credibility and to maintain a level of deterrence. The Arabs know that if they attack the Israelis, the Israelis will hit back and hit hard. They will hurt you. This is the Israelis' philosophy.

When SCUDS started falling in Israel, their natural reaction was to strike back immediately. However, Washington made it clear to the Israelis that, if they attacked Iraq, it would ruin the whole coalition effort because the Arabs would not remain part of a joint war effort with the Israelis in fighting other Arabs. Larry Eagleburger explained to the Israelis that it was in their interests to sit on the sidelines and let the United States and the coalition take care of Saddam Hussein. That was the basic message, obviously stated much more diplomatically than what I have just said, but the message was very clear. The Israelis were clever enough to go along with that.

Q: Diplomatically it is a very interesting time.

HOOKS: It was a very difficult decision for the Israelis to make but the options were very clear. They had no choice in the matter. Although Israelis don't necessarily listen to us and could have done something on their own, they realized it would have been foolish to do so. They understood that when the United States military is beating up on the enemy, don't do anything to get the United States out of the fight. It was that simple. Naturally there was some talk that they could not stand by and let themselves be bombed. The Israelis really had no option in this in terms of getting involved. Had we not been involved in Iraq, they obviously would have had to react, but under the circumstances it would have been foolish to do anything.

Q: They also had problems for the area about what to do with the embassies because I think we made most of our embassy personnel evacuate in most of the Arab world at the time.

HOOKS: The evacuation concerns were based on fear that Arab populations would react to the

United States bombing Iraq.

Q: But at the same time we had to keep the Americans, particularly in Dhahran who were involved in pumping oil. In an interview with Ken X who was consul general there, we were evacuating our embassies in the Gulf at the same time trying to keep the Americans on board.

HOOKS: Evacuation is a complicated process. The first to be evacuated are always minor dependents. Next are adult dependents, spouses for the most part. After that, staff members are evacuated depending on whether they play an essential role in the functioning of an embassy in crisis. In a crisis, the role of an embassy changes. The first priority of an embassy is the protection of American citizens. All efforts are concentrated in that direction. Everything else is secondary. Many functions are halted, or continued only on an emergency basis, such as visa issuances, education exchanges, etc. Consuls are the most important people during a crisis, although political officers and military attaches play a critical role in gathering information and maintaining contact with the host government and the various groupings involved in the crisis.

Q: And there are other problems when you start bringing people back if it is not done well. We had an awful lot of people from that war sort of in limbo from various places, very unhappy.

HOOKS: I have worked in a number of embassies where we have had evacuations, and I can tell you, it is a terrible thing to happen. It is actually easier not to be evacuated than it is to be evacuated, because if you are evacuated, you are in total limbo. You don't know how long it is going to last. No one can guarantee you it is going to last only 72 days, for example, and on the 73rd day you will be back at post. Most of the time you are in a situation where no one knows how long it is going to last. When families are involved, the lives of children are totally disrupted. The family can come back to Washington, but what do they do? Even if you have a house here, you generally have leased it out and you can't just tell the tenants to clear out. A rental apartment normally requires a long-term lease. A family has to decide whether to enroll their children in a local school, or just wait out the crisis.

I was chairman of the school board in Tel Aviv in 1991, and we had a tremendous problem trying to adapt to war conditions. We had to close the school down during all the bombing. No one wanted their kids to be in school during an air attack. Everyone wants their kids home. There is nothing more emotional for people than their children. Once the war was over, kids started coming back to school. Out of a school of 360, we only had about 50 kids present when we reopened the school. Afterwards, kids started drifting back. You can imagine how difficult it is to arrange a class program when one day a teacher is teaching three kids and the next day she's got five kids, and a week later 12 kids. It was a very unusual year. It destroys people's morale. For those who went back to post, there is always a dichotomy that exists between those who stayed and those who left, between those who were indispensable and those who were dispensable.

I faced that situation in Abidjan, and no matter what you do, you can never overcome the trauma. It is only overcome when all the actors involved leave post. We are so focused on American employees that we often overlook our local employees, who face the insecurity that drives the evacuation in the first place. Local employees often fear job loss as positions are sometimes cut out if an Embassy only maintains a skeletal staff or closes. This was not the case in Tel Aviv, but

it is often the case in Africa.

Q: Chas Freeman also said that something he ran across with a few people who just lost their nerve during the crisis. He said the State Department didn't deal well with this issue. If somebody loses their nerve, do you want to have them as part of your team again. The State Department seemed to almost by-pass this problem. It is a test of character.

HOOKS: It is not a test of character. Character is something else. It is a test of people's emotional state and we will get into it when we talk about Brazzaville, where I went through an evacuation, and closing down an embassy in Abidjan. It has to do with people's emotional state in a given set of circumstances. People react differently at different times. A lot depends on whether you are able to keep people busy and reassure them. It is hard to know how people will react. Sometimes you see someone who is strong and outgoing, and you think that person would be a natural leader in a crisis. Some will be, some will not. Some people who are very quiet and who don't stand out particularly may step forward and be a leader, just as we have seen in every area of life. I think it surprises you at times who steps forward and begins to shine as if their light has been under a bushel basket all these years.

I think most people, however, do surprisingly well. A lot depends on whether you can give people a sense of confidence that you know what you are doing. In the case of Tel Aviv, because of the confusion when Washington back pedaled on the question of evacuation, it created lots of problems. There was an attempted evacuation as people were told they had no choice but to leave, only to be told a few hours later that evacuation was voluntary. Some people did opt to leave, some of whom never came back. The impact was felt throughout the American community. It had an impact especially on the school, and it had an impact on morale. Those situations are only fully healed when all the parties involved move on. That is one of the beauties of the Foreign Service; people do move on after those situations and new ones coming in with a different attitude.

Q: Besides the Gulf War, you did have the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. Was that beginning to impact on Israel as far as great waves of former Soviet immigrants coming and all or was that felt much at your time?

HOOKS: It did not result in great waves of people coming in. Clearly more Jews were coming in than before, but the numbers did not represent a quantum jump.

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a big surprise to almost everybody. It led to many questions about the future, how the former Soviet Union would evolve politically. In 1990 – 1991, there was a lot of discussion about the new world order. There were questions about whether the United States was the only super power left. This was a process that was starting to evolve.

Israel was not impacted so dramatically as it might have been otherwise because it was associated with the United States. Their patron quote unquote was still very much intact, in fact was even stronger than before. They had limited relations with the Soviet Union. If anything, the breakup of the Soviet Union would likely result in less support for Arab states facing Israel. One

of the big concerns at the time was the control of weapons, especially nuclear weapons, in the former Soviet Union, especially concern that they may fall into the wrong hands. There was also concern about keeping scientists employed in Russia so they don't go to Iran or elsewhere to work in nuclear facilities. There was a lot of uncertainty about the future.

Q: Compared to the time before, now you are more senior and all, how did you and your family find life in Israel?

HOOKS: Life was very good. This is one of the great posts in the Foreign Service. We loved living in Israel both times, I should add. First of all, the State Department sometimes does things really well, and one of those was to use the money that Israel paid for wheat and other things from the 1950s to buy housing for Embassy staff. In Herzliya Pituah and in Kfar Shmaryahu we had wonderful housing and a great American school. The weather in Israel is perfect and there is so much to see and to do in Israel. While you can't drive to neighboring countries, at least you couldn't in those days very easily, you could still fly to Europe more cheaply than from the United States. In many respects it was a very good life for families. Israelis are very accessible, very friendly, and it is easy to get involved in Israeli society. If you are interested in history, geography, archeology, it was all there. As I said before, Tel Aviv is the most intense embassy I have ever worked in, and I think it attracted really great people in the Foreign Service, some very talented people and therefore I had great colleagues to work with. There was a great sense that you were involved in something really important. Israel obviously was very important to Washington. Decision-makers in Washington barely know where many countries are located, but everybody knew where Israel was. Everybody wanted to be informed, so the messages the Embassy sent back to Washington were looked at very carefully. It isn't enough to see on CNN that something has happened. Washington wants to know immediately what that means. The embassy was trying to put this in context.

Q: Was there a feeling while you were there that things would work out in the Middle East?

HOOKS: Your question is a very broad one and I have to say no, I don't recall anyone being so optimistic as to think that we were seeing the light at the end of the tunnel in terms of resolving issues. I think there was a sense that step by step some issues have been addressed, but some of the very fundamental issues have not been addressed yet. Relations with Egypt have come a long way. However, the question of the Palestinians has not been fully addressed and that is a fundamental issue, including the status of Jerusalem, permanent boundaries, returning occupied territories to Syria, etc. I don't think anyone was even dreaming that we were on track for peace in the Middle East. It is one of those situations where you try to manage a crisis and try to keep moving it forward. You kick the ball further down the field in hopes you will be able to resolve something. Some progress has been made since I first arrived in Tel Aviv in 1971, although the fundamental problems are still actively on the agenda.

Q: Career wise, did you want to be a Middle East hand or what? What were you looking at?

HOOKS: When I came in the Foreign Service, I wanted to focus on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. When I left Israel at the end of my first assignment, I asked to go to the Soviet Union. Poland was my second choice. That was what I wanted to do in those days, and going

back to Israel was not part of an overall strategy on my part. The Israel Desk contacted me when I was in Haiti to invite me to apply for an economic position in Tel Aviv. I was very interested. It was a great experience which I greatly enjoyed and am very glad I went. My original idea of focusing on the Soviet Bloc evolved over time.

PHILLIP C. WILCOX, JR.
Consul General
Jerusalem (1988-1991)

Phillip C. Wilcox, Jr. was born in Colorado in 1937. He received his bachelor's degree from Williams College in 1958 and then immediately after received his law degree from Stanford University in 1961. After graduation he went and taught in Sierra Leone from 1961-1963. During his Foreign Service career he had positions in Laos, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Washington D.C., and Jerusalem. Mr. Wilcox was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 1998.

Q: Today is June 22, 1998. Phil, let's move on. 1988 you went to Jerusalem where you served from '88 to '91 as consul general.

WILCOX: That's right.

Q: How did you get the job?

WILCOX: I had been serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA with responsibility for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. I previously had been Director for Arab and Arab-Israeli affairs, so I was prepared for Jerusalem, and when I was asked to go, I readily agreed.

Q: Was there any vetting of you at that point or had you already been vetted by the various, I'm talking about the American-Israeli organizations.

WILCOX: I don't think there was any vetting process outside of the administration. I had been involved in the issue and the policy and knew the players, including the Israelis and the leaders of the American Jewish community, and I was qualified by experience for the job

Q: By any chance during this time that you were in Washington, did you run across Martin Indyk?

WILCOX: Yes, I knew Martin quite well. He was the Director for Research at AIPAC, and I had considerable contact with him while I was on the Israel and Arab-Israel desk, and when I became Deputy Assistant Secretary.

Q: What was your impression, I mean where was he coming from during this time?

WILCOX: He had by the time I left NEA, Martin had already moved over to the job of Director of the newly-created Washington Institute for Middle East Policy Studies. Some of the board members of the Institute were also directors of AIPAC, so there was an intimate relationship between the two groups. Martin himself had been a scholar in his earlier days in Australia and had written his doctoral thesis on the Egypt-Israel peace process, and so he had expertise on the area. I worked with him and other officials of AIPAC when I was on the Israeli desk. It was a friendly, but often adversarial relationship, since AIPAC often opposed administration policies concerning the Middle East, Israel, and the peace process.

Q: Did you find that AIPAC reflected the politics of Israel in that you had equivalent to the Likud which takes a very strong and pro-Israeli line as opposed to Labor which is how can we get along in this difficult part of the world?

WILCOX: AIPAC came of age during the Likud era after 1977 and it grew into a very skilled, well financed and sophisticated lobby. AIPAC's role was to enhance the American-Israeli relationship, and it generally reflected views put forth by the government of Israel. It worked very hard to promote stronger support in Congress, and later began to give attention to the executive branch, the Department of State and the Department of Defense. It had an effective, capable group of people who were knowledgeable, dedicated, hard working, tough, and single minded.

Q: Did it seem to reflect, most of the time in the people who were brought on were true believers even to use an old biblical term zealots as far as the cause of a greater Israel?

WILCOX: No, I wouldn't call them zealots. I think that the leadership in AIPAC were people who believed deeply that a strong U.S.-Israel [relationship] was valuable for the United States, that our interests converged in all major respects. The major point of friction with AIPAC during that time were U.S. arms sales to Arab states, and AIPAC worked aggressively to prevent or postpone or to subject to conditions the sale of U.S. weapons to Saudi Arabia, Jordan and other Arab states which had not made peace with Israel. AIPAC argued that to sell sophisticated weapons to these states would erode the qualitative military edge that it was U.S. policy to preserve for the state of Israel. So there were very difficult and almost chronic disputes whenever an Arab state would propose to purchase U.S. arms, and AIPAC would almost invariably oppose them. AIPAC also preached the Israel view that it was necessary to retain the West Bank and Gaza for security reasons, that there were no moderate Arab states, and that the Palestinians were permanently committed to the violent destruction of Israel.

Q: Could you describe Jerusalem in 1988 when you arrived? The area was kind of keyed up. Okay, we wanted to go back to AIPAC first.

WILCOX: AIPAC was opposed to the administration's view that the basis for peace lay in a land for peace arrangement based on resolution 242. We were also at odds with AIPAC over the question of the PLO office in Washington. The administration realized that this office, which was run by American citizens, would continue operations under some other name if it was closed down, but eventually acceded to strong pressure from the Congress and from AIPAC to shut down the office. As usual, AIPAC played very hard ball on this issue.

AIPAC is a single issue organization. Its members lacked the knowledge and perspective of other foreign policy issues and for that reason, did not have the understanding that there were other U.S. interests that had to be weighed in considering our policy toward Israel and the peace process. So at times it was an adversarial relationship. But the Administration also recognized AIPAC's influence and courted its able Director at that time, Tom Dine, as an important player.

Q: Was the issue raised say particularly with Saudi Arabia, because Saudi Arabia was essentially no threat to Israel. It just didn't have the military capacity, the population. Was the protection of the Persian Gulf, because this obviously became very important in our next episode we are going to be discussing, but was that raised at all with AIPAC saying, you know fellows this is all very nice but Saudi Arabia is being threatened by both Iran and Iraq, and we have to have AWACS and protective weapons and all that.

WILCOX: That, of course, was part of our case. It usually didn't prevail with AIPAC or Congress. The administration won an early fight with AIPAC and Congress over the sale of AWACS surveillance aircraft to Saudi Arabia. After that defeat, AIPAC vowed that it would never be defeated again in such a stand up contest. It wasn't. I believe that AIPAC was every bit as concerned about its own power and influence as Israel's interests. Steve Rosen, AIPAC Director for Research who succeeded Martin Indyk, once acknowledged this to me, saying "we are a fighting organization, and we like to win."

Q: Well, then let's move to Jerusalem. At the beginning things obviously really heated up. Let's talk about when you arrived there in '88. What was the situation? We are talking about the whole area, but basically centered around Jerusalem.

WILCOX: Well, at that time the Likud government and Prime Minister Shamir were governing Israel. Its policy was to promote the Israeli settlements and to hang on to the West Bank and Gaza which they regarded as part of greater Israel. The Likud never proclaimed an intention to annex these areas and absorb them into Israel, realizing that were they to do so, the Palestinians in those areas would have to be enfranchised. That would upset the Jewish demographics of Israel. Still, they wanted to maintain control of these territories under some form of limited autonomy where the major decisions and security would be controlled by Israel. To prevent the emergence of a local Palestinian leadership and self governing institutions, the Israelis removed or deported Palestinian mayors, for example, who had nationalist views, and appointed Arabs who were puppets. Local leadership, therefore, scarcely existed. The Palestinian PLO leadership abroad was in retreat having been driven out of Beirut and landed in exile in Tunisia. There was a deep stalemate.

Q: How had the previous incumbents reported from Jerusalem? How did they perceive their missions as consuls general?

WILCOX: I think reporting from Jerusalem over the years made a real effort to try to understand the dynamics of Palestinian politics, the society, the economy of the West Bank. The embassy was responsible for Gaza.

As for the role of consuls general, by definition they all led schizophrenic lives, living in West Jerusalem among Israelis, and dealing professionally with Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. I and some of my predecessors thought it was important to keep an eye on the Jewish side of Jerusalem to keep our Palestinian analysis in context and to look at the city as a whole. While my official contacts were with the Palestinians, since Israel prohibited its officials from dealing with the consulate, I also developed very close contacts with Israeli writers, journalists and academics, especially those who were interested and involved in the peace process and human rights and had contacts with Palestinians. In any case, I viewed my role as the American representative in the City of Jerusalem, as well as our channel to the Palestinians.

While the bulk of our contacts were with Palestinians and we concentrated our reporting on that sector, I gained perspective and insight by keeping in touch with Israelis. Our job, of course, was to encourage the Palestinians to take a more creative and positive view toward peace.

By and large, it was not possible to bring Palestinians and Israelis together at the consulate because of the depth of Palestinian feelings about the occupation and their Israeli adversaries and the embarrassment they felt in associating with Israelis under American auspices in a setting they could only regard as political, not social. We did so only on rare, carefully controlled occasions. Nor did we try to bring together peace-minded Israelis whom we knew were already in touch with Palestinians, since this probably would have been counterproductive. These relations were close, though very discreet, and did not need U.S. sponsorship.

The only major mixed event at the consulate was our annual Fourth of July reception. In the past, following the practice of other consulate generals in Jerusalem, the U.S. held two receptions, one for Palestinians and the other for Israelis. One of my predecessors, Wat Cluverius, broke with this tradition and combined the two parties. I agreed with this policy, since it was designed to demonstrate that the U.S. saw the Jews and the Arabs in Jerusalem as neighbors who had to live together. The Palestinians saw our policy differently, however, and some of them regularly boycotted the event, while otherwise maintained close relations with us. I think they suspected that holding a Fourth of July reception for both communities implied that the U.S. had accepted Israeli control over all of Jerusalem and had abandoned the policy of leaving the question of Jerusalem's status open for future negotiations. That certainly wasn't the intention of having a single reception, but all things in Jerusalem are political including Fourth of July receptions. Mayor Teddy Kollek of Jerusalem made things worse for us by constantly saying in public that he was responsible for persuading the U.S. to hold a combined Fourth of July reception. This made it look to the Palestinians that we were doing the Israelis' bidding, which was not true.

Q: In your talk just now, you always state in Jerusalem and Jerusalem and Jerusalem. What about the West Bank?

WILCOX: The West Bank was under our jurisdiction, and I and all my predecessors traveled extensively in the West Bank, using our Arab drivers. We used Israeli drivers in West Jerusalem. My officers were out in the West Bank every day talking to people, administering a small economic development assistance program, promoting U.S. views, and trying continuously to persuade the Palestinians to take a more activist and positive view toward the peace process and to accept resolution 242.

Q: Could you explain what resolution 242 was?

WILCOX: Resolution 242 has always been the foundation of U.S. policy in the peace process. Essentially, it calls on Israel to withdraw from territory occupied in 1967, that is the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, in exchange for peace and mutual recognition. It is essentially a bargain for the exchange of land for peace. Resolution 338 calls for the negotiations to bring that process about. The Palestinians for years had been paralyzed in their political approach by refusing to recognize the existence or the permanence of the state of Israel. They clung tenaciously to this view in public that because Israel had taken their land, they had a right to recover it and compromise with Israel was not acceptable. I think most of them did not believe that this was a realistic policy, but nevertheless, they would not bring themselves to admit that, and for reasons of pride they clung to this uncompromising position. So there was a terrible intellectual and ideological lag among the Palestinians on the West Bank. Their policy was one of steadfastness, to hold firm to their views and to hope that somehow someday their cause would prevail. It wasn't prevailing. Their land continued to be taken by the Israelis, settlements were expanding, and steadfastness was a failed policy. We worked to urge the Palestinians to look at their own situation more realistically, to find ways to engage with Israel, and to make peace through a compromise that would salvage something for them and their children. Our view was the only route to peace was a division of the land and a mutual recognition between Israelis and Palestinians.

This was a hard sell, not just because of traditional Palestinian stubbornness and the lack of strong, visionary leadership, but because the Likud governments in those days offered the Palestinians little in return for peace. "Peace for peace" was Shamir's policy, and he envisaged a future of permanent subordination of the Palestinians under effective Israeli control, since his view and that of his colleagues was that the West Bank and Gaza belonged to Israel. It was difficult, to say the least, for the Palestinians to recognize Israel when Israel refused to offer any compromise itself or to recognize the Palestinian as a people with rights and aspirations of their own. The Israelis until well into the late '80s clung to the view that the Palestinians were basically Jordanians, and that Palestinian nationalism and the idea of a Palestinian state were not only illegitimate but dangerous. So there was a grave ideological time warp on both sides. Both thought they were stuck in a zero sum game in which one side had to win and the other had to lose.

Q: Did you have dealings with the Jewish settlers?

WILCOX: Yes, we did. We would meet occasionally with settler representatives in Jerusalem, and members of my staff would sometimes visit settlements and talk to settlement leaders. It was important to learn more about it and to report on the internal politics and dynamics of this movement, which represented a threat to an ultimate peace. We also reported in great detail on the expansion of settlements.

Q: Were you viewed with hostility by the settlement leadership?

WILCOX: Absolutely. The leadership of the settler movement were religious fundamentalists

and ultra-nationalist Jews who believed that they were fulfilling a Biblical prophesy by reclaiming the ancient Biblical homelands and had a God given right to take that land and to live on it. The Palestinians would somehow have to make do or leave. They were deeply angry at the U.S. for suggesting that settlements were a threat to peace and stability in the region. Up until the early 1980s, the U.S. government held that settlements were illegal. Unfortunately, President Reagan changed our policy, and our opposition to settlements thereafter was more attenuated and spasmodic.

Q: Did you find when you were there particularly dealing with the settlers, much of the impetus for this movement was being supported particularly in Jewish circles in New York I would have thought. Almost everything you did would be on a hair trigger, and the hair trigger would be almost in New York. New York City I am talking about.

WILCOX: The impetus for the settlement movement didn't come from New York, it came from the various Zionist revisionist ideologues and religious leaders like Rabbi Kook who created a new variant of Jewish philosophy which held that to recover the land of ancient Israel was a divine mandate, central to the future of Judaism and linked to the coming of the messiah. This was a very powerful concept emotionally and religiously. It grew after the Israeli victory in 1967 and the take over of the West Bank which the followers of this stream of Judaism saw as a miraculous act of redemption. It is true that this movement drew support and funds from some American Jewish donors and religious cohorts. Also, a significant number of the most enthusiastic and ideological settlers were American Jews from New York and elsewhere in the U.S., although many were born in Israel.

Q: Did you find yourself caught between you might say this ideological group which was essentially doing something which was against our policy, but the spearhead of which was often American, I mean holding dual passports. When things went wrong of one sort or another, did you have to go in and sort of help Americans who were really Israelis? Did this cause problems?

WILCOX: Any American citizens who requested assistance from an American consulate or embassy would always receive assistance, irrespective of their political views. But militant settlers who were also Americans tended to avoid the consulate. I don't know how many of the Americans who chose to live in Israel retained their American passports. Some did, some did not.

Q: I would have thought that you would have had a problem dealing with your staff Particularly your officers, I mean here in a way was comparable to the situation in South Africa in dealing with what was considered an oppressive government, the white government on the blacks. Here from the perspective of a junior officer, they are focused on the plight of the Palestinians. Yet it is very tricky. The older officers can understand the dynamics of American politics, but young people tend to see things in black and white. This is just; this isn't just. I would have thought that this would be a problem.

WILCOX: Any American diplomat who served in Jerusalem quickly became familiar with the realities of the Palestinian problem. Those who had some previous experience dealing with Israel knew the other side of the issue as well. My officers were young, but while they were deeply

involved and had strong views about the situation, they were professionals, did not go off the deep end, and maintained a necessary degree of detachment. I made it a point in myself and encouraged my staff to report objectively and honestly about what was going on, and we called our shots as we saw them. We worked hard to be honest and objective, without glossing over the unpleasant realities of the Israeli occupation and Palestinian failings as well. We saw ourselves as American diplomats representing U.S. interests in the midst of a problem that required a solution.

Q: How did you find your reporting, yours and with your officers. How was that received both in the embassy in Tel Aviv and in Washington? Did you find you had to fine tune the reporting; how did you deal with that?

WILCOX: I paid a great deal of attention to our reporting, and I wanted to make sure that our reporting was not special pleading on behalf of the Palestinians, while at the same time accurately conveying the situation and Palestinians views. I also sought to put our reporting in the larger context of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. I thought I was in a good position to do that having worked on the Israeli side of the street for some years. I was proud of the reporting the consulate general did at that time. I thought it was timely, analytically rigorous, and directed to the Department's policy concerns. Our reporting officers were in the field constantly. Some of them spoke Arabic and Hebrew. We knew the political and business community in the West Bank and East Jerusalem very well, and reported voluminously on what they were doing and what they were saying.

The response to the reporting was varied. Among colleagues in the department it was appreciated. There were often positive comments, but there were also those in my time and during the tours of all previous consuls general whose reporting I previously read in Washington who thought the consulate's reporting was biased toward the Palestinians. In any case, we believed our professional vocation was to report objectively and honestly. I also thought my job description obliged me to make policy recommendations from time to time and I did so. Those recommendations were sometimes welcomed and sometimes not welcomed, but that is to be expected. I tried to make recommendations with recognition of competing factors, including, sometimes, Israeli equities that Washington policymakers would have to balance and to give my best advice.

Q: Can you comment on any of the recommendations that you made positive and negative back in Washington?

WILCOX: During the Intifada, a young Israeli reservist at a bus stop near Tel Aviv killed a group of Palestinians and serious rioting broke out in Gaza. Israeli forces responded in an excessive and heavy handed way, killing seventeen Palestinians. Palestinian emotions, already running high in the midst of the Intifada, grew even more intense. The local leadership was already involved in a hunger strike against Israeli policies. The PLO introduced a resolution in the UN Security Council condemning the use of excessive force by the Israeli forces. I recommended that we engage in negotiations on this resolution rather than veto it as we were increasingly doing. If we were unable to achieve balanced language, we should abstain from the resolution. Our policy was to oppose the use of excessive force against the Intifada in violation

of recognized human rights standards. We were also working to defuse the conflict and to encourage the Palestinians to consider a political solution. I reasoned that a veto would further reduce U.S. influence among the Palestinians and undermine our efforts to get the Israelis to pursue a more sensible response to the Intifada. My recommendation for an abstention was not welcomed in Washington and the U.S. cast a veto in New York. The upshot was that the local Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and Gaza decided to boycott further official contacts with the U.S. officials, including the consulate. This was a foolish, counterproductive move on their part, but it demonstrated their sense of anger, despair and powerlessness.

Some time later while on consultations in Washington, John Kelly, the Assistant Secretary in NEA, who had earlier urged me to give my best advice to Washington, told me, by way of cautioning me, that Robert Gates, the then Deputy National Security Adviser in the White House, had said that “Wilcox has gone off the deep end.” I surmised that my recommendation for an abstention in the Security Council vote, which I thought I had presented in a thoughtful way, taking into account my long experience in Washington dealing with U.S. votes in the UN, was regarded as a radical proposal.

Q: Well, it sounds as though we were locked into almost the same sort of diplomatic response that the Israelis and the Palestinians were. At a certain point we wouldn't engage in any talk. It sounds like a rather sad commentary on diplomacy.

WILCOX: We were frustrated by the tendency of the Palestinians, with the help of some of the Europeans, to go to the Security Council every time there was an issue that should have been addressed through negotiations. We had been trying for years to promote negotiations on the Palestinian issue, but were making little headway with either the Palestinians or the Israelis. The Israelis would not recognize the Palestinians, much less the PLO, as their negotiating partner, the Palestinians expected the U.S. and the international community to do their negotiations with Israel for them, and the U.S. at that time would not deal with the PLO, whom all Palestinians regarded as the address for negotiations. The tendency of the Arabs and the Palestinians to run to the Security Council every time they had a serious grievance, combined with domestic pressures in the U.S. to veto all UN resolutions critical of Israel, tended to increase alienation between the U.S. and the Palestinians and their Arab friends.

I always thought we should have used the Security Council more creatively, with our influence and our leadership, to craft resolutions in the Security Council which would go beyond sterile Israel bashing and help the situation. Instead, the policy in Washington was that when it came to Security Council resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we should not negotiate and that the “worst” draft resolutions were the “best” because they were easier to veto.

Q: What was the state, I am a little bit foggy on the chronology, one the Intifada, the uprising. When did or was this to take place? The other one was the beginning of talks with the Arab, the PLO in Tunisia and all of this.

WILCOX: The Intifada began in November, 1987, with riots in Gaza and in the West Bank city of Nablus sparked by the deaths of Palestinian youths in confrontations with the IDF. It spread spontaneously, with strikes, marches, barricades, and stonings of Israeli forces.

In a matter of months a full scale mass protest movement emerged, led by a clandestine Intifada leadership dominated by the PLO Fatah faction. Protesters had no firearms, but used stones against the IDF. The leadership also issued regular leaflets which contained propaganda and calls for strikes, boycotts against Israeli products, and the withholding of Palestinian day laborers from work in Israeli factories and homes and fields. The leaflets contained a lot of rhetoric, as well as the core of the Intifada's ideology and tactical advice to the Palestinians. We read these documents with great care and reported them.

The Israelis were caught by surprise, since the Palestinians had been relatively passive since 1967, and had never before mounted a sustained protest movement. The IDF was forced to deploy many more Israeli troops in the West Bank and Gaza than they ever had in the past. Its strategy was to respond with major force, for fear of being seen as weak, instead of ignoring the riots and letting them play out, which would have been a sounder strategy. So thousands of young Israeli conscripts and older reservists found themselves involved in street battles with stone-throwing Palestinian kids. The IDF saw themselves as a fighting army and they were cast in this new role as policemen to put down street riots. They were unprepared. Although the policy was to use live fire only in self defense, the death toll from live fire grew. Many Palestinians were also killed or wounded by rubber, steel-cored, bullets that were widely used. The IDF also used beatings, curfews, massive arrests, and the confinement of people in whole villages or areas, a form of collective punishment.

Rather than subduing the Intifada, these Israeli practices intensified it, and the IDF was put, increasingly, on the defensive. The uprising had a profound effect on Israeli public opinion which in the past has assumed that the occupation could be maintained without much effort and that the Palestinians had been subdued. Now they were sending their sons and husbands to subdue Palestinian teenagers and they found this troubling. The troops themselves disliked the new role they had been cast in, and a process of soul searching about the occupation began.

At the same time, the Palestinians began to sharpen their propaganda and to articulate more carefully their cause to sympathetic Israeli journalists and to the western media. The western press reported on the Intifada intensively and the specter of heavily armed Israeli armed forces beating up unarmed Palestinian youths created a lot of sympathy in the United States and Western Europe for the Palestinians. [As a result of] this renewed interest and attention to the Palestinian cause, many for the first time saw the human dimension of the occupation and all its anomalies. In Israel, people began to ask how the occupation could be sustained - and the peace movement and political ferment grew.

Some Israelis advocated harsher crackdowns on the Palestinians, but many others said this [was] an untenable [price] for a liberal democracy to pay in terms of repression and violation of human rights and began to advocate a political solution. The Palestinians, themselves gained a new sense of pride. [They] gained new respect and increased understanding in the world, where they had often projected a negative image. This external recognition, plus the fact that the Palestinians had for the first time stood up to the Israelis, gave the Palestinians a new sense of confidence and, in return, realism and honesty about their situation with the Israelis. The fact that the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza took the initiative in the Intifada themselves, without

prompting or direction from the external PLO, added to their sense of confidence. As a result, Palestinians began to talk among themselves and to us about recognizing Israel and a negotiated peace which would result in the creation of a Palestinian state which would live peacefully with Israel. Such talk was almost never heard in the '70s or the '80s when I had first met Palestinians. We engaged with Palestinians and encouraged them.

There had been signs over the years of pragmatism and moderation within the PLO, but the mold of rejectionism had not been broken, in part, I think, because the U.S. did not engage with the PLO. A major change in Palestinian doctrine came at the Algiers meeting of the Palestinian National Congress in 1988 when an aide of Arafat's, Bassam Abu Sharif, published a paper, with official blessing, that called for the creation of two states, the recognition of Israel, and peace between them. At first, Washington was skeptical and paid little attention, but this was a seminal document that reflected an important shift in Palestinian thinking.

The Intifada was the impetus for this change. The Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza, for the first time, began to assert themselves with the external PLO. They were in constant touch with Arafat and the PLO leadership and were urging them to be more creative and to seek a political solution with the Israelis. Arafat and his leadership reacted positively, recognizing that they had to be responsive to their constituents in the occupied territories who had initiated and were bearing the brunt of the Intifada. A new synthesis emerged in the PLO that led to its commitment to forswear terrorism and recognize resolution 242 and to the beginnings of a U.S.-PLO dialogue in Tunis. That dialogue was suspended when the gang of Abu Abas, a radical member of the PLO executive committee, staged an abortive attack against Israel on the beach at Herzliyya, near Tel Aviv.

To summarize, the Intifada created real political movement on both the Israeli and Palestinian side in the direction of accommodation. It was an important event in the history of the conflict and the peace process.

Q: What was your role during this time, when the Intifada had reached full proportions. Could you talk about how we were seeing it there? Was there a different perspective from our embassy in Tel Aviv and also with Israeli officials, sort of how did you fit into this and what were you reporting?

WILCOX: The embassy in Tel Aviv received the full weight of Israeli views and reported them. I think the embassy in Tel Aviv also understood that the Intifada was a serious crisis and that it created a new situation which [called] for renewed diplomatic efforts. Tel Aviv was also responsible for covering Gaza, so it had a window into Palestinian affairs. Naturally, since most of the embassy's interlocutors were Israelis, they tended to pay more attention to Israeli urgings and demarches, but I do not think the embassy's reporting was biased or unbalanced. I made a point of visiting the embassy almost weekly and consulting with our ambassador. The ambassador was Tom Pickering when I arrived, and Bill Brown during the latter part of my tour there. I felt it was very important for the embassy and the consulate general to avoid an adversary relationship and become the advocates of their respective clients. I urged my staff and embassy likewise to get our two staffs together so that we could talk about a common U.S. approach to these things. There was not always agreement, but there was regular contact by phone and in

person, and I felt it was critical to maintain this. There had been times in the past where there was severe tension between the consulate general and the embassy. In some respects it was kind of built in to this situation. I was aware of this and worked hard to avoid it.

Q: What was the great focus of the press, TV news, CNN with particularly cable news. I mean you can always lead with a story showing Palestinian youths throwing rocks at Israeli troops and groups of Israeli troops firing back. I mean here you were, this was your area of responsibility. Did you find it difficult dealing with the press?

WILCOX: I dealt with them regularly as I always had in Washington. I tried to give them the most objective appraisal I could to expound U.S. policy. The press did a particularly good job of reporting on the Intifada. The U.S. press helped illuminate the issues to the American public, as did the Israeli media for the Israelis. Media reporting helped create the political catharsis on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides that was quite encouraging.

Q: What did you and your staff do during this time to sort of get out the word. You know, this is an opportunity. Whom were you talking to about this?

WILCOX: There wasn't an elected or formally recognized leadership structure in the West Bank. The old municipal leadership had been undermined by Israeli deportation, and the Israelis discouraged the emergence of other leaders by arrests and deportations. This lack of a coherent recognized political structure on the inside made it difficult to find the points of authority and key interlocutors.

The Intifada leadership were young people who were unidentified and carefully concealed. There was an overt tier of respected pro-PLO Palestinians, however, including journalists, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, notables, and political figures like Faisal Husseini who were influential and served as a kind of local leadership. We saw these people regularly. They and the younger clandestine Intifada leadership were all trying to persuade the PLO to move further toward compromise.

There was chronic rivalry among Palestinians, as there had been historically, that threatened their unity and sense of purpose. This rivalry, based on regional and clan ties, weakened the cohesiveness of the community and its ability to deal with their situation. Arafat and the external PLO encouraged this rivalry, since they did not want strong political leaders to emerge in the occupied territories. Disunity was a constant problem when we had American visitors either from the Congress or the executive branch who wanted to talk to Palestinians. Our job was to invite Palestinians who have some stature and who might in some way be representative to meet with Americans. But because of rivalries, it was not always easy to get a group of Palestinians who would come to meet with senior Americans. Often they were interested in who else was coming. That was part of our burden in the consulate general, but we generally succeeded. We had to work very hard with the Palestinians to identify a team of Palestinians to meet with Secretary Baker when he began his round of diplomacy.

Most Palestinians viewed the U.S. as partisan and pro-Israel, and this complicated our relations with them, but most realized the value of contacts with the consulate, and during my first year in

Jerusalem we had superb access. However, after the U.S. veto of the Security Council resolution following the killing of the Palestinians at Rishon Lezion and in Gaza in the midst of the Intifada, the most prominent Palestinians decided to boycott all further contacts with Americans. This interrupted some of our contacts, but we stayed in touch with many others and with intermediaries of the boycott group.

Q: During this time of great tension and confrontation, I would have thought you would have been quite concerned about Americans who were settlers there. Just by the filtering process as you say, these tended to be the most zealous of the group who have come over and made this choice. Were you kind of keeping an eye out of saying You know I am a little worried about this guy or group or something. They might start shooting, because they were armed.

WILCOX: One of my colleagues, Bob Silverman, who spent a good deal of time following the settler movement, once approached a settlement and was accosted at gun point by a settler and forced to leave. At my request the embassy protested this to the government of Israel.

Q: What about dealing with the Israeli officials in Jerusalem?

WILCOX: The only relationship we had with Israeli officials was with the municipality of Jerusalem. That tradition was established many years ago, so I would regularly deal with Mayor Teddy Kollek and his deputies. We had housekeeping, security, and logistic problems, so we needed to have contact with the municipality. Those relations were usually cordial and direct.

On the other hand, we did not have formal relationships with the foreign ministry and the foreign ministry instructed its personnel not to deal with consulate officers. Nonetheless, having worked earlier in Israeli affairs, I had friends in the government of Israel and occasionally they would come to my residence, but they did so after hours. There was no formal relationship. Israeli doctrine of the indivisibility of Jerusalem and permanent Israeli control of Jerusalem was vigorously asserted, and the Israelis resented the fact that the Americans had an independent diplomatic mission in Jerusalem that reported directly to Washington, while we maintained our embassy in Tel Aviv. There was always tension there, but it has existed for many years. By and large, Israeli diplomats were professionals, very sophisticated people. They generally handled this in a civilized way.

There was one major exception. Several members of my staff who lived in West Jerusalem reported over a period of months that their apartments had been broken into and items were moved in a way designed to show that someone had been there surreptitiously. Nothing was stolen. When I was convinced that there was a pattern to this, I called on the Director of Protocol at the Foreign Ministry to alert him to this problem. I strongly suspected that Israeli security personnel had entered the apartments as a form of harassment or game playing. I wanted to let the Foreign Ministry know of my concern [by] alleging official involvement. Thereafter, there were no further entries.

Q: When did you go to Jerusalem.

WILCOX: In 1988 in April.

Q: I'm not sure whether you missed it but it is almost a rite of passage that in any election year around the time of spring is when the primaries come. That's when every candidate for anything goes to New York and promises that they are going to see that our embassy is moved to Jerusalem. That hasn't happened, I mean it comes up all the time. It may happen some time. Did that come up in your watch?

WILCOX: It came up constantly. We kept our embassy in Tel Aviv in 1948 after the [Israeli] government moved to Jerusalem, and maintained the independent status of the consulate general in Jerusalem to demonstrate that the status of Jerusalem had to be resolved in negotiations, not unilateral acts. When Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967, we regarded that part of the city as occupied territory.

Today, the Palestinians demand the recovery of East Jerusalem and the establishment of the capital of the Palestinian state there. They no longer seek to recover West Jerusalem where many tens of thousands of Palestinians lived before 1948 and were forced out of their homes to East Jerusalem or the West Bank or elsewhere.

There was a wall between the East and West sides of the city between 1948 and 1967, and Jews were denied access to their holy sites. Some Israelis fear that if the Palestinians are given East Jerusalem they will re-divide the city. The Palestinians, [however], say they want and need an open city in which the two communities can deal with each other. Jerusalem has enormous emotional significance for both Israelis and Palestinians, and it is wrong to assert that one side or another has a superior claim to Jerusalem or that one or another has more historical significance. The fact is that it is of supreme political and religious importance for both Palestinians and Israelis will ultimately require a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem and perhaps some novel arrangements for shared sovereignty in certain areas. This can be done, although it is increasingly difficult because of the construction of huge Israeli settlements in large areas of East Jerusalem on confiscated Arab land.

Because a solution of the Jerusalem issue is critical to a comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli peace settlement, the U.S. must continue to insist that the final status of East Jerusalem must be settled by mutual agreement. If we move our embassy to Jerusalem before that happens, we will undermine or role as intermediary and therefore risk prolonging conflict, with resultant damage to our interests in the Middle East and a stable peace for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Q: How did the Gulf War between Iraq and the United States and other powers impact on you?

WILCOX: Staying with Jerusalem, for a minute, there has been a lot of rhetoric about the unity of Jerusalem. But it is, in fact, a deeply divided city in which 30-40% of the population are Arabs who oppose Israeli rule. The city is divided politically, socially, and psychologically, and there is chronic tension. The Jewish-Arab geographical division is far less distinct now because of the settlers in East Jerusalem. The current arrangement is unsatisfactory in every way. I have always believed that a political division of the two peoples in the city will bring about a closer social, economic and cultural relations between them and create a much happier city. The city would remain open, in any case, since the Arabs want an open city as much as the Israelis do.

Q: When you are talking about Jerusalem, did you and your staff have any problem with the tensions there during the time you were there or with the extreme orthodox element?

WILCOX: The ultra orthodox ignored us, but the settlers disliked us because the U.S. opposed settlements and advocated a territorial compromise with the Arabs. However, we watched security very carefully. I think Washington often exaggerated the threat to American citizens in Jerusalem through the frequent issuance of travel advisories, especially during the Intifada. At one time there was pressure to actually move my staff who lived in East Jerusalem into West Jerusalem. I successfully resisted this.

Q: That would be a political move, too.

WILCOX: It would have had profound political significance and would have crippled our mission. The mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, was quite unhappy with our security advisories on Jerusalem, and he once called me in and told me that there had been 11 homicides in Jerusalem in I think it was 1989 whereas, there had been X-hundred homicides in the city of Washington that year. He said we should pay more attention to security in our own country and avoid our alarmist security advisories about Jerusalem because it hurt tourism, which was and is hugely important to Jerusalem's economy.

Q: Well, then let's go to the Gulf War. Could you explain one, what the Gulf War was, and then talk about its impact on your operations.

WILCOX: In 1990 and 91, President Bush, mobilized a brilliantly successful coalition of western states who deployed multinational forces led mainly by the U.S. ultimately to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait. That required vigorous diplomacy with our allies in the UN Security Council. The coalition victory against Saddam Hussein and was a great victory for the United States and the west. The Gulf War drew in Israel because Saddam began to launch SCUD missiles against Israel. The United States, fearing that Israeli retaliation against Iraq would undermine the U.S. Arab cooperation against Saddam, urged that the Israelis forebear from retaliating against Iraq. Deputy Secretary Eagleburger visited Israel in an effort to persuade them not to, and succeeded.

Q: You were saying the Israelis did not respond to these attacks in part because of the Americans and in part because...

WILCOX: The Israelis decided not to respond to the Iraqi attacks in part, because of our urging, but also in part because of the lack of militarily effective means of retaliating. The SCUDs were being launched from the deserts of Iraq. They were very difficult to pinpoint. Aerial attacks from Israel against Iraqi sites would require over flights of Jordan or Syria which those countries certainly would not have permitted, and therefore would have meant a violation of the airspace. The Israelis probably recognized they couldn't find these sites, some of which were mobile, and that bombing them wouldn't be an effective response. They probably also recognized that they did not have the capability of sending ground forces to Iraq to destroy these missile sites, even if they could locate them. Another over flight route would have been over Saudi Arabia.

So, they did not retaliate, departing from the normal tradition of hitting back hard. The Israeli public hunkered down and withstood the missile attacks. Miraculously, they killed no one, but did considerable damage in Tel Aviv in certain neighborhoods. The Iraqi SCUDs were primitive and poorly guided. To help Israel, the U.S. deployed batteries of Patriot anti-missile missiles in Tel Aviv. There was a controversy about how effective these missiles actually were, but it was a political gesture by the United States which helped reinforce the Israeli policy of not retaliating against Iraq.

Q: What about your staff in this? What changes in your work was happening?

WILCOX: There was real concern about the safety of Americans, and a good many Americans from Tel Aviv were evacuated with their wives. A number of my own staff were evacuated also including spouses. My wife Cynda also left, reluctantly. No missiles were launched against Jerusalem. I predicted this, because Jerusalem was also an Arab city, and the site of many Islamic holy places. But, there was real concern. These missiles were also quite inaccurate. We could see their trails passing overhead in the night. You could never tell where they were going to land, so there was much anxiety.

Q: Were you hit with a wave of visa requests?

WILCOX: Some Israelis left the country. Tourism virtually stopped. But for the most part the Israelis hunkered down. There was a massive, well organized civil defense effort. There was great concern about chemical warheads on these missiles, and Israelis were issued gas masks and vinyl sheeting to seal up their houses and Atabrine, a medical antidote, were available. The Israelis did an excellent job in reacting to this. There was no panic.

Q: How about within the West Bank community? One, reaction to Iraq's war and two, how they reacted to the missile threat and what the Israelis were doing to them.

WILCOX: Before the war started, Palestinian intellectuals were for the most part contemptuous of Saddam Hussein. They saw him as an Arab tyrant, not a leader they wanted to emulate. But when the war began and the missile attacks started, there was a spontaneous support among many Palestinians for Saddam. There was shock and chagrin of course, on the part of the Israelis and West that the Palestinians could support Saddam. But this behavior was quite understandable, if regrettable, given the Palestinians enmity for their Israeli occupiers and their apparent helplessness to do anything about it. Arafat, you will recall, actually went to Baghdad and was photographed embracing Saddam., a step he later regretted when Saddam lost the war. The Palestinians support for Iraq alienated them, for awhile, from the U.S. A more important consequence was the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from Kuwait.

Q: Did you have either a problem or a situation to deal with let's say before the missile attacks, because there was a period of a few months almost six months I suppose. The Iraqis went into Kuwait in August of 1990, and we really didn't start attacking until January guess, of 1991. The United States was sort of shocked to see particularly these Jordanians jumping around with joy about what Saddam had done to Kuwait. Did you have the same thing in Jerusalem and the West

Bank?

WILCOX: Palestinian support for Saddam was influenced, I think, by the inferior status that the Palestinians had been given in Kuwait where there were thousands and thousands of Palestinians, professionals, working people, businessmen. Very few had been given Kuwaiti citizenship, although they made important contributions to Kuwait. As for Jordan, King Hussein's support for Saddam also infuriated Washington, but given Jordan's critical economic relationship with Iraq and support among the masses for Saddam, the King had less room for maneuver than the U.S. realized.

Q: Did you find yourself having to say come on fellows, Saddam Hussein is our enemy, and you are not helping yourselves. I am talking during this time.

WILCOX: Of course that was our message. We said it was crazy for the Palestinians to support Saddam Hussein when it was in the interest of the Palestinians to make common cause with the United States which was better positioned than anyone else to try to help the Palestinians make peace with the Israelis and do justice to the Palestinians. It was a disaster for the Palestinians.

Q: What was your take when you went out into Jerusalem on Arafat and his leadership, and did this change over the time you were there?

WILCOX: Arafat and his PLO leadership were in part responsible for the stalemate and lack of movement toward a negotiated settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. Arafat as I said earlier, his leaders clung for years to the notion that Israel was not a legitimate entity, that it should not be recognized, and the policy should be steadfast confrontation. There were people in the Palestinian national movement and the Palestinian diaspora who saw clearly some years ago before the Intifada that this was a hopeless position. Israel was a strong powerful state. It was there to stay and had powerful friends, and if the Palestinians wanted to salvage something from the disaster that had befallen them, they would have to treat with Israel for peace and try to divide the land. This view did not prevail in the PLO until 1988. The moderate voices were overruled and some of the moderates were even assassinated by PLO extremist groups, such as Abu Nidal's gang. Arafat's first goal was to preserve a tenuous unity among the PLO factions and to stay on top. He had devoted his career to keeping this diverse group of Palestinian exile organizations. They ranged from the moderately peaceful to the most violent and fanatic. Arafat did this quite successfully over the years.

If Arafat had been a leader of broader vision, he might have faced down the radical factions of the PLO much earlier and pursued a more pragmatic policy toward peace with Israel. If he had done so, he might have found a willing partner in Israel, but he also might not have. Israel is also to be blamed for rejectionism, since for years, there was no interest in Israel in dealing with the PLO, which was regarded as a terrorist organization, and the great majority of the Israelis were in denial about Palestinian nationalism and the need for a Palestinian state and a withdrawal from the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. So was the United States, which had forsworn any political contacts with the PLO or Arafat. Like Israel, the U.S. failed to understand the reality and depth of Palestinian nationalism and the centrality of the PLO, and continued to pursue the chimera of a Jordanian solution to the Palestinian issue. So, the radicals, the hard liners prevailed

for decades among the Palestinians and the Israelis until the Intifada and the Gulf War precipitated changes that led to the Madrid conference and the Oslo Declaration of Principles.

Q: Did Jordan have any, did you see the hand of Jordan any time you were there?

WILCOX: Yes, Jordan itself has a fascinating history of pragmatic relations with the early Zionists and the state of Israel going all the way back to King Abdullah. He was the only Arab leader during the 1930s and '40s who recognized that Zionism and Israel had to be dealt with. Abdullah was also fierce opponent of the Palestinian national movement and saw the Palestinians and the Hashemites as competitors for Palestine, and for this reason he saw that he had a common interest with the Zionists.

In 1948 Jordan assumed that it would remain the sovereign power in the West Bank and Abdullah let the new Israeli government know that he was interested in peace. King Hussein inherited his grandfather's interest in coexistence with Israel, and viewed Palestinian nationalism as a threat to the Hashemite Kingdom. He unwisely bowed to Egyptian and Arab pressure and allowed Jordan to be dragged into the 1967 war, and lost the West Bank to Israel. Jordanian-Palestinian enmity grew worse when in 1970, the PLO, in the Black September movement, challenged Jordan militarily, and lost. Over the next two decades, Hussein gradually began to recognize that it was not in Jordan's strategic interest to recover the West Bank. This would have meant the absorption of two million Palestinians into Jordan which already was composed of a populace that was at least half Palestinian. To have absorbed this additional burden of Palestinians would have threatened the future of the Hashemite dynasty. So, in 1987 as the Intifada was taking root, King Hussein made an historic announcement that he no longer aspired to recover the West Bank, and that the Palestinians were on their own. This reflected his vision as a statesman and a politician.

Q: Although he renounced it, we didn't.

WILCOX: Right. We were still behind the Jordanians. Now we were not committed in any articulate way to the Jordan option, but it was implicitly what we wanted. It was also the arrangement the Israeli Labor party wanted. By the mid-1980s the Labor Party was willing to cede part of the West Bank to Jordan, because it recognized that the status quo was not tenable. They trusted Hussein, and saw the solution in a Jordanian-Palestinian arrangement, with Jordan as the senior partner.

Q: Was there a let down, a disappointment. Iraq collapsed rather quickly. I mean there was supposed to be this great battle, and it turned out that the Iraqis didn't stand up to the allied forces at all, although Saddam Hussein maintained it so. I would have thought that you would on the part of the people in East Jerusalem and the West bank had invested quite a lot of emotional capital in this. Did you see a let down?

WILCOX: There was deep despair. There had been this euphoria, an unrealistic view that somehow the Arab world, the Islamic world would rally to Saddam Hussein. The U.S. victory created a sense of disappointment, and political defeat. By that time the Intifada, which had caused great suffering, was faltering, and it was clear that the Israelis would not yield to the

Palestinians. Israeli repression, economic restrictions, various forms of collective punishment had been effective in blunting the Intifada. Internecine rivalries among the Palestinians also played a part. And radical Palestinian groups began killing other Palestinians for political reasons, and to settle scores. It was an ugly business. The early sense of hope and euphoria had faded So, at the end of the Gulf War, whereas the Intifada had inspired a sense of sort of hope and confidence earlier, this spirit was replaced by disillusionment.

It was at this time that Bush administration recognized the opportunity which the victory of the U.S. in the Gulf and the fall of the Soviet Union offered for a resurrection of the peace process. Bush and Baker seized the moment, using the greatly enhanced power of the U.S. and the favorable new geo-political situation to launch a new peace initiative, and they did so in a very determined way.

Q: When did you leave Jerusalem to get a feel for the timing?

WILCOX: I left Jerusalem in September of 1991, after Secretary Baker had visited there five times for negotiations with local Palestinians and with the Shamir government, a process that ultimately led to the Madrid conference, the beginning of the renewed peace process.

Q: What was your impression of Secretary Baker's engagement, and this was really his first time. I mean we had the collapse of the Soviet Union which was enough on anyone's plate, and in a way he was sort of dragged in to this thing by the Gulf War.

WILCOX: The collapse of the Soviet Union was as you say a factor in emerging American supremacy, and it greatly enhanced our diplomatic leverage in dealing with the Middle East where the Soviets were no longer a factor on behalf of the radical Arabs.

Q: Could you talk about your impression of Secretary Baker, particularly from what you saw because oral history is trying to focus on the view, and also members of his team, Dennis Ross and others.

WILCOX: Baker was a tough, skilled negotiator who understood that here was an opportunity for American leadership and for another effort to resolve this chronic, decades-old problem. The convergence of forces which I have mentioned brought about a genuine, full blown negotiating effort. Baker and Bush deserve great credit for taking this initiative. As Baker became more involved, he got the bit in his mouth and began to push both sides hard. He ultimately succeeded in bringing the parties together at an international conference, one of his finest achievements as Secretary of State.

Q: Did you have much contact with him?

WILCOX: Yes, in Jerusalem when he came, he would meet with Palestinians at my residence. He was tough, persistent negotiator, human, and frank. The Palestinians respected him; I think he respected them too. He understood that they had something to say, and I think, had some sympathy for their position. Of course, I was never with him when he was with the Israelis, but he had the same style with the Israelis. Shamir resisted Baker, all the way, but Baker prevailed,

and dragged Shamir against his will to the Madrid Conference.

Q: Well, in a way, this was a real historic thing in that the secretary of state was treating the Palestinians as real people.

WILCOX: The U.S. had never had high level contact with the Palestinians in the past, above the level of the consulate general, at least until the dialogue began in Tunis in 1988, but that was quite limited in content. George Shultz made a gesture to the Palestinians in 1987, I think it was that year, when he offered to meet with a group of Palestinians at the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem. They foolishly boycotted him and no one came. So Baker's contacts were really the first at the level of Secretary of State. Shultz met once in Washington with Edward Said and Abraham Abu Loughud, but they were Palestinian-American citizens.

Q: Did you have a responsibility to get the right Palestinians there to talk. You talk about these factions and going through a period of depression, I would have thought it would be difficult to get the right group together.

WILCOX: Very difficult. There was jealousy and no recognizable center in the Palestinian community. I think that's the way Arafat wanted it, and the Israelis had also done their share to prevent the emergence of a strong local leadership, for example, by arresting and often deporting nationalist political leaders, and undermining local government by appointing puppet mayors. One of the most able and respected Palestinians, Faisal Husseini, had been repeatedly jailed by the Israelis for his nationalist views, as had others.

The idea of meeting with Baker was controversial because the Palestinians had a sense of grievance against the U.S., which they saw as pro-Israel. Indeed, at the time the Bush-Baker initiative was conceived, the Palestinians were still boycotting official contacts with all American officials, including the consulate. Also, they had no local representative institutions for choosing leaders to negotiate for them, and none of the local leaders were ever sure where they stood vis a vis the PLO. The meetings that ultimately happened required Arafat's approval, so there was a lot of to and froing with Tunis, by fax and phone, which the Israelis doubtless monitored. So, it was touch and go, and I was never certain whether the first of these meetings would come off.

My principal interlocutor with the Palestinians had been Faisal Husseini, the son of Abdul Khader Husseini, the famous Palestinian military leader, was killed in the battle at Kastel near Jerusalem in the 1948 war. Faisal Husseini was an educated man, committed to the Palestinian cause, from the dominant Palestinian clan that had produced the leader of the nationalist movement in the late thirties and early forties, Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem.

I called on Faisal Husseini soon after my arrival in Jerusalem after he had been released from prison and established a relationship with him. He had had no contacts with the consulate for many years, and was still considered a dangerous radical by the Israelis. I found him a thoughtful man who had studied the Palestinian-Israeli conflict very deeply and was beginning to evolve a new and realistic view of the need for peace and compromise. Notwithstanding his long imprisonment, he took a statesmanlike view of things and avoided the anti-Israeli hatred and the

doctrinaire bombast one often heard from Palestinians. While in prison, he had learned Hebrew, and he was developing close contacts with Israeli liberals and the Peace Now movement.

Husseini had a lot of stature in the Palestinian community, in part because he was smart, steady, and incorruptible, and in part because he was the son of Abdul Quader and the grand nephew of the Mufti. But his aristocratic family lineage was also an obstacle, especially among young radical Palestinians who believed that the time of the old families and “notables” had come and gone, since they had failed to rescue the Palestinians.

When Assistant Secretary John Kelly called me from Washington and announced that Baker wanted to meet with a representative group of Palestinians, I began working to assemble a delegation, putting the word out by phone or in meetings with intermediaries with whom we had kept in touch despite the boycott.

One evening late at night, Faisal Husseini called me at my residence and said it is time to - I think he used the phrase - “turn a new page,” that the Palestinian-U.S. impasse should give way to dialogue, and that the Palestinians recognized Baker’s initiative as an opportunity and would agree to meet with him. This showed courage and leadership on his part, and indicated he had overcome the rejectionists who wanted no contact with the U.S. It also indicated that he had been given the green light from the PLO in Tunis. So working with him, we gradually assembled the right group of Palestinians, and the first meeting took place with Jim Baker. He made five trips while I was in Jerusalem, and there were further meetings when Molly Williamson took over as my successor. Through his meetings with the Palestinians and separate meetings with the Israelis, Baker put together agreed terms of reference for the Madrid peace conference, a major diplomatic breakthrough.

Q: What was the role of Dennis Ross at this point?

WILCOX: Dennis Ross had become Secretary Baker's principal aide and advisor on the peace process. Others on the team were Dan Kurtzer, who later became Deputy Assistant Secretary. Dan is now Ambassador to Egypt. John Kelly, the Assistant Secretary of State, and David Welch who at that time was working on the NSC staff with Dennis Ross.

Q: Did you find yourself having sort of post mortems after these meetings with the Palestinians. You know they would come to you and say what was that all about? I mean it is a normal thing, figure out what we would talk about.

WILCOX: Yes. I tried to set the stage for further meetings and to refine the issues and to urge them to focus more clearly and to sharpen up their understanding of what we were looking for. We didn't start immediately with the concept of an international conference in Madrid. That emerged. Baker's approach was “Here is an opportunity for peace. It is good for you and good for your neighbors and good for us. Let's be realistic and pragmatic, and see what we can put together.” This big sticking point, of course, was that the Israelis would not talk to the PLO, who by then Washington had finally realized represented the Palestinians. Also the Israelis feared an international conference, fearing a gang up. Ultimately Baker sold the Israelis a formula for an opening conference, to be followed by bilateral negotiations.

As Baker's meetings with the Palestinians developed, it was implicit that the Palestinians were not speaking for themselves, but the PLO. Baker understood this, but persuaded the Palestinians to go along with the fiction that the PLO was not involved, so that the Israelis could be brought on board. In the end, all sides agreed to a formula that Baker finally sold, though the Palestinians didn't like it, that the Palestinians would not have their own delegation at Madrid, but would be joined with the Jordanians. At Madrid, the facade of Jordanian primacy was quickly broken and it became clear to the world that the Palestinians were speaking for Palestinians, not Jordan.

Q: Did you have a feeling that you were helping to create Palestinian or at least a West Bank Jerusalem leadership?

WILCOX: We didn't create it, but we encouraged it to think realistically and to engage with the United States and ultimately with Israel. I think that was really the main mission and accomplishment of the consulate general at that time, to cultivate, encourage the local leadership to move in the right direction. This took a lot of sympathy, encouragement and diplomacy. We wanted the Palestinians to know we respected them and that we saw them as a people with equities and a cause that deserved our respect and attention. They needed this, because they felt, justifiably, that their cause had been neglected and misunderstood, and there was a lot of resentment.

The Palestinians on their part did not understand the United States. They had limited grasp of the West and they did not know how to project their cause or articulate it. They had done a lousy job of this over the years, in part because they lacked knowledge of the U.S., and in part because their cause was so clear to them that they assumed everyone else should understand and accept it. Also, I think those elements who used terrorism as a political weapon gravely undermined their cause. For many in the U.S., the Palestinian movement was identified with terrorism rather than the legitimate claims of a people who also deserved our support and respect just as the Israelis did. And terrorism played into the hands of the Israeli hard right who preached that the Palestinians were determined to destroy Israel and that efforts to compromise with them were naïve and dangerous. This view was often promoted, of course, by the Likud and other right wing elements who wanted no compromise and for whom hanging on to the occupied territories was more important than peace. Demonizing the Palestinians provided a rationale for their expansionist ideology.

So giving the Palestinians a sense that they were important and we respected them and they had equities and rights was very important. Baker's willingness to engage with them helped a lot. Of course, that was our job at the consulate.

Q: Were you seeing any growth in a political movement in the United States? You know there is a Jewish Israeli one; there is the Greek one, Irish one, and there are a considerable number of Arabs in the United States from various places in the Arab world, and yet they never seemed to be very cohesive.

WILCOX: It hasn't been very cohesive because it is a very diverse community. The Arab world is vast and varied, and this is reflected in the ethnic, religious, national origin differences among

members of the Arab-American community. The Arab American community has sought assimilation as its first goal and has not coalesced into a strong and influential lobbying group. So it hasn't been a major force in articulating the Palestinian point of view in the Congress or the executive branch.

Now they certainly have improved their performance. The National Association of Arab Americans and the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee has an articulate, thoughtful leadership now. They support the peace process and an equitable solution with Israel. There are similarly many American Jewish organizations that have been pro-peace and also backed the Madrid and Oslo processes. Many American Jews were relieved and pleased with this turn of events and strongly supported it during the Peres-Rabin era. When the Likud returned to power, official American Jewish opinion became somewhat more conservative. The voices of the moderate and liberal voices within the American Jewish community were not as prominent as they were during the days of Labor governments, and AIPAC has become more right wing.

WILLIAM ANDREAS BROWN
Ambassador
Israel (1988-1992)

Ambassador William Andreas Brown was born in Winchester, Massachusetts in 1930. He joined the "Holloway Program" which was part of the Naval Reserve Officers Training Program and went to Harvard University, graduating with a Magna cum Laude degree. In 1950 he went to Marine Corps basic training in Virginia and later served in Korea. His Foreign Service career took him to a multitude of places including Honk Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, USSR, India, the UK, and Israel. His career includes an ambassadorship to Israel as well as several positions in the State Department, Environmental Protection Agency. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November of 1998.

Q: Weren't you looking at the calendar in 1988?

BROWN: I was looking at the calendar because a presidential election was coming up in November, 1988, and I said to myself: "If this assignment is to be made, then let's move now, lest I get hung up in pre-election, political games. I said to Charley Hill [Executive Secretary of the Department of State] and others that I would be delighted to be appointed Ambassador to Israel. However, I said, "For goodness' sake, let's move the nomination process along."

Well, bureaucracy being what it is, I didn't get the call from President Reagan until late April, 1988. At the time I was at the baggage carousel at Kennedy Airport in New York, with the baggage rumbling around. An announcement came over the phone asking Ambassador William Brown to call such and such a number. I went to the phone and plugged in. President Reagan came on the line and asked whether I'd be willing to serve as Ambassador to Israel. I said that I would be deeply honored. I was on Cloud Nine.

Well, I then made some inquiries, and it seemed that things just were not moving. Meanwhile, my own tour as Ambassador to Thailand was coming to an end. I wanted to arrange for a hearing from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and get on with the process of formal appointment as Ambassador to Israel. But the wheels of government grind slowly, and the process went dragged on. Finally, I became very concerned about this appointment.

When I returned to Washington, I consulted with Max Kampelman, a wonderful gentleman who was then Counselor of the Department of State. Then I found that there was a hangup. By now Kampelman, representing Secretary Shultz, had communicated with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chaired by that venerable Yankee, Senator Claiborne Pell [Democrat, Rhode Island]. Kampelman found a certain disinclination to give me a hearing on the part of Senator Pell and Senator Paul Sarbanes [Democrat, Maryland], a man of Greek ethnic background. They had apparently decided that they would not hold a hearing for me as the prospective Ambassador to Israel or for another prospective Ambassador to Athens, whose name I have forgotten. So we were at a standstill.

Q: Was there any reason given? Was there any objection to you?

BROWN: None given openly. However, the reason seemed to be that they expected Governor Dukakis [Democrat, Massachusetts] would win, and that Dukakis would therefore wish to name his own Ambassadors to Israel and Greece. This had been going on for some time, and here I was, hung up. However, having sought, in vain, a meeting with Senator Sarbanes, I was finally able, after persistent efforts, to arrange a meeting with Senator Pell.

I went to see him alone and first met with two staff aides, who were rather brusque, both before and after the meeting with Senator Pell. I won't name their names. One of them is now an Ambassador. Their clear message to me was: "Don't you get it? You should withdraw your name because the Committee on Foreign Relations isn't going to give you a hearing. That's that. You should withdraw your name, as the candidate to be Ambassador to Athens already has done." I said, "I hear what you're telling me but I'm not going to withdraw my name. I'll want to see Senator Pell."

I was then ushered in to see Senator Pell. He was a courtly gentleman who came from a patrician, Rhode Island, Yankee family. He was very courteous. He said, "Ambassador, as I look at your background and credentials, you seem eminently qualified. In the normal course of events, there would be no problem. However, the fact is that we, as the Democratic majority on this Committee, think that Governor Dukakis will win the election and strongly believe that, as the new President, he ought to have his choice of all Ambassadorial appointments, particularly in this case, for Ambassador to Israel, which is a very important position." Senator Pell was polite, but very firm in his position.

Finally, I said, "Thank you, Senator, for giving me an audience. I will abide by your decision. If your decision is not to give me a hearing, so be it, but I hope that that can be changed. In the meantime, I am going to go and study the Hebrew language. Now, since we're in private, I'll say something personal. The irony of the situation is, and I've never said this to anyone before, all my life I've been a Democrat. As a professional, career officer I've never allowed politics to

show. I've been scrupulous in that respect. It so happens that I'm a lifelong Democrat and have never voted for a Republican! It also happens that my wife's maiden name was Eleni Melpomeni Coutchavlis, born of Greek parents in Boston, whose the family doctor was none other than Dr. Dukakis, the father of the Governor. He saved my wife's life by performing an appendectomy. When I joined the Foreign Service, we went to Dr. Dukakis for inoculations and medical consultations. I just find this whole thing ironic. I've even worked with Kitty Dukakis, the wife of Governor Dukakis, as Ambassador to Thailand where I addressed refugee problems which were so important to her. However, if it's your decision, the best I can say is that I'm going to study Hebrew, and thank you very much.”

So I started a crash course in Hebrew. I reported my discussion with Senator Pell to Max Kampelman, who talked with Secretary Shultz. There were further conversations between Kampelman and the staffers of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In the course of these discussions Max Kampelman passed the word that if the Committee would not give me a hearing, then there was another, possible route, that is, an interim appointment when the Congress recessed prior to the elections. Kampelman told me that the Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff had said, “You wouldn't dare!” Kampelman said, speaking on behalf of Shultz: “Just watch us!”

So that's how it went. I was not given a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Congress recessed, and President Reagan gave me an interim appointment as Ambassador to Israel. This meant that I received just about the same exequatur [commission] which all Ambassadors receive, to hang up on the wall of my office. However, if you looked at the commission carefully, it stated that the appointment was for this session of Congress. That's how it came about.

Now, many years later, I read in the papers about Republicans yowling about the fact that President Clinton was making recess appointments against the will of the Congress, or that there are hangups and delays on judgeships and the play between Senator Jesse Helms [Republican, North Carolina] and the White House on certain, Ambassadorial appointments. Again, this process remains ironic. This was an example of how a professional, senior officer can get unwittingly caught in the gears of a domestic, political hassle.

Q: While this was going on, were you approached by AIPAC [American Israel Political Action Committee] or other groups in Israel?

BROWN: Yes. The word spreads like wildfire on anything to do with Israel. Probably before even I knew of my interim appointment, AIPAC and other Israeli interest groups knew that I was a prospective candidate as Ambassador to Israel in the first instance and that I had received a call from President Reagan on this appointment. So I began to get all kinds of invitations and approaches in this regard, while I was assiduously trying to learn Hebrew, a very difficult language for a man of my age at the time. However, I went at it as best I could, having learned to speak, read, and write a number of other languages. Knowing at least a modicum of Hebrew was to prove very, very useful to me.

Q: Who was our Ambassador who preceded you?

BROWN: Our Ambassador was Tom Pickering, a distinguished diplomat.

Q: Had he left Tel Aviv?

BROWN: No. However, since Secretary Shultz had obtained the interim appointment as Ambassador to Israel for me, he wanted me to go to Tel Aviv as soon as possible. This resulted in one of those situations which frequently happens where the incumbent Ambassador, having served with distinction for a certain period doesn't feel in any hurry to leave the post. The incoming Ambassador wants to get to his post as soon as possible. So, let us say, there was a certain amount of jockeying back and forth.

Finally, Ambassador Pickering and his wife left Tel Aviv. Our paths crossed briefly at the airport in Paris. They were leaving for the United States, and we were on our way to Tel Aviv. We had five or 10 minutes of conversation before we separated.

In that regard I think that it's useful to pause a bit and reflect on the situation as it was in late 1988. Secretary of State Shultz had the courage to engage on a very delicate, contentious initiative by a lame duck [outgoing] administration. That is, he made an offer to Yasser Arafat [of the PLO, the Palestine Liberation Organization] and his supporters. Shultz said that, notwithstanding the by then well-established restraints on official, U.S.-PLO contacts, if Arafat could bring himself to say the necessary words and make the necessary commitment to a peaceful solution with the State of Israel and an end to "terror," we would open a dialogue with the PLO.

You may remember from my previous remarks that people could, and did, get into real trouble on this issue. For example, Andrew Young, Ambassador to the UN in the Carter administration, lost his job due to what turned out to be an unauthorized meeting with a PLO representative in New York. I believe that Ambassador Young initially hid the fact that he had met with the PLO representative. When it was discovered that, in fact, he had met with the PLO representative, he lost his job as Ambassador to the UN. President Carter was very upset at this incident because Ambassador Young was a very valuable asset to Carter, both internationally and domestically. There were those who had long argued for opening a dialogue with the PLO, but President Reagan and Secretary Shultz had initially resisted this. Then they came to the point that, if the necessary conditions were met, such a meeting could be held. That is, if Arafat would renounce terror and support a peaceful solution then we would open, under very special limitations, a dialogue. That dialogue would run through Ambassador Robert Pelletreau in Tunis and a PLO representative of Arafat.

I think that it is also worthwhile to remember how Arafat got to Tunis. Over the years Arafat had carried out many terrorist operations against Israel, some of which affected us. In 1970 he attempted to overthrow King Hussein of Jordan by a coup d'etat. This was the so-called incident of Black September, 1970, which was put down by King Hussein, and Arafat and his supporters were driven from Jordan with heavy losses and took refuge in Lebanon. He then burrowed into Lebanon, moving into the gaps between the Phalange, the Christians, the Syrians, the Shiite Muslims, and the Sunni Muslims. He established in Lebanon what became a sort of mini state on

the Israeli-Lebanese border. He then launched paramilitary operations against Israel, which I witnessed as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in the American Embassy in Tel Aviv, in the 1979-1982 period.

This PLO activity initially escalated to the point where the Israelis countered, first with Operation Letani in 1978, in the wake of a particularly serious, Palestinian terrorist operation involving an Israeli bus. Then, later on in my time in Israel, in June, 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon and crushed the PLO. The Israelis surrounded the PLO in Beirut and then bombarded them. Finally, with our intercession, Arafat was allowed to leave Beirut, with his PLO forces, and some of their dependents, under U.S. observation and with the UN involved. He initially left Lebanon and was embraced by Papadopoulos in Greece and then found refuge, not in Damascus, [Syria], not anywhere else nearby, but way over in Tunis. So the PLO had suffered a disastrous setback, notwithstanding its own attempts to describe it otherwise.

For years Yasser Arafat hung out in Tunis, where in response to certain PLO provocations he also suffered a couple of Israeli counter raids in the process. Some of his senior lieutenants were killed in these Israeli raids. He was pretty isolated and beleaguered over in Tunis. So Arafat had an interest in making some kind of breakthrough. I was not consulted in all of this, although I was Ambassador-Designate to Israel. My views were not sought, and this operation was run out of Secretary Shultz's office. Do you remember such do-gooders as Rita Hauser and others? They themselves operated in this gray zone with Arafat and his representatives, urging him to say the right thing in public. Arafat reached the point of saying part of it, but he couldn't quite say all of it. Shultz said, "No, that's not good enough." I think that it was at some international conference, possibly in Geneva, where Arafat got in front of the TV cameras and finally read the script which we had crafted for him.

Q: He had his own supporters to conciliate.

BROWN: He had his own constituencies to contend with. PLO extremists damned all of this and called for the inevitable armed struggle with Israel and its total eradication. However, Arafat finally made this statement, just as I was going to Israel.

Q: Had the Intifada started at that point?

BROWN: Oh, yes. In fact, the Intifada had been going on for some time. I think that it began at the end of 1987.

Q: You might explain what that was.

BROWN: The Intifada was an uprising in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank areas, by Palestinian youths, natives of Palestine, the local crowd. They insisted on their own uprising and for their own purposes. In retrospect, it appears to have been very largely domestic and local, to the point where it became embarrassing for Arafat. I would say that, from my vantage point, he appeared to relish the thought of the Israelis being embarrassed and the spectacle of an outbreak against Israel. However, he did not relish the thought or image that this series of incidents was domestic in origin and that he was just an outside player.

The Intifada was a very delicate problem for Arafat, and, as with many other, historic examples, it was fraught with danger for him. Look at the uprisings in Eastern Europe and what happened to those who rose against the communist governments after World War II. Then the Soviet Army moved in and crushed these uprisings, and many native communists who had started them went to the wall. It's a very delicate matter to see domestic liberation or freedom fighters rise up, when you're sitting 1,000 miles away, breathing fire and brimstone.

Anyway, the Intifada began. As I said, it was conducted essentially by Palestinian youth, it was domestic in character, blessed, of course, from Arafat in Tunis, but not really run by him. The Israeli response was conducted by a coalition government which rotated between Shimon Peres [Labour Party] and Shamir [Likud Party]. Under that peculiar arrangement, as of 1988 Shamir was the Prime Minister of Israel. The Defense Minister was none other than Yitzhak Rabin. Rabin's response to the Intifada, as the minister responsible for the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, was reportedly: "Break their bones!" The Israeli military, employed a variety of its riot control techniques, including rubber bullets, and resorted to demolition of terrorists houses by tanks and explosives. Hundreds of these Palestinians were interrogated and given quick, administrative trials. They were then incarcerated in security centers. Some were released after a relatively short time and then ran through the same operation again as the Intifada continued.

So the Intifada was proclaimed as a great success for Arafat, but it was an embarrassment, both domestically and internationally for him.

Q: It was played on TV on a daily basis and made the Israelis look like big bullies.

BROWN: Yes. The Israelis, who had played on the Holocaust theme and acted as the misunderstood of the world, found themselves now under the international spotlight. The publication of our own, annual Human Rights Reports, under successive administrations, made Israel increasingly vulnerable to U.S. criticism. So that was the scene in Israel as I took over my duties as Ambassador.

Now, just before I left for Israel, I had held a whole series of meetings with American Jewish leaders, including AIPAC, B'nai B'rith, the Zionist Organizations of America, the Anti-Defamation League under Abe Foxman, and some other groups which were quieter but still very important, including representatives of the ultra-orthodox Jews.

I met with a significant, ultra-orthodox Jewish leader in his investment office in New York. I had a very interesting conversation with him, which covered not only the views of the ultra-orthodox Jews on Israel but on his group's operations in the Soviet Union as well. For years they had been running ultra-orthodox networks in the Soviet Union, in their determination to keep that aspect of the Jewish faith alive there. It was a sophisticated operation. It involved the distribution of their literature, their own agents, and their own channels. Altogether, it was fascinating.

Of course, we also watched the development of the Sharansky case. You may recall that I had been involved in the Sharansky case years previously in Moscow. In Moscow we dealt with the

Sharansky case, the “dissentniks,” and the “refuseniks.” These people met with Secretary Shultz in April, 1987, in Moscow. I was with Shultz when he met with them in Spasso House, the American Ambassador's residence in Moscow, for a Passover or Seder meal. Shultz put on a yarmulke, but had to excuse himself later on, because Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze called him by phone. I stayed with the others. We had a kosher Passover meal in the American Ambassador's residence, with all of these refuseniks and dissentniks, who were later given permission to leave the Soviet Union and go to Israel. A new process was under way. The mood was changing under Soviet President Gorbachev. We didn't yet have the huge influx of these people in Israel, but the way was being prepared for what developed into a massive exodus as the Soviet Union fell apart. A very fascinating period opened there. So that was the background as I went to Israel as American Ambassador.

I arrived in Israel, having been appointed by a lame duck President Reagan. (End of tape)

I went to Israel just as George Bush had been elected President of the United States and was waiting to be sworn into office. Present at my swearing in at the Department of State was James Baker, the prospective Secretary of State. In a surprise move, Secretary Shultz brought Baker into his office, as I was preparing to go out and be sworn in. Baker, wearing his Marine Corps tie, looked at my Marine Corps tie and said, “I don't like the school you went to [Harvard University], but I sure like your tie.”

I had met extensively with Dennis Ross, who was to become a key negotiator on Middle Eastern questions. I met President-Elect Bush in the Vice Presidential office through Dennis Ross. I remember that President-Elect Bush asked Dennis Ross: “Dennis, are you going to stay with us here?” Dennis said, “Well, sir, I think that the better course would be to move over to the Department of State and work from there.” Bush said, “All right, good luck to you.” Bush also wished me well. I'd also met with Larry Eagleburger, who was then President of Kissinger Associates up in New York and was being tapped to be Deputy Secretary of State. When we met, one on one, in Larry's office, it hadn't been officially confirmed, but it was known that this was a done deal. Larry said, “Bill, it's going to be a different ball game. I know these guys, and you're going to see changes made.”

I met with retired General Scowcroft, who was an associate of Eagleburger in Kissinger Associates, down here in the Washington office. I met with him one evening, and it certainly reinforced Eagleburger's comments about prospective changes. Scowcroft was still in the private sector at the time. However, having met and heard what Larry Eagleburger said and then hearing what Scowcroft said, I came to realize that we were in for a distinctly, shall I say, “firmer” attitude toward the Israel in general and the Shamir Government in particular.

Knowing all of this, I realized that I was in for quite a challenge as Ambassador to Israel. All of these cross currents were going to develop and sharpen, if you will, in the new administration.

Q: Did you sense, from your discussions with President-Elect Bush, that there would be a colder eye looking at Israel? Ronald Reagan had come out of the Hollywood atmosphere, but...

ROWN: I didn't sense it immediately, during that brief meeting with Dennis Ross and Bush in

the Vice President's office. Incidentally, in the middle of the conversation, Bush and we rushed over to the White House Lawn because President and Mrs. Reagan were taking off in a helicopter and going someplace. The atmosphere was very jovial and convivial. They wished me luck. So I didn't get that impression in that particular meeting, but I certainly got it after Bush became the President of the United States.

So off I went to Israel in these very special circumstances. One could say that the circumstances affecting any new American Ambassador to Israel are special. When I arrived in Tel Aviv at the end of 1988, I was just delighted. You could say that this was my highest career aspiration. I knew that it was going to be tough, but perhaps I didn't realize fully how tough it was to become.

I paid my call on the President of Israel, Chaim Herzog, an old warrior who had an Irish accent, having been born in Ireland. He was the son of the Chief Rabbi, first of Belfast and later of Dublin. Later, his father became the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine and of Israel. President Herzog himself had served in Military Intelligence in the British Army during World War II. Then he became the head of Israeli Military Intelligence and was a noted military historian, having published several books on the Arab-Israeli conflicts. He was a gracious gentleman and I had a very nice meeting with him.

Then I began my calls on the then leaders of the Shamir Government, starting with Prime Minister Shamir, an old, hard line member of the Likud Party. Prior to that the Likud Party had been known as the Herut Party. Before that Shamir had been the head of the "Lehi Stern," or "The Stern Gang," as the British called it, advocating violent struggle for independence from 1946 to 1948. He was a tough man, given to very few words, especially in conversation with an American Ambassador. He would listen very carefully and was very polite. He was unyielding and unbending in his attitude on the basic problem of the Palestinians, but he was willing to listen.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance was Shimon Peres, the leader of the Labour Party. He served alternately with Shamir as Prime Minister, when Likud and Labour had come out of the previous election virtually tied in terms of the number of seats which they held. They agreed to form a National Union Government, with the position of Prime Minister rotating between Peres and Shamir. This was already in effect, and Shimon Peres had already served as Prime Minister for two years, prior to my arrival in Israel. Shamir had previously done his time as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and was now the Prime Minister.

Yitzhak Rabin was the Defense Minister. He was a tough figure, and I talked to him many times about the Intifada. The Foreign Minister when I arrived in Israel was Moshe Arens, a fascinating gentleman, a survivor of the Holocaust and an immigrant to the United States at about age 11 or 13, or something like that. He had come up in the world as an aeronautical engineer and was a graduate of MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] and California Technical Institute. He had also served in the U.S. Army. He was a younger member of the Likud Party who had immigrated to Israel with his American accent and outlook, if you will, in the very late 1940s or early 1950s. He had come up in Likud Party politics and had been appointed Ambassador to the United States in 1982, when I was DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv. He had chosen a bright, young man named Binyamin Netanyahu as his DCM in the

Israeli Embassy in Washington. So I knew him from those days.

When I arrived in Tel Aviv, I was without instructions. It was expected that I would wait until the new administration came in. However, I knew that what we were coming up against was a revival of the land for peace approach. This had worked with Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat in dealing with the Sinai, but applying this principle to the West Bank and Gaza in dealing with a Likud government was quite a different matter. There was this problem with the Intifada, there was an unresolved series of issues, especially the Israeli occupied Golan Heights, outstanding with President Hafiz Assad of Syria, while the Israelis were still in Lebanon. It was quite obvious that the new American Government would come up with a variant of the land for peace concept. The question was whether we could persuade a coalition government headed by Prime Minister Shamir, with Foreign Minister Arens and other, tough, Likud Party members in it, to accept this approach.

So I went separately to Prime Minister Shamir and some of his colleagues in the cabinet and, frankly and honestly, said to them: "I am without instructions from my Government. However, what I foresee is an opportunity along the lines of 'land for peace.' I hope that you and your colleagues will think about this, because I wouldn't be surprised to see this coming." I got the standard answer from Prime Minister Shamir, which was polite but, in essence, meant: "We've already made concessions to the Arabs. We've already given up 90 percent of what we took in the 1967 War."

Q: He was mainly referring to the Sinai.

BROWN: The Sinai, yes. Lock, stock, and barrel. He added that I was talking about territories, which, in his view, were of historic, religious significance and of vital security interest as well. He said that there was a way to deal with the Palestinians and he had no desire to act as conqueror. If the Palestinians wished to reach an accommodation with Israel, there was a way for them, even under the Camp David Agreement, to run more of their affairs, peacefully. However, Shamir saw no necessity to give up land to them. He was well aware of my arguments and U.S. positions, but he simply do not see it that way. The same was true as far as Syria and the Golan Heights are concerned. Much blood had been shed there. From the positions the Syrians held they dominated Galilee and approaches to vital Israeli centers. President Assad was a brutal dictator, as shown by what he had done to his own people and to Lebanon. Shamir did not see any need to give up the Golan Heights, a vital piece of land, to Assad. Accommodations could be worked out, but Shamir did not see the need to give up this land.

With Shimon Peres I used a different approach. On the one hand, he was Deputy Prime Minister but he had distinctly different views from those of Shamir, to put it mildly. He had tried, with King Hussein of Jordan and Ambassador Tom Pickering, my predecessor, to work out a Jordanian deal. It had been discovered that he was trying to negotiate this, and that had caused quite a flap. There was also residual criticism of the way the U.S. had handled the Jordanian option in 1982.

You may recall that a land for peace approach had been presented by President Reagan and Secretary of State Shultz in September, 1982, just as I left Israel. So these possibilities had

already been tried out, in one form or another. However, now there was a new wrinkle. For the first time there was to be an opening for a U.S.-PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] dialogue in Tunis. In fact, the dialogue began, not with Yasser Arafat, but with one of Arafat's lieutenants. This was a very disturbing development for the Shamir Government in Israel, so I had to cope with that.

In my discussions with the Shamir Government I was speaking truthfully and honestly, but without instructions. I reported on these discussions back to Washington and on the manner by which I had tried to discuss matters with the Israelis. The answer to what I said from the Likud Government was simply, "No."

I returned to Washington for consultations and was ushered in by Dennis Ross to see Jim Baker, the new Secretary of State. I said to Baker: "As I look at the situation, notwithstanding what I heard in response to my initial probes, I believe that there is a chance of making some progress, if this administration really puts its shoulder to the wheel. It would take your efforts, Mr. Secretary, and it would take a presidential stamp to make progress. You can't make progress at a lower level. You will have to spend your time and energy, but I do believe that we are at a moment of opportunity with the new administration. I urge you to push along those lines."

Do you want to take a break here?

Q: I think that this is a good place to do it, so we'll review the last thing you said, about talking to Secretary Baker, when you said that you felt that there was a chance of making progress on an Arab-Israeli settlement. I hope you will discuss the role, as you saw it, of Dennis Ross, and we'll just go on from there.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Today is August 27, 1999. Bill, let's continue with what you said to Secretary Baker and what Dennis Ross's role was in all of this.

BROWN: When we broke up before, I was describing my arrival in Israel, for the first time as Ambassador.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BROWN: From late 1988 this time through the very beginning of 1992. I retired from the Foreign Service in January, 1992. Like all years in Israel, these were momentous.

I said at the end of my last interview that when I went back to Washington on consultation, although the Israeli Government was headed by Prime Minister Shamir and his tough minded, dominant faction of the Likud Party, I still felt that there could be a breakthrough in the development of the peace process. I said that to Dennis Ross, who had come over to the State Department from the NSC [National Security Council] staff at his own choice. He thought that

he could do more to achieve a breakthrough in the peace process under Secretary Baker at the State Department than by just staying on at the NSC, where he had served during the Reagan administration and where he had flourished.

Q: Did I talk to you previously about Dennis Ross, in the context of your relations with him?

BROWN: I knew Dennis only tangentially before. He had, of course, been a key figure in the Washington Near East Policy Institute and was well connected. He was a young, dynamic man with an academic background and a keen interest in Middle East matters.

Q: I was wondering if you would talk about his background, because he was and is an important player in Middle Eastern affairs, and where he seemed to be coming from.

BROWN: At first this remained to be seen. He had a Jewish background. I don't know whether he had studied in Israel, but he had good connections and was a dynamic player. I would say that, in terms of politics, he was middle of the road. His earlier experience happened to have been in the Reagan administration, where he had done well. As I mentioned in a previous interview, I was with him when I paid a brief call on the Vice President and President-Elect George Bush at the White House. On that occasion Bush said to Dennis: "Are you going to stay here in the White House?" Dennis said, "Well, I'd prefer to go over to the Department of State and help Secretary of State Jim Baker in hopes of a breakthrough." Bush said, "Good luck to you!" It was a very instructive conversation. I was aware from that exchange that Dennis had very good credentials with the incoming, Bush administration.

Now, coming back to my arrival in Israel, remember that this was at the end of 1988, in the dying days of the Reagan administration. I mentioned that I had called on Prime Minister Shamir and others on a personal and private basis, stressing that I was not speaking under instructions. The newly-elected Bush administration hadn't yet taken hold. However, I expressed the hope that something meaningful could be developed in terms of land for peace. I was received courteously and graciously by Prime Minister Shamir, but it was quite obvious that we had a long, hard row to hoe, as far as convincing an Israeli Government dominated by the Likud Party that it should give up significant portions of land for peace, in accordance with UN Resolutions 242 and 332. They felt that they had given up an enormous amount of territory in the Sinai Peninsula. That is, they had given up more than 80 percent and, indeed, almost 90 percent of what they had taken in the previous conflicts with the Arabs. They had given up strategic depth, they had given up oilfields, they had given up a massive military infrastructure which they had built in the Sinai. This was obvious to anyone who looks at a map of that area.

Looking at the Syrian situation, one is struck by the bloody battles which for years had raged in and around the Golan Heights. I was again struck by the dominant aspect of the Golan Heights in any offensive movement against Israel. The Shamir Government was also opposed to ceding territory to a Palestinian entity, such as turning over the Jordan Valley to the Palestinians and opening up the possibility that a future, hostile regime, such as a Jordanian regime which might be taken over by Saddam Hussein [of Iraq]. Such a regime, for instance, might wind up on the doorsteps of Israel. All of this was made quite obvious to me. So in recommending that we move ahead on the peace process, I knew full well that we faced very, very severe challenges in this

respect. Nevertheless, Israel had a coalition government, with senior elements of the Labour Party in it. Namely, in this respect, it contained Shimon Peres - who had just stepped down as Prime Minister and who was now Deputy Prime Minister and, concurrently, Finance Minister, the latter a very important job, with patronage and so forth - and Yitzhak Rabin as Minister of Defense. I thought that, if we played this right, we would somehow find leverage develop within the coalition government. I would say that I was received enthusiastically by Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin when I called on them.

Q: When did you arrive in Israel as Ambassador? The Reagan administration was still in office...

BROWN: I arrived in Israel in December, 1988. It was in the dying days of the Reagan administration. Secretary of State Shultz met with Moshe Arens, incoming Israeli Minister of Defense in Washington. I was present when they met again in Paris. I think that they met in January, 1989, just before Bush was inaugurated as President.

The Shamir Government was very unhappy with the American announcement at the end of the Reagan administration of the opening of a dialogue with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] in Tunis. However, I hadn't been involved in that decision. To the contrary, I hadn't even been briefed or approached on this matter. So I didn't have a cloud over my head in terms of the Israeli view of me in this respect.

Q: Did you have the feeling, at this time, that the Shamir Government was looking at Ronald Reagan as coming from California, which is in the movie business and the Jewish element is very strong there. Reagan was considered a very pro-Israeli person. Now George Bush was coming in as President. He represented the Eastern establishment, which was not so infatuated with Israel.

BROWN: Well, I would put it this way. The Israelis have very good biographic files on everybody prominent on the American scene. So they probably had a far better readout of past statements, remarks, and off the record and private comments made by George Bush than I did. I had a sort of neutral feeling concerning President-Elect Bush himself but I had it from none other than Larry Eagleburger, who was to become the Deputy Secretary of State and who was very well plugged in, that there would be changes. The Bush administration included people, such as Brent Scowcroft in particular, whose basic approach to Israel was certainly not to fall all over themselves. They were not anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli, but they had a firmer, more measured and cooler approach to Israel, shall we say. That's the way I saw it at the time.

As time went on, I learned more about the views of President Bush and other key figures in the administration. I didn't have a readout of Secretary of State Jim Baker in that regard. The Israelis sure did, but I didn't. He was an ex-Marine officer, of my age group, and had had a very successful law practice. He also had a reputation for being cool, well-prepared, and a good planner. I had nothing that suggested that he was going to be really tough on Israel, or anything like that. That was to come later.

Now, there's one thing that I want to pause on. In the final period of the Reagan administration negotiations had advanced, through my predecessor as Ambassador to Israel, Tom Pickering, on a convoluted agreement on the buildings of the American diplomatic establishment in Israel. For

years the Israelis had been pressing, and Jewish lobbies in the United States had also been pressing, to move the American Embassy from Tel Aviv up to Jerusalem. For years U.S. presidential candidates and their supporters had pledged that this would be done.

Q: This was when the Jewish lobbies in the United States were in New York. I was going to say Miami, but I should blame New York.

BROWN: Time and again, when they were elected to office, and facing the realities of the documented U.S. position on the status of Jerusalem, succeeding Presidents had decided that the time was not ripe to move the Embassy to Jerusalem. However, in recent years there had been some movement on this. The Israelis, playing this issue for all that it was worth, had taken things to the point that formal negotiations were held, on the buildings of the American diplomatic establishment in Israel. As I said, this question is rather convoluted, and I won't go into all of the details.

Basically, a deal was worked out, whereby the Israelis would find a site in Jerusalem for our Embassy. It had been more or less negotiated and chosen. It was a site which was just on the western side of the old line between eastern and western Jerusalem. That is, the line that had formerly divided the Jordanians from the Israelis, prior to 1967. So this site was in the western portion of Jerusalem.

There was no particular time table for moving the American Embassy to Jerusalem. The site, at this particular stage, wasn't necessarily to be called the location of the American Embassy in Jerusalem. However, the Israelis, with their skillful approach to the matter, had negotiated us into a position where this site would be called the location of an American diplomatic facility in Israel. It would be a place where the American Ambassador would do business and so forth. In other words, it wasn't a clear cut statement that the American Embassy was to move to that site in Jerusalem and open up as the American Embassy, but this arrangement represented some movement on this issue.

Meanwhile, the arrangement was that the Israelis would eventually get our building, the old Embassy, in Tel Aviv. As a further possibility, the Israelis would open up other sites in the Tel Aviv area where we might construct a building. So we might go ahead and build something in Jerusalem, and a plot of land was negotiated for this purpose. The Israelis would get our old Embassy in Tel Aviv and the adjacent parking lot for which we had negotiated a lease-purchase option during my previous time as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]. This was a rather substantial parking lot which gave us the right to put up a building there. So we had something with which to bargain.

Secretary of State Shultz was responsible for this negotiation. He wanted to cinch it and move ahead. I ended up signing documents as the new Ambassador in Tel Aviv. This culminated the negotiating process which Ambassador Pickering, my predecessor, had started. That background has a relevance, even today. There is a basic document involved in this negotiation, which lays the groundwork for a possible move of the American Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

Q: What about our Embassy in Tel Aviv? Was there a problem with it? You had been in Tel Aviv,

and you were saying that you might move to another site. Why would we move?

BROWN: I have to be careful about this, since we are speaking for the record. This is my personal view, Okay? There are many different views on this and related subjects.

Personally speaking, I had reached the view that we should move our Embassy, as an Embassy, to Jerusalem. That certainly was not the mainstream view in the Foreign Service. The issue is complex and highly political. It is loaded in many ways. However, here were a couple of concerns as I saw the matter, apart from my political view that this move should be made from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In my view the American Embassy in Israel should move to the western side of the city of Jerusalem and handle its business there.

First of all, I don't want to go into detail, but in security terms, the American Embassy in Tel Aviv was, and in my view, remains vulnerable. The setback of the Embassy building in Tel Aviv has been remarkably deficient for years. The setback is the technical term for how far you setback the building from the entrance to the property on which it is located. I don't know what the current standard setback is now, perhaps 150 feet, or something like that. Perhaps the standard setback now is 200 feet, bearing in mind the bombing of the Embassy in Beirut and so forth. However, the setback in Tel Aviv is the width of a sidewalk. There are a couple of concrete barriers between the external wall of the Embassy building and the sidewalk, but a truck well loaded with explosives could easily approach and breach the wall of the Embassy. In short, the Embassy building in Tel Aviv is vulnerable.

There is a parking lot adjacent to the Embassy in Tel Aviv. There are vehicle parking areas all around the Embassy building. The building itself adjoins a bar in a rather seedy district of Tel Aviv. It used to be a red light district, in fact. Next to this bar is another structure. Thus, the location of the Embassy makes it vulnerable to attack in several respects.

Secondly, the Embassy building in Tel Aviv was initially started in the 1950s as a second or third rate hotel. It was not originally constructed as an Embassy. It was purchased in the middle of the construction period. The Embassy building faces the Mediterranean Sea on one side, and the salt in the composition of the concrete construction material produced deterioration of the building over time. One answer to this problem is that we could reconstruct the building, piece by piece. Over the years, as pieces fell off the structure, bits of patchwork were added here and there. Engineers were now telling us: "Hey, this is a serious situation. It's not going to get better. It's going to get worse." The building was crowded because the Embassy staff, over the years, had grown.

As a sailor, I very much enjoyed the building since it was close to the sea. However, we were also vulnerable to terrorist attack from the sea. Indeed, later on in my tenure in Tel Aviv such an attack was launched against Tel Aviv from the sea side. One of the targets of this attack was clearly the American Embassy. This attack was launched by an extremist faction of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. This attack was aided by one of the Navy ships of Colonel Qadhafi of Libya. I'll get to that later on.

I found nothing sacred about the location of the Embassy. Of course, it was downtown. It was

close to the Israeli Ministry of Defense, which was a plus. However, access to the Embassy is hindered by traffic involving people who wish to arrange for consular services. There are great streams of people lined up in front of the Embassy's consular section during working hours. That also created another security problem. The Embassy in Tel Aviv was past its time as a functioning Embassy building. Having said that, I would admit that we could function there. It wasn't dangerous to health, apart from the possibility of a terrorist attack.

There was and still is another, major factor. Over the years the U.S. and other foreign governments sternly warned the Israelis not to move any of their government ministries up to Jerusalem. You'll find discussion of that issue in your interviews, when you look back at the old days. The Israelis ignored this advice and, piece by piece, moved their government ministries up to Jerusalem. That meant, for the American Embassy, that more and more of our official business inexorably moved up to Jerusalem. This was handled by having the Ambassador, the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], and other officers of the Embassy, both senior and junior officers, travel up the hill to Jerusalem. With the increasing traffic congestion, this trip from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem often took a minimum of one hour and 15 minutes, to an hour and a half, or, under the worst conditions, two hours. Up and down, up and down we went. Let me tell you, this kind of travel is wearing and time consuming. It consumes personnel, vehicles, gasoline, and time.

Especially for an Ambassador and a DCM. I can remember when I was DCM under Ambassador Sam Lewis. It was extremely taxing to go up to Jerusalem, do business at night, come down to Tel Aviv, call in secretaries, dictate cables and other correspondence, and get cables out, because the more important cables have to go out right away. So this process was time consuming and physically wearing.

As I looked further into this process in 1989, I began considering various sites for a new Embassy building. The Israelis would offer us sites in the Tel Aviv area and then withdraw the offers. The objection to one of these sites was that it was too close to the Israeli Mossad [Israeli intelligence organization], or too close to this or that sensitive, security area.

Q: You seem to be saying that the Israelis really didn't want to give us anything.

BROWN: Right. They wanted us to move the Embassy to Jerusalem. However, we had a negotiated deal, and they had to go through the motions, at least, of offering us a decent site in the Tel Aviv area.

Then you got into the predictable Foreign Service controversy about where the American Embassy should be. I don't care where you are, this issue always comes up. I've mentioned my experience in Moscow and elsewhere. It is a Foreign Service syndrome that the American Embassy should be downtown, in the center of town, since the action is symbolically there. Over the years, not only as a result of my experience in Moscow, I had developed a contrary view. That is, you can take the American Embassy and put it in the outskirts of the capital city. In fact, in a small country you can move it just about anywhere you want. Those who want Embassy services, particularly the applicants for consular services, businessmen, and others, will come to you wherever the Embassy is located. They will adjust. There is case after case where an American Embassy, which was originally on the outskirts of the capital city, ended up in the

center of the urban mass.

Q: That was the story with the American Embassy in Athens. At one time it was way out in the boondocks. By the time I got to Athens it was not so far out, and now it is virtually in the center of Athens.

BROWN: So, compared with other members of my staff, I was amenable to looking at the outskirts of the city, because of my sense of history and of the way the system works. However, there were those on my staff who understandably said, "Well, if we're going to stay in the area, why not stay where we are?" Or some said, "Goodness, this site that the Israelis are offering us is really shabby, out in some wheat field." However, I was looking at various possibilities very seriously.

Some of the sites offered us were, shall we say, rather trashy. I remember saying to Eli Rubenstein, who was a key player in all of this, as Cabinet Secretary under Prime Minister Shamir. Now Eli is Attorney General of Israel. Anyhow, on one occasion he offered us a site in a town near Tel Aviv. My staff universally turned their noses up at it. I didn't necessarily turn up my nose at it, but in jest I said to him: "Eli, as you know, I'm studying Hebrew, and I'm looking at this site, which you are really pushing. I wonder. How do you say dump in Hebrew?" [Laughter] I meant a place where you dump trash and so forth. Anyway, that effort at that time to find another site for the Embassy in essence came to nothing.

A great deal of the effort to find another site had to do with the Israeli security establishment. There were times when I would go to the Defense Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and talk to him alone. I would say, "Come on, your people offered us this (or that) site and then withdrew the offer." We went through that process several times. One had to be very diplomatic in these matters because of technical security considerations on both sides which were unmentioned but which were obviously in people's minds.

Q: We're talking now about eavesdropping.

BROWN: Well, you said it. [Laughter]

Q: This was the name of the game all over. The Israelis, of course, wouldn't eavesdrop on the Americans, and the Americans wouldn't eavesdrop on the Israelis.

BROWN: Senior professional people on both sides were concerned about these security considerations.

Q: We're spending a lot of time on real estate, but I think that it's important. This is something you have to consider. After all, Hillary Rodham Clinton is running for the Senate in New York, and we're talking about putting an Embassy up in Jerusalem, which is not surprising.

Anyway, what were you thinking about at the time in terms of the problems of putting our Embassy in Jerusalem? Why not put the Embassy in a place near or next to Jerusalem, but not in Jerusalem?

BROWN: Israel is such a small country that, speaking personally and in a technical, administrative sense, I think that we could have done so. The Embassy could have been on the road between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, provided, and you have to be sensitive in this respect, that it wasn't in the Occupied Territories. The Israelis had eliminated the signs which showed where the Occupied Territories began and ended. You know, the old Green Line and so forth.

Q: You could have put the Embassy in a place where everyone could say that this is Israeli territory. You could have said that it was placed there for security reasons.

BROWN: Except that in practical terms, Stuart, once you start down that road, then there are lobbies and various interest groups which would say, "Well, if you vacate that building in Tel Aviv, why not go all the way," and the natural destination would be Jerusalem.

Now, at the time, as I said, this search for another site didn't go anywhere. We'll come back to this subject later on, because I got heavily involved in another version of this search. However, there is one other element here, and that is, apart from the well-known views of the Israelis, the well-known views of Jewish lobbies in the United States, and the well-known views of sympathetic people who are running for office in the United States or were sympathetic to this view. There is another aspect.

From the peace process negotiating viewpoint, there is a strong feeling still held in certain quarters that this move of the Embassy, if it takes place, should be saved until the end of the peace process. That is, it is a sort of pawn or trump. This would be, in this view, a last, final gesture which, if handled the right way, would advance our causes. By this it is usually meant that this would be useful to push the Israelis over the top. In a tough negotiating situation, you might say, "Okay, if you will do this, this, and this, all of which, we realize, is very tough for you, then we'll move the Embassy. Until then," the argument goes, "We should hold off such a move."

I developed a different view, a view that with the passage of time this question no longer had the importance it had once had, I thought that we should not, how shall I put it, hold such a question hostage to anything. In my mind there would always be at least 111 different reasons from the Arab side why we can never do this. Never, and I'm not joking. There will always be those who fiercely oppose moving the Embassy to Jerusalem and will view this as caving in to the Israelis. I don't believe that an issue of this importance should be held hostage to other factors.

Now, I would like to review my dealings with the Israeli National Coalition Government headed by Prime Minister Shamir. Shimon Peres was the Deputy Prime Minister and former Prime Minister. Moshe Arens was the Foreign Minister, and Yitzhak Rabin was the Defense Minister. The Intifada [Arab uprising] was going on and causing damage to the Israeli image. I had private talks with important Israelis, people whose names you wouldn't necessarily recognize, but men who were former generals or senior security officials. Among these I found that a significant number had sons in the military. These sons were also senior, very tough, battle hardened commanders with great reputations. They were telling their fathers, who were veterans themselves: "What am I doing down in Gaza, commanding troops who are shooting these

Palestinian kids with rubber bullets because they're throwing rocks and bricks at us? Who cares about Gaza? Gaza is a miserable, overpopulated, totally underresourced quagmire. What's so important about Gaza in security terms?"

So I sensed that there was a side of the Israeli psyche that was very disturbed about all of this because the Israelis were now so strong that they didn't have to worry about the Palestinians as a major security threat. As an irritant, yes. As something which was damaging their national and domestic, internal image and psyche, yes. However, there was no contest as far as the Palestinians or other Arab countries taking on the Israeli military establishment was concerned. In conventional warfare terms, Israel was capable of defeating any Arab neighbor at the time and, probably, any combination of immediate neighbors such as Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. The Israeli military establishment was a well proven, highly effective force, notwithstanding its deficiencies, of which there were many.

I was finding more indications of concern about the future, particularly on the Labour Party side of the National Coalition Government. We were getting this sort of rumbling.

Q: This was a different feeling that you had when you were DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in...

BROWN: When I was DCM in 1979-1982 there was no Intifada.

Q: So you were finding a different...

BROWN: This was a different ball game. With communications, TV, the development of human rights consciousness, and the annual U.S. Human Rights Reports, all of this was increasingly important. It had to be dealt with. I had to make demarches to the Israeli Government, which I did. I usually made them to Yitzhak Rabin, the Defense Minister, because he was responsible for the situation in the Occupied Territories. Essentially, everything that went on in the territories fell under the Minister of Defense, Yitzhak Rabin. When the Intifada broke out, he is reliably reported to have said to his commanders: "Break their bones."

Now, when I went to see Rabin on such matters, he was, as always, courteous and polite and received me well. However, I couldn't get very far with him, or, indeed, with any Israeli like him. I would raise the matter of the shootings of Palestinians. The Israelis had carefully read the Human Rights reports and had developed counter arguments. We would quote the Geneva Convention and say that Israel, as the Occupying Power, ought not to be shooting at civilians. They would quote the Geneva Convention or other things back to us and say, "We are working under rules inherited from the British. By the way, Ambassador, if you are so exercised about the rules of engagement, under what circumstances would you raise your rifle and fire your rubber bullet against a mass of young people who are showering you with bricks, projectiles, and so forth? Have you ever managed to get the rules of engagement of your the British, in Northern Ireland? You won't get them. If you were to get them, you would find that they are rather gruesome, by comparison to what we do."

I would say that this business of taking tanks and bulldozers and knocking down the house of the family of a suspected member of the Intifada because he threw a brick or did something similar,

is just not done nowadays. Rabin would say, “Oh, no? Would you prefer that I instituted hanging, which is perfectly legal for the occupying power under the Geneva Convention, after due trial and processing?” So these arguments would go on and on. The Israelis knew the script, and I knew the script. However, I had to lodge these protests.

Q: Well, but since you frequently went in to see Israeli Government ministers to discuss these matters and reports of incidents of this kind were on TV almost every day, did the Israelis seem to realize that we were watching what was happening in Gaza and on the West Bank? People back home in the U.S. were saying: “These Israelis are on a losing streak.” Did they understand this?

BROWN: The Israelis studied American public opinion very carefully. There was instant reporting from the Israeli Embassy in Washington and from their Consulates elsewhere in the U.S., in addition to telephonic conversations and backchannel reporting. Oh, yes, the Israelis covered us better than we cover ourselves! So this was a disturbing development to them.

One could sense concern, particularly with a minority party such as Peace Now, Shulamit Alloni's group, and others. Some were adamantly, openly opposed to Israeli suppression of the Intifada, and their voices were increasingly heard. Naturally, in the Labour Party group, there were hardliners, but these matters were the focus of increasing, internal concern. When you talk about Israel, you're talking about a country where mothers are really, genuinely concerned about their 17 and 18 year old sons. They know that their boys are stationed down in some Palestinian village, where they may be hit on the head by a brick. There were casualties in the counter-Intifada operations. People wondered what purpose all of this served. I had many, many conversations with ordinary Israelis on this. However, the concerns expressed by ordinary Israelis didn't seem to have any result. The majority of Israelis supported the government's policy, albeit with increasing concern.

The second factor that was really grating the Bush administration was the ongoing development of Israeli settlements on the West Bank and around Jerusalem. Let me pause a second here and refer to the interviews which you had with Ambassador Sam Lewis, covering seven or eight years of his tenure as American Ambassador to Israel (1977-1985). There are also supplementary comments by others, in this regard.

Way back, during Labour Party dominated governments, they faced the phenomenon of hard line, zealous groups. These groups particularly considered the West Bank area sacred, Jewish ground. They believed that this was documented in the Bible, documented by Jewish cemeteries, by the remains of ancient Jewish synagogues and manifold, other, anthropological data. They were determined that they were going to go back and reestablish a Jewish presence in what Westerners called the “Occupied Territories.” The Israelis call the West Bank “Judea and Samaria.” Gaza is in the Occupied Territories but it has never had the same pull on Israeli heartstrings as the West Bank.

These zealous groups are not necessarily ultra-religious in orientation, but they represent a combination of Zionist and religious groups which are determined to reestablish a permanent presence, particularly in Judea and Samaria, but also in Gaza. The expression they used was that

they wanted to reestablish facts on the ground.

Q: Would the term Zionist, in your definition, refer to a religious group?

BROWN: No. You have to be careful there. The Zionists can be secular, religious, or mixed secular and religious. The term is used very loosely. In general, “Zionist” means someone who is dedicated to the proposition that there is a land of Israel and that it should be a Jewish state. At this point you notice some differences between the various Jewish groups. Among the Zionists there are some who hold the view that they need to reestablish a Jewish presence in the Occupied Territories. This certainly was the viewpoint of the Likud Party and of its predecessor, the Herut, which was the hard core of the Likud. Going back to the views of Jabotinsky [founder of the modern revisionist Zionist movement], the revisionist Zionists considered that they were entitled to hold both sides of the Jordan River in modern Palestine. These people take the view that the British behaved disgracefully in 1921 by carving up the old Palestine Mandate and removing from it what the British called “Trans-Jordan.” This is what we now call simply “Jordan.” The British earmarked “Trans-Jordan” and said that that was an Arab entity under the Amir Abdullah. In other words, no Jewish settlement was allowed. The rest of Palestine was to be a combination of Arab and Jewish. The Jabotinsky school of thought clearly rejected that proposition.

Coming down to the modern period, the “settlement movement,” as we currently use the term, began under the Israeli Labour Party Governments. The settlements consisted of isolated groups of Jews who chose such places as the high ground often overlooking an Arab town or city. Often these areas were totally unoccupied and were, in fact, bare hillsides. However, they had some religious, or some religio-political significance to the settlers. They dug into these places. In a more extreme case, they moved into hotel space in Hebron, nominally as tourists. Then they stayed in a hotel and turned it into an armed camp downtown Hebron. This was an “in your face, here we are, and what are you going to do about it,” armed presence.

One has to remember that this process began when a rather weak, Israeli Labour-dominated coalition government, led by then Prime Minister Rabin, accommodated itself to this situation, somewhat reluctantly accepting the new settlements. It was on the basis of such new successful settlements that the Movement grew and grew.

Now, when in 1977 Menachem Begin became Prime Minister and Ariel Sharon arrived on the scene, this process really took off. By the time I came back to Israel at the end of 1988, these settlements had mushroomed so that they had become large, well-established communities. They were bedroom communities for commuters to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. They were advertised as having advantageous mortgage rates, subsidized by the Israeli Government, with a network of highways and other infrastructure in and around them. This was really serious, and it was constantly expanding.

Q: Was American money involved in these construction projects?

BROWN: No U.S. Government money could be identified in these projects. The U.S. Government is dead against this. However, you run into the old problem that money is fungible

[can be transferred from one account to another]. The United States Government gives \$3.0 billion annually in easily identifiable aid to the Government of Israel, of which \$1.8 and \$1.2 billion is for military and civilian aid, and I forget which segment is which. So \$3.0 billion in aid is annually appropriated for Israel after debate by Congress, in a bill which is passed and then signed by the President. Furthermore, there are additional amounts of aid for other purposes. There are those who argue that this U.S. aid to Israel frees up Israeli money to be spent on the settlements. Periodically, we would ask for an accounting of these funds. Meanwhile, I made demarches at the Foreign Ministry about the new settlements.

At times I made demarches to the Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, whose facial expression and demeanor told me that he was not at all happy with this situation. However, he had other and very important things to do. Rabin would say that some damned woman in the Israeli Ministry of the Interior approved this or that project, unbeknownst to him, and, well, this sort of thing happens. He made it clear that he was not happy with this situation, but he was not going to fall on his sword over this issue. Neither, by the way, was anybody else in the Labour Government, except a tiny group of peaceniks who said, "This is just creating further problems that are going to come back to haunt us later on." Moreover, over time, some people began to say, "Wait a minute. Why are such large subsidies going to the Occupied Territories when that money ought to be spent in my poor, backward, town of Moroccan Jews within Israel proper? These settlements are siphoning off money that I could be getting for my work here."

Q: Was there a certain amount of middle class charity in Israel? I would think that the people who were benefitting from this aid would be better educated...

BROWN: They would be better educated and dedicated. As I said, many of these settlements were bedroom communities where some people with high tech qualifications lived. These people would be prosperous, dynamic, can do, achiever types who moved out there with their wives and kids.

Q: They were being subsidized.

BROWN: They were being heavily subsidized, provided with cheap mortgages on their homes, given schools and other infrastructure, and issued defensive weapons. The Israeli Ministry of Defense was charged with defending these settlements and making sure that they had proper barbed wire barriers and were monitored and patrolled. It was a rapidly growing irritant in the view of the new Bush administration. As a result, as I accompanied, say, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, or the Defense Minister on calls in the United States in the Oval Office at the White House, I saw the President of the United States sooner or later raising this subject. The Israeli visitors, for their part, were sidestepping his remarks and questions.

There was one particular case where Rabin, as Israeli Defense Minister, had a pretty good meeting with President Bush on other matters, but sidestepped the settlement issue. Then Rabin departed to call on Vice President Dan Quayle. Secretary of State Baker and I were the last of the group leaving the Oval Office, when President Bush beckoned us to come back. Baker and I were alone with the President in the Oval Office. The President was very angry over the settlement issue. He thought that he had had assurances from Prime Minister Shamir that the

construction of further settlements was going to end or be significantly reduced, and this had not happened. Settlement construction was continuing.

The President said to us: "I'm not going to put up with this," and he began to pound and slash the air with his fist. He got very agitated. Secretary Baker said, "Mr. President, you don't have a problem with Bill Brown. He's on our side." I tell this story to show you the depth of President Bush's feelings on this subject. He felt that he was being double crossed on the issue of Israeli settlements on the West Bank. However, Prime Minister Shamir didn't feel this way at all.

There was a later visit to the United States by Prime Minister Shamir, which was fascinating in many ways. He came on a regularly scheduled visit, as the head of the Israeli Government. I would like to go off on one, tiny, tangential aspect of this visit.

Q: Go off on as many tangents as you wish, because I think that this relationship between Israel and the United States is so important. We all need to talk about it.

BROWN: Let me mention this one, small glimpse at the Israeli psyche as an element in this connection. Prime Minister Shamir moved into Blair House. A dinner was given at the White House in the evening, preceded by a small meeting upstairs between the President and Shamir. Then they were to go down to the diningroom. Anyway, it was a black tie affair.

I received a phone call from the Israelis because they were disturbed about the fact that Shamir wouldn't go to this dinner wearing a black tie tuxedo rig. Here you have a situation which requires you to be so careful about stereotypes. In the stereotyped view of most Americans, the Labour Party of Israel had the open collar, tieless, sort of proletarian, egalitarian approach. The Likud Party, under Menachem Begin, was more accustomed to wearing white shirts and ties. Now here was Yitzhak Shamir invited to a black tie dinner at the White House. He refused to wear a black tie or to put on a tuxedo. Now the members of Shamir's entourage, especially those who had served in the United States, all had tuxedos with them, but they couldn't wear them. So I was asked to explain and resolve the problem. I said, "Sure, just wear a dark suit with a dark tie, and it will be okay." Back home in Israel, the average Israeli official wouldn't dream of wearing a tuxedo. In all of my time in Israel I never wore a tuxedo. Most senior Israeli officials had tuxedos for use overseas, but they didn't wear them in Israel.

There was another interesting reflection of this attitude toward formal attire when Moshe Arens was Foreign Minister. He and I were supposed to address a graduating class of American Jewish medical graduates from the Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University. They now had studied there for three or four years and were getting their degrees as Doctors of Medicine. For such an occasion cap and gown were designated, and I had my Harvard Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] crimson gown and my cap all ready to put on. We got to the university president's office, where they had a black gown for Professor Moshe Arens, who was a Ph.D. and a Professor of Aeronautical Engineering in Israel. Arens said, "I'm not going to wear that gown." He would not put on a cap and gown for this ceremony. The university President said, "But this is the way it's done." Arens said, "I don't care. I'm not going to wear that gown." I said, "Well, if that's the case, I'm not going to wear my cap and gown, either." So Moshe Arens and I went out in business suits. This gives you a little glimpse of the peculiarities in Israel as far as public imagery is

concerned.

Anyway, President Bush had a meeting with Shamir, at which I was not present. At the last minute the meeting was made highly restricted, with only Prime Minister Shamir and Yosip Ben Aron, then the Director General of the Prime Minister's office; President Bush; and probably Secretary of State Baker attending. I don't know whether Dennis Ross was there or not. They were in the President's office for quite a while. Then came a larger meeting in the Cabinet Room. I could tell, when President Bush came to this larger meeting that, although he was not discourteous, he was obviously unhappy. He gave a general review of the situation, including the remark that, "We have our differences." Shamir, for his part, was correct and gracious, but I could tell that the atmosphere was not good on this occasion, and then it got worse.

In all of this, harking back to my earlier remarks, my assessment was that, nevertheless, as I said to Secretary of State Baker, I thought that it was worth making the effort to advance the peace process. So in 1989 and continuing through 1990 Secretary Baker led an effort to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians. In our view, it was based on the concept of land for peace, and all that UN Security Council Resolution 242 entailed. The negotiations began with a meeting between President Bush and Prime Minister Shamir. The more detailed discussions were conducted by Secretary Baker and Moshe Arens. There was a second track, and that was handled by Secretary Baker and Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Defense Minister. At the same time the growing frustration and unhappiness of Shimon Peres was apparent. So was the rivalry between Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin within the Labour Party.

I was faced with handling many messages and conversations, most of them oral. Peres was predictably all for our of approach and was pushing us to go ahead faster, through him.

Q: What was Peres' position in the Israeli cabinet?

BROWN: He had been Prime Minister and then, under the agreement with Shamir, was rotated back down to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. Moshe Arens was the American-accented, highly articulate and hawkish Foreign Minister in the Likud Government. Shamir was Shamir, which meant that he was usually silent. He would receive you courteously, listen to what you had to say, make some facial expressions, but express minimum remarks. He was noncommittal but certainly showed no signs of budging.

However, the attitude of Rabin is the one I want to focus on. We developed a sense that Rabin was willing to negotiate, really negotiate. Now, this situation was exceedingly delicate. The foreign relations between the U.S. and Israeli Governments, at least on paper, are normally conducted between the State Department and the Israeli Foreign Ministry. However, in fact every Israeli Prime Minister has dominated the foreign relations between the two countries. That is, for the major questions.

Shamir was, a tough, quiet-spoken man. Moshe Arens was a highly articulate, former Ambassador to the United States, former Defense Minister and now Foreign Minister. Arens was willing to take on Secretary of State Jim Baker or anybody else on issues of theory, practice, and implementation of initiatives concerning the Palestinians He had been through all of this as the

former Chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. In his previous role as Ambassador to the United States and as former Defense Minister, he knew the issues backwards and forwards from the viewpoint of a Likudnik. As I said, Rabin was willing to play. This developed to the point that Secretary of State Baker wanted to open a unique, special channel to Rabin. Dennis Ross instructed me to set one up. Indeed, and I think that this is the first time that I have discussed this, I approached Rabin after consultations with Dennis on how to handle this. I had a secure phone at home in a special vault in my residence. I would invite Rabin over for drinks, which he never refused. We would have a glass of this or that, would go upstairs to this special vault, and I would then bring out and key in the secure phone. Having made telephonic contact with Dennis Ross, I would then turn the secure phone over to Rabin, and he and Dennis would conduct a conversation. I didn't involve myself in these conversations. I just kept silent and listened to the proceedings.

A key issue which developed, among others, was whether the Shamir Government would open a dialogue with the Palestinians on our version of a peace process, which meant land for peace. This process had been brokered by the United States. In the longer term this meant that the Palestinians would have more say on the various issues outstanding.

In this context Shamir and Arens immediately began to lay down all kinds of markers [standards]. One of the markers was that the Israelis said that they would never, ever talk with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. They reminded us that we had staunchly supported that Israeli position for many years. They said that nothing should play into the hands of Arafat. Therefore, they did not want to negotiate with the PLO in any way. They would not negotiate with anybody identified with the PLO. This was an old Israeli line: never deal with the PLO. That was the official position of both the Labour and the Likud parties, since the PLO was regarded by them as a bunch of terrorists.

Shamir also said that they wouldn't deal with Palestinian detainees, that is, people who had been arrested by the Israelis. Well, this involved a hell of a lot of people who were important on the Palestinian scene and who had been picked up and detained, one way or another. Sometimes they had been held for a short time, sometimes they had spent years in Israeli jails. The Shamir wouldn't deal with such people or with anybody openly identified with the PLO. Well, as you often found when you talked with anybody on the Palestinian side, no one was going to deny adherence to and support of the PLO. The Israelis also wouldn't deal with outsiders. That is, Palestinians from outside the area, from the Palestinian diaspora.

So, there were many, negative markers laid down by Shamir and Arens. Meanwhile, here was Rabin, who was discussing something extremely delicate in these unique conversations with Dennis Ross. These conversations were taking place in my residence, using my secure phone. Rabin was saying: "I think that I have a list," and Palestinian names would be mentioned. Dennis Ross, on his side, would say, "Have you thought about so-and-so?" Rabin would say, "Yes. On the other hand, there is a problem there." These were extended conversations. Rabin would sometimes indicate that he thought that he could push it and take it to a new level, including some new names as possible interlocutors.

Periodically, Rabin, like other Israeli Defense Ministers, would use his security establishment to

summon Palestinians. The standard approach was that an Israeli military jeep would pull up to the home of a prominent Palestinian. An Israeli colonel, or some such person, would jump out and say: "You are wanted to meet an important Israeli figure. You'll see him tonight." It would turn out that it would be Defense Minister Rabin whom he was meeting. Rabin would then hold forth on Israel's peaceful intentions. He would say that the Palestinians should "get their act together" and stop the Intifada.

So Rabin was doing things on his own, some of which we didn't know about. He was using his own channels internally within Israel to carry out his own kinds of probes. This was a delicate matter. Israeli Foreign Minister Arens believed that he was entitled to know what was going on. The Foreign Minister was a sharp, perceptive, well-connected man who communicated with me, as the American Ambassador, and sometimes directly with Secretary of State James Baker.

I remember one evening when there had been an extended telephonic conversation between Secretary Baker and Moshe Arens. By this time the tension between the two of them on where to go next had reached the point where phone conversations had become somewhat contentious. So I received an instruction, from Dennis Ross, to "go in tonight and see Arens. Here are the points which we want you to make. Review the conversation which Secretary Baker has just had with him [Arens] a few hours ago. Baker wants to be very sure that Arens understands the position and doesn't get it distorted." I got a lengthy read out from Dennis Ross on what I should say to Arens. By the time I got all of these points straight and made the appointment with Arens, who lived outside of Tel Aviv, it was about 11:00 PM.

Referring to his conversation with Secretary Baker some hours previously, I said that Baker had asked me to review the discussion and emphasize the following points which he had made during the conversation. Then I read these points out. Arens heard me out and said, "That's not exactly the way I remember the conversation. The way I remember the conversation, Secretary Baker made these points and I made the following replies." I was taking notes on all of this. By now it was after midnight. As I said good night to Arens, he said, "I suppose now that you're going over to see Rabin." I said, "That's right, Moshe."

Then I went over to see Rabin under instructions. By now it was well after midnight. I reviewed the points in the Baker-Arens conversation as Dennis Ross had given them to me, as well as the points which I had made to Moshe Arens. Rabin just sat there in his home, soaking it in. I'll tell you that at times in this process I thought that I was dealing with about four different Israeli Governments, day and night. I deliberately have not mentioned others, but I have just mentioned my conversations with these four major participants in the discussions.

One could get, on any given day or night, four different interpretations on what was at issue and what had been said. However, the delicate and extremely sensitive part of it was that we were running a separate dialogue with Rabin, on my secure phone. At a certain point, after I had been involved in many of these conversations, Rabin made it very clear to me that he was reporting to Prime Minister Shamir. He said, "I want you and Washington to know that I'm not playing games here. I am telling Shamir what's going on." Naturally, I would ask, "And what was his response?" Rabin would say, "Well, he just sits there, listens, and sort of nods." In other words, this was typical behavior by Prime Minister Shamir, who usually played things very close to the

chest.

Meanwhile, as time went on, Deputy Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres was getting more and more agitated. He probably had at least a whiff of what was going on. He wanted to participate in more of the action in an effort to move the Israeli coalition government to...

Q: But you were not instructed to go to Peres...

BROWN: Well, at times, yes. At times I would be instructed to make general points to Peres. There was one time when Peres was suddenly taken violently ill. He was up in a provincial hospital at Afula. I hurried over there and found the poor man was receiving IV [Intra Venous] treatment. His face was flushed and he appeared to be running a temperature. He was very unhappy that he wasn't the main channel for these discussions with the Americans. He made a remark that I should understand that "these young men in Washington" were mishandling the situation. He clearly meant that Dennis Ross and his associates ought to be dealing primarily with him.

Remember that Shimon Peres had a strong rivalry with Rabin, in addition to his other problems. As time went on, the Israeli coalition government was under increasing tension internally, on a variety of issues. It became apparent to me that Shimon Peres was maneuvering to bring down the coalition government.

Q: One thing that I would like to comment on. What you're telling me right now is that it sounds as if Moshe Arens was acting something like the British and was being almost too clever by half. He knew so much to counter every argument that, in a way, it was not something that you could deal with. All this is true, but...

BROWN: Wait a minute. Here was Arens, a highly articulate and experienced man. He was the Foreign Minister of the Israeli Government. I was the American Ambassador. Indeed, Secretary Baker had phone conversations with Arens, but Baker was a tough player in his own right, and he and Dennis Ross were not getting back from Arens the kinds of positive material and the wherewithal which they wanted. On the other hand, through the conversations with Rabin, Baker and Ross had the hope that Rabin, given his unique position and his direct entree to Prime Minister Shamir, as well as his reputation as a tough, old warrior, might be able to help them pull something off.

Meanwhile, further settlements were being built or extended, President Bush was very unhappy, and the signs of strain within the Israeli coalition government were growing. It became apparent to me, as I said, that Shimon Peres appears to have decided to bring down the coalition government. He was working to bring it down and to trigger a situation where he could take over and where the Labour Party would become the dominant partner in the government, in one way or another.

Remember that his taking over the government would not necessarily have to be done by a general election. Under the Israeli system of the time, if a Prime Minister resigned, and if you had the necessary votes in the Knesset, you could go to the President of Israel and say, "I can

form a government to replace this government, without the need to have automatic elections.” That, apparently, was what Peres had in mind, as time went on.

Again, I would like to refer to Ambassador Sam Lewis in his comments on how an American Ambassador, in delicate times, and they always are delicate times, deals with the Israeli Government. You'll find a great deal of very useful material in Sam Lewis's remarks. I don't want to repeat all of that. The Israeli political process continues, day and night. There are heavy strains on the American Ambassador traveling up and down between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, dealing with different people, not only in the Israeli Government, but with different people in the U.S. Government as well. Remember, too, that Washington has all kinds of players who are going off on their own tangents. So, while in my view the main action was in the hands of Secretary Baker, you have to remember that there were all kinds of other players in Washington who wanted to do their thing.

For example, Jack Kemp, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, wanted to make a trip to Israel. I became aware that Vice President Dan Quayle also wanted to visit Israel. Neither of these trips took place because Secretary Baker didn't want them to happen. He wanted to control this process and, understandably, he wanted to create an image among the Israelis that, if they wanted to do major business with the United States Government, they should do it with Jim Baker, who represented the President of the United States and who was the all-powerful, Secretary of State. And they had better not forget it.

This situation produced growing tensions and strains which I have outlined here. As an American Ambassador, like my predecessors, I had all kinds of Congressional Delegations and other, high level visitors from the Executive Branch of our government. I had all kinds of leaders of American Jewish organizations coming through. Sometimes there were non-American Jewish groups or individuals coming to see me. With a new government in office, because the Bush administration WAS a new government- (end of tape)

-in its dealings with the Israeli Government. Indeed, the Bush administration was in tough with the Prime Minister's office. In this situation all kinds of unofficial American visitors would arrive to deal with the Israeli leaders. If I was lucky, they would come to see me first. We would discuss things. Sometimes, these visitors came and went, using their own old boy network. In many cases, by a wink and a nod or a brazenly open statement, they would say to their Israeli interlocutors, “I'll tell you the real situation. I'll give you the real dope on what's going on in the White House, and you can deal with me.” It was an amazing parade of individuals. You had to stay in touch. You could not sit and simply deal with the Foreign Ministry. You had to be on your toes day and night. You really had to keep your ear to the ground. You had to have good sources back in Washington. The support of the Israeli desk in the Department of State was of paramount importance. You had to have a Director and Deputy Director of Israeli-Arab Affairs who were well plugged in and who would give you information which was never contained in the cables as to what the real play was and what things to watch out for, as well as what visitors to handle as special cases, and so forth.

I'll give you another example. Inside and outside the U.S. Foreign Service I was considered sympathetic to Israel. I had done my stint as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] and had now been

Ambassador for nearly a year. There came a time when our annual economic assessment of the country was due. My Economic Counselor approached me regarding the Embassy analysis of the budget for military and civilian aid to Israel, which amounted to roughly \$3.0 billion. Roughly this level of aid had been provided to Israel for years. Progressively, it had been increased. When I was DCM, it had largely been in the form of loans. By now it had evolved to an outright grant of cash, part of which was used to pay off previous loans, and the rest to purchase military equipment which was needed to upgrade the Israeli military establishment. However, it now was grant aid.

There was a counterpart aid program of nearly \$2.0 billion for Egypt, which the Egyptians very much treasured. It had been made quite clear to the Egyptians that they were getting their \$2.0 billion as a result of living up to the provisions of the Camp David Agreement and being good guys, for instance maintaining an Egyptian Ambassador in Israel. The \$2.0 billion in aid to Egypt was, in my view, far more important to the Egyptians than the \$3.0 billion in grant aid was to Israel, given the state of Egyptian finances, the nature of their economy, and their growing population. Of course, other aid recipients around the world were increasingly vocal as they saw their aid totals go down, while aid to Egypt and Israel was maintained and even increased.

In essence my Economic Counselor was asking me what I thought of all this. I knew, of course, that any important message, no matter how labeled, from the American Embassy in Tel Aviv to the State Department would be widely read and distributed. These messages often went beyond the reaches the addressees for whom they were initially intended.

Q: We're talking about the Israeli League, which means that certain Senators receive messages even before the Secretary of State.

BROWN: Well, let us say that they receive these messages concurrently. With that background, my instructions to my Economic Counselor were: "Tell it the way you see it." I had a feeling that I knew where he was going to come out on this issue. That is, he would discuss all aspects of the Israeli economy, as well as our national objectives. His analysis would include the issue of liberalization of the highly statist Israeli economy, which had evolved over the years, under previous, Labour and Likud Governments.

In Israel the state owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, large segments of the Israeli economy. We felt that it was in the U.S. national interest and indeed that of the Israelis, that Israeli Governments should liberalize and privatize the economy. This certainly described our objectives in terms of the Israeli economy. Among other objectives, we also wanted to sell more of our goods to Israel. Of course, their economy was much smaller than ours. We had a free trade agreement with Israel, under which they could sell just about anything in the United States. There were a few minor exceptions to this. At least, they were minor to us. To the Israelis they were major exceptions, including tomatoes and orange juice. However, we were frustrated in our inability to crack the automotive and other markets in Israel, to which all kinds of restrictions and barriers pertained. We found that a large part of the Israeli economy was controlled by state organizations and featherbedding arrangements between management, which meant state management, and the trade unions, which had worked out all kinds of internal adjustments. They may have internal arguments over these arrangements, but, on the whole, they're happy with

them.

Q: You might explain what featherbedding is.

BROWN: Labor and management have a good relationship.

Q: Essentially, it means overstaffing.

BROWN: Yes, overstaffing. Because many of these enterprises were state-owned, labor didn't have to worry about significant job cuts. If there was a threat of job cuts, labor would go out on strike and use the labor movement, the Histadrut, which was controlled by the labor unions, to bring the Israeli Government to a standstill. And even, in some cases, to bring the government down. The Histadrut was traditionally run by Labour Party people.

My Economic Counselor drafted a message...

Q: Who was that, by the way?

BROWN: Clark. I can't recall his first name at the moment. I'll add his name later.

Anyway, the thrust of the draft report which he prepared was that it was time to consider a modest cutback in certain areas. Briefly, Israel didn't need our money as much as it used to need it. The Israeli economy, despite all of its difficulties, had come along very nicely. The Israeli Government had the resources to do things easily which it couldn't do previously. The draft concluded that we ought to consider a gradual cut in the aid level. So I let this go through to Washington as drafted, as a LIMITED OFFICIAL USE [relatively low classification] or LOU report. Perhaps it was classified CONFIDENTIAL...

Q: Which is a relatively low classification.

BROWN: I let this report go in to the Department of State. Wow, was there a reaction! I quickly received a high level, AIPAC [American Israeli Public Affairs Committee] mission, led by Tom Dine, the AIPAC Executive Director. It was obvious that there had been a leak. They knew that I was considered an Ambassador who was sympathetic to Israel. I had good relations with AIPAC. They let me know that they had heard of some such cable, and they couldn't believe that I would have authorized submission of such a report.

I said, in essence: "Gentlemen, at the bottom of that cable is my name. I'm not going to go into the details of this report. I'm not going to discuss a report classified CONFIDENTIAL," and I left it at that. There were AIPAC people who said to me: "We know that it was somebody else in your Embassy who drafted the report." However, I was just noncommittal. I said that I was the Ambassador and I took responsibility for the message.

Little did I realize what was going to happen immediately thereafter. About this time the Soviet Union began to collapse to the point that great numbers of Soviet Jews started to come to Israel. That, in my view, lent an entirely different character to the situation and to the analysis we had

prepared.

At the very end of 1989, larger and larger numbers of Russian Jews began to come to Israel. This quickly produced a crisis. Israel was receiving 50,000-60,000 people a month, coming from Russia, the Ukraine and elsewhere in the USSR. Ben Gurion Airport was transformed.

Q: You're talking about Ben Gurion International Airport.

BROWN: Ben Gurion International Airport was transformed into a major staging area for receiving Jewish immigrants from Russia. They came mostly by air but they also came by ship. It was a real flood of immigrants. The all-embracing term used to describe these people was, "The Russian Jews." That's a generic term which went back to Czarist days, when the vast, Czarist Empire included the Baltic States and Poland as well. These people were all referred to as "Russians." In fact, many of these "Russians" came from the Ukraine. However, they were all labeled "Russians."

They came from the various, Soviet republics, predominantly the Ukraine and Belorussia, all of which were becoming increasingly chaotic. That movement of Russian refugees immediately put an enormous strain on the Israeli Government, and the cry went up for more help. At this stage I found myself in a situation where I was doing everything that I could to help the Israelis cope with hundreds of thousands of immigrants who had to be housed, fed, and taken care of.

Guess who the Minister of Housing was. None other than Ariel Sharon. So I had some very interesting conversations with Sharon. I had dealt with Sharon as Deputy Chief of Mission and as Chargé d'Affaires. I had seen him as Minister of Agriculture when he was also Chairman of the Settlements Committee. Later on I had gone head to head with him on Lebanon, when he was Israeli Minister of Defense during the siege of Beirut.

Now we were faced with the attempt to engineer the collapse of the Shamir Government, which didn't work out the way that Shimon Peres had planned it. Peres had engineered a crisis, and a very reluctant Rabin had gone along with it. I remember an evening I spent with Rabin and his wife, Leah Rabin, at the home of a political friend of theirs who was an Orthodox Jew and a key man in their religious contacts. Every major politician in Israel has to work the religious circuit, whether he likes it or not. We were coming to a crunch because in their rivalry and tense relationship, Peres was insisting to Rabin that the time had now come for action.

In this context, Peres insisted that he had the votes of the Moroccan ultra-orthodox party known as "Shas," whose key, young, dynamic director was a well-known figure called Ariele Deri. He is well known. The party leader was a Sephardic Jew, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. The membership of Shas included a lot of people who would normally vote for the Likud Party on secular matters, but voted for Shas on religious issues. Since Shas was an ultra-orthodox, Moroccan based party, it was interested in getting money through its control of the Ministry of the Interior for its schools, its yeshivas, its social institutions and hospitals, and its educational network, as well as its exemption from military service for its members. This was big politics.

Shas was a member of the coalition government. It was Peres's view that he had worked that

circuit well enough that he could engineer a political coup d'etat, as it were, with the result that the Labour Party could take over the Israeli Government. He felt that Labour could form its own government, a national coalition if necessary. Peres assured Rabin that this operation was in the bag.

Rabin was very skeptical and reluctant to go along with this program. However, at this time the situation was finally coming to a crunch, and Mrs. Rabin was livid against Peres and not at all certain that this effort would succeed. They went along with this program, but it failed. Suddenly, there was an Israeli Government without the participation of the Labour Party in it.

Q: This was about when?

BROWN: It happened at the beginning of 1990. It coincided with the beginning of the large influx of "Russian Jews." It was a crisis situation as far as the national effort to accommodate these people was concerned. There was a reshuffling of the government portfolios, because now the Labour Party was out of the coalition. Rabin was out, and his special channel via my secure phone to Secretary of State Jim Baker through Dennis Ross was out. The new Defense Minister was, guess who? Moshe Arens.

The new Foreign Minister was David Levy, a Moroccan born, secular figure who had had only a rudimentary education. He had come up via the Likud Party ladder and now claimed his prize, the prestigious position of Foreign Minister of Israel. He had been heavily involved in settlement development during his previous tenure in the Ministry of Housing and Construction. He was proud of his contributions to the development of settlements outside Jerusalem and beyond. He didn't speak English, which created a language problem for him. I used my broken French and some Hebrew in talking to him.

The head of the U.S. desk in the Foreign Ministry was an old friend of mine. He assured me that David Levy was a man who could and should turn out to be an excellent Foreign Minister. His background in the construction of settlements and his record of making fiery, nationalistic statements notwithstanding, this was a man, I was told, with whom we should be able to work as the new Israeli Foreign Minister. I was assured by my friend that there was a possibility there which, if it were played right, could make David Levy a major player in a breakthrough in the peace process.

In the meantime other things were developing. Tens of thousands of Russian Jews were coming into Israel, day and night. This was an extraordinary development, and Israel needed major help. So a proposal was made for the development of housing loan guarantees. Now Secretary of State Baker was a former Secretary of the Treasury. He knew his Treasury accounting procedures.

When the United States Government really wants to do something, there are all kinds of things that can be done which, to an ordinary Foreign Service Officer, are a little bizarre. A proposal arose whereby in addition to the \$3.0 billion a year in military and civilian aid, we would come up with hundreds of millions of dollars worth of loan guarantees, whereby the United States Government would guarantee loans entered into on the U.S. securities market. The Government of Israel would offer to make loans, with a U.S. Government guarantee behind them to make it

possible for Israel to get the money at a cheap rate of interest. After all, if you're an investor, and the United States Government is going to guarantee your investment, for some institutions that can be attractive. For the Government of Israel it was a good deal, provided that the rate of interest on these bonds was pegged appropriately low.

Here Jim Baker, as the Secretary of State and a former Secretary of the Treasury, knew what he was about. He now had extra leverage on the Israelis. He could say, "Well, now, there are all kinds of concerns in Congress and elsewhere about our budget, which is getting exceedingly tight. Let's see. We could, perhaps, be accommodating if we had the right kind of accommodation from the Israeli Government." However, the Israeli Government had now been reshuffled, and the Labour Party was out.

We were now in 1990, and a new development came along. However, before I leave this subject, I want to refer to coping with the likes of Ariel Sharon in this situation. First of all, we were sympathetic to helping the Government of Israel with its new housing problem. There were thousands of Russian Jewish immigrants pouring into Israel. It was a crisis situation. Sharon was Minister of Housing. He asked me to call on him, so I went over to see him, accompanied by a couple of notetakers. The situation was so critical that he asked me for assistance from FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency]. He said that FEMA must have tents and emergency equipment of all kinds. Sharon said, "I need this. Can you get it for me?" He also said, "You've got construction companies in the United States which can build modular housing units. We need them. I also need the 'loan guarantees' and I need them right away so that I will have the resources to go out and buy this equipment and ship it to Israel. I need emergency shipment to Israel. I need to have it shipped directly to Israel. Let's do away with all of those protectionist maritime provisions, which refer to U.S. crews on ships and involve expensive shipping rates. Let's just get it here and get it here quickly!"

In making these remarks Sharon also referred to the settlements in the Occupied Territories. At this point I said to Sharon: "Mr. Minister, let's just break right here. I'd like to have a little, private discussion with you." So we left the notetakers and went to a different room. I went into Sharon's private office and I said, "Look, Arik," which is his Israeli nickname, "we have business to do here, and I'm willing to do business with you. We have a depression in the U.S. housing industry and those people are looking for new business. However, lay off remarks about Israeli settlements, because you're going to run into a buzzsaw if you do that. Let's keep the focus on resettling these Russian immigrants within Israel proper. You're not going to have the United States Government getting into loan guarantees or any other money identified with moving immigrants into the Occupied Territories. So just 'lay off' that, and we can do business." So that's the way I handled it. Then we resumed the discussion with the notetakers present and went on.

Indeed, suddenly housing construction people were flying in from the United States, because there was money to be made. The housing construction people were looking for all kinds of business, and we began to put deals together. Modular housing units were a possibility but there was a high Israel tariff on foreign made units.

I then ran smack into the opposition of the new Minister of Finance, Moda'i, who was a very articulate man. He was a former businessman and was dead against the use of modular or any

form of temporary housing. So I went to call on him. What I ran into was a form of an old Israeli attitude: “Our families came and lived in tents until they were resettled. Why the heck should we spend hundreds of millions of dollars and borrow money on the U.S. market to settle people in temporary, cheap, corrugated, modular housing which, in the end, is going to be dumped? That's a waste of money. They can live in tents the way that others did.”

I found myself going back to Sharon and saying: “Moda'i is opposed to modular housing.” Now I was involved in a fight between Israeli Government ministries. Finally, I went to Prime Minister Shamir and said to him: “Can you help me overcome this difficulty?” It was a fascinating business. I was going back and forth between these high-level Israeli cabinet ministers. Many of them were rivals within the Likud Party. We're talking now about rivalries which were genuine and personal and the issue involved large sums of money, much of which would have to be borrowed.

Here's a little insight into the complexities that I got into. This was now the spring of 1990. The old peace process using our special channels was gone. We were in a crisis situation where the U.S. Government was, for the record, very sympathetic. However, we had a President and a Secretary of State who were agitated and irritated over the issue of continuing construction of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Areas. They were also frustrated over the loss of the kind of dialogue we had going with Yitzhak Rabin. We were looking at the new Shamir Government and saw that it was even tougher in such attitudes than it had been. Now it was really focused on the new crisis of resettling hundreds of thousands of “Russian Jews.” It was a very frustrating situation from the viewpoint of President Bush. Meanwhile, in the spring of 1990 with hundreds of thousands of immigrants into Israel, under the circumstances I have just described, my previous support for gradually reducing U.S. aid to Israel went out the window. I now said, “Israel needs more U.S. help, not less.”

Now came a new phenomenon, the rumblings of tension between Saddam Hussein and his neighbors, particularly Kuwait. By the spring of 1990 these rumblings had reached the point that Saddam was talking fire and brimstone about Kuwait, which he considered, as I suppose most Iraqis do, essentially as a breakaway province or state of Iraq proper. Kuwait has been a bone in the throats of the Iraqis for decades. In the view of the Iraqis, Kuwait was an artificial creation which had been sliced off from Iraq. They tended to consider it yet another British creation designed to consolidate British control of the oil [of the Persian Gulf].

Saddam Hussein made more and more threatening statements. As he did so, he began to indulge in a heightened form of anti-Israeli rhetoric, as well. On April 2, 1990, he made a statement that war might come in the Middle East, namely between Iraq and Kuwait, if his demands and challenges were not met. If war came, it could easily spread elsewhere. If this happened, he would liquidate half of Israel with chemical warfare. He said that he would use his missiles and chemical warfare. Life became even more exciting for the American Ambassador in Tel Aviv.

Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens asked me to call on him. He drew my attention to these threats which, of course, I had already focused on. He said, “I need to open a dialogue right away with U.S. Secretary of Defense Cheney.” Here was Saddam Hussein openly threatening Israel while the U.S. was located a great distance away. Arens said that Israel had nothing to do with

Kuwait, and this maniac [Saddam Hussein] was threatening to rain death and destruction by waging chemical warfare against Israel. Arens concluded: "What is the United States going to do in this situation?"

I would refer you, at this point, to Arens' book, called Broken Covenant, in which he detailed what it was to be Israeli Defense Minister, at and from this juncture, and what he considered to be the inadequate responses of the United States Government. Naturally, Washington was very much aware of Arens' unhappiness, but the momentum of the relationship continued.

Saddam Hussein was a military dictator who not only made bombastic statements, but who had also used chemical warfare against the Kurds of Northern Iraq. The Iraqis had some very good diplomats, and some of them were assuring us that this threat against Israel was merely one of those exuberant statements which Saddam Hussein was used to making. As the heat mounted, the Egyptians also tried to calm us down. My colleague in Tel Aviv, Egyptian Ambassador Mohammed Basyouni, met with me and told me: "Pay no attention to Saddam Hussein's statements. You see, we Egyptians know Saddam Hussein like nobody else because he went to school in Cairo. Mubarak has a special relationship with Saddam Hussein. Maybe he is a little rough at the edges, but this can be worked out. Don't get excited." I cite these conversations because they were to change rather dramatically only a few months later.

Q: Yes, this was very much the atmosphere of the time.

BROWN: Remember that we were selling food to Iraq under PL 480 [Public Law 480, covering surplus agricultural commodities] and we were interested in selling more to them. Iraq had a large, affluent economy in certain respects. It was buying many things, including military hardware. There were American businessmen who were looking around Iraq and criticizing the United States Government for not getting enough of the action. The British and other Europeans were selling more to the Iraqis and we were losing market share.

I believe that it was in April, 1990, there was an American Chiefs of Mission Conference in Bonn. The new, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs was John Kelly. His Deputy Assistant Secretary was Jock Covey, with whom I had served previously. Jock had served in Israeli affairs for quite some time and had been DCM in Jerusalem. If you haven't interviewed him, you should do so.

Q: Where is he now?

BROWN: I don't know. His name is spelled C-o-v-e-y. He is a brilliant officer. We gathered in Bonn, and discussions flowed on area-wide problems. The American Ambassador to Iraq at the time was April Glaspie. As my colleagues at this conference commented, one of our concerns was that we were losing business to the British, French, and Germans throughout the Middle Eastern region because we were still applying artificial, outmoded, outdated approaches. These Arab regimes had money. Somehow, we were not responding, we were not adequately participating in the game. There were many new, economic opportunities which we were missing.

April Glaspie said in effect, "Sure, Saddam Hussein is a military dictator, but there are possibilities in Iraq which we are missing." A rear Admiral attended this conference as a representative from the Central Command of the U.S. Armed Forces. He made a little presentation of the situation in the Middle East from his point of view. He pointed to our budgetary problems, particularly as far as the U.S. Navy was concerned. He said that perhaps it was time to cut back on our naval presence in the Persian Gulf, because it was awfully expensive.

Q: We're talking about our presence in the Gulf.

BROWN: Yes, in the Gulf. Our Ambassadors stationed in the Gulf replied: "Wait a minute. That naval presence is important at this time." The Admiral said, "Well, that may be true, but the naval budget is tight. We are cutting back on our carrier forces, and we have to do something about it." In this atmosphere I made a presentation which I started by saying: "I guess I'm the skunk at your party because I've got a problem here in terms of the Israeli perception, particularly in the wake of these bellicose statements by Saddam Hussein."

I returned to Tel Aviv, and the situation involving Iraq and Kuwait grew more and more tense. As it did so there developed in Israel a palpable concern that war might break out and that Saddam Hussein might live up to his public threats to attack Israel. Indeed, we saw more activity in those portions of Iraq which abutted Jordan and Syria. There were Iraqi air bases in the area, which were beginning to sprout missile batteries. Of course, the Israelis became aware of these developments.

Within Israel and within my Embassy there arose a concern about what was going to happen. In other words, if war came and if Saddam Hussein carried out these threats, what would happen if he hit Israel with missiles? If these missiles had nuclear, bacteriological, or chemical warheads, what would happen?

A dialogue was taking place on the intelligence front and on the broader, defense front, between my Embassy and Washington. Within my Embassy my DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] was now Mark Peres, a wonderful DCM. We were faced increasingly with very concerned members of our Embassy staff. The more they learned about the situation, the more concerned they became about what we were going to do.

I began a dialogue with the Department noting: "On a contingency basis we need gas masks." The initial response from Washington was: "We are the best judges of whether you need gas masks and equipment like that. At this point we don't see the need for this material." I began holding town meetings within my Embassy. I found that the discussion was never ending as we got into hypothetical situations. For example, questions would be asked like: "Suppose they attack with chemical weapons? We heard Saddam Hussein say that he would liquidate half of Israel with chemical weapons. We don't have anything to protect ourselves at this point."

At one of these meetings an enlisted man in my Defense Attaché Office said, "Well, I have my gas mask, but my wife doesn't have one." Everybody immediately turned toward him and said, "What? What do you mean that you have a gas mask?" "Yes," he said, "we've got them in the

Defense Attaché Office for the defense attachés and their immediate staff. My problem is that my wife out here in Herzeliya and our kids don't have gas masks." Well, I called up the State Department on the secure phone at a high level now. I was talking to the Deputy Assistant Secretary and to people above him. I was smartly told: "That's an impossibility. We control the distribution of gas masks, and there is no authorization to do so. If we ever had any intimation that there was a real threat, we would distribute them to you." I asked: "Do you want to know the serial numbers on the gas masks in the Defense Attaché Office? My Defense Attachés have gas masks." They told me from Washington: "Well, that's unauthorized." I said, "Unauthorized or not, some members of my Embassy staff have gas masks, while the great majority of the other people in the Embassy do not have them. What are you going to do about it?" We got into a rather contentious, spirited discussion of this.

Meanwhile, we went to the Israelis who, we knew, had supplies of gas masks for issuance to every man, woman, and child in Israel. Gas masks were stored in warehouses in Israel. We negotiated with the Israelis and arranged with them that, unless and until I got the necessary equipment from Washington, my Embassy needs, top to bottom, would be met. We received assurances that we would get gas masks.

There were further town meetings, and Embassy staff members wanted to have gas masks. The Israelis were cautious and said, "Look, the gas masks are there in the warehouses." By stages our Defense Attachés, the professional military people, were allowed to go into these warehouses and see that the gas masks were there. Then my Embassy people wanted to know: "Is my size gas mask there? What about my kids? I have a 6-year-old, or a 3-year-old, or a 2-year old, or a baby three months old. What do you have for babies?" The Israelis progressively let us know that they had different sizes of gas masks. They even had...

Q: Cribs or bassinets?

BROWN: Yes. Well, the agitation was growing, and it was growing inside and outside the Embassy as well, to distribute the gas masks. As the crisis worsened that summer of 1990, eventually we began to receive the gas masks in cardboard boxes, duly labeled. Then people said, "Well, how do I know that it will work? I want to be instructed in their use. Shouldn't we have drills?" Of course, if you use these gas masks, the canister begins to deteriorate and will eventually become useless.

Meanwhile, Washington was coping with this and also with Saudi Arabia. Ambassador Chas Freeman...

Q: We interviewed Ambassador Chas Freeman, who was talking about his problems.

BROWN: Yes. So the discussion went on and on.

Q: I was wondering if this would be a good place to stop. If you would note, and I will note here, that we're talking now about the growing threat from Saddam Hussein during the summer of 1990. Also, you've already talked about the huge increase of Russian Jews...

BROWN: Who were coming through at all hours.

Q: Today is August 31, 1999. This is an interview with Ambassador Bill Brown. Bill, on this same topic that you were discussing before we broke off, did you find, as your officers were looking around, that there was unrest with the Russian Jews arriving in Israel at this time? Were these Russian Jewish immigrants saying: "What the hell is this? We're happy to be out of the Soviet Union, but here is a madman we never heard of before, Saddam Hussein, who is talking about attacking us with biological weapons." I would have thought that the Russian Jews would not have had the same spirit about all of this.

BROWN: Well, perhaps they felt caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. However, the fact is that they kept coming. Later on, even during the Gulf War, they continued to come to Israel.

Now, later on, as the war developed, commercial air flights into Israel, except for EL AL airline [Israeli state-owned airline], were no longer flying into Israel. However, the means were found, and these immigrants kept on coming into Israel. It was quite a phenomenon.

Incidentally, I am certainly no expert on the details of Israeli history. However, there was the history of progressive waves of immigration, and there were the problems that inevitably emerge when large waves descend on a limited economy in a tiny country like that. In a way, there are certain parallels to our own waves of immigration. That is, those whose parents came to Israel don't necessarily take too kindly to those who are currently coming.

Q: Absolutely. Raise the ladder, Charley, I'm aboard!

BROWN: That's right. So, there were mixed feelings because tremendous resources had to be found and had to be concentrated on these immigrants. Tremendous resources had to be found, concentrated, and applied quickly. That inevitably led to discussion as to where to find the money. In other words, who was going to suffer from giving up these resources, and so forth. I mentioned evidence of a split within the Shamir Government on how to house these people. As Minister of Housing and Construction, Ariel Sharon wanted not only whatever he could get from FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Administration] in the United States, but he wanted large-scale shipments of mobile housing, whether made of metal, plastic, wood, or a combination thereof. He wanted this to be shipped expeditiously to Israel.

Moda'i, who, at the time, was Minister of Finance, was against this proposal, saying, in essence, that this would be wasting money because temporary housing of that kind would cost a lot. He felt that, in the end, it would eventually be discarded, and a lot of money would be wasted. He felt that it would be better to go more slowly and house these people in tents, while building something more secure, and so forth.

There were arguments within the Israeli Government as to where to put these people. Should they be housed in the cities, in new suburbs, in the desert, in areas where Moroccan Jews had

been settled and were subsidized to live in desert towns? Or should they be left to shift for themselves? Should transient camps be built? Should they be given free food, housing, and language education for a certain period? Should they be given the choice to go out on their own to find housing?

These were subjects for legitimate debate, and compromises were made. Generally speaking, the arrangements were fine tuned to the point where, as these people arrived at Ben Gurion International Airport, the airport was progressively turned into a huge, initial transit station.

The typical immigrant family leader was offered a choice: would he and his family prefer to go into a camp, where they would be housed for six months with a roof over their heads and provided with three meals a day and language education? Or, would they prefer simply to be given a check right away to start them off, with a monthly subsidy to follow, which had been calculated in advance. They could do whatever they wanted to do with this subsidy. A great number of the refugees said, "Give me the check." This was because, in traditional, European, Russian style, they hoped to get help from friends and relatives in Israel, and they figured that they could squeeze into an apartment of minimal size, save some of their money, look around, and try to make a new life for themselves.

It is fascinating to reflect on the contrast with the reaction of the Ethiopian Jews who were transported to Israel. Culturally, the Ethiopian Jews were far behind the significantly, Westernized society of Israel. We saw this later on, when another, new wave of immigrants came to Israel, under, for example, Operation Solomon, when the vast majority of the new immigrants went into special camps. Unfortunately, in many cases, these camps were isolated, and the refugees were provided with a total dole or subsidy by the Israeli Government.

Q: Well, really these settlements turned out to be kind of ghettos, weren't they?

BROWN: Well, "ghetto" is a term that I wouldn't accuse the Israelis of setting up, given their background and all of what that word implies. The Israelis found that the best way to handle this matter of resettling immigrants was to put these people together, in ethnic clumps. These ended up being totally subsidized dole arrangements.

When you have such an arrangement, your only real hope is with the young people. The older generation finds it so much more difficult to adjust and doesn't have the challenge of being forced to go out and find jobs and so forth. When you handle resettlement in that way, it really is the younger people that can adjust the most easily.

However, when the Israelis had to deal with "Russian" immigrants, there was a whole host of special problems. Remember, as I said before, a lot of the refugees were Ukrainians or came from elsewhere in the old Soviet Union, but they were very heavily from the Ukraine. Among these ex-Russian refugees, there were some highly talented people. They included scientists, technicians, and other people with great skills. Culturally speaking, they were a good group. The joke was often told that if a man wasn't carrying a violin, a flute, or a clarinet off the airplane with him, this meant that he was a pianist, and the piano was coming separately. The influx of talented, symphonic orchestra level musicians, or artists and painters was striking. Unfortunately,

for a lot of them, there were simply no jobs for them, initially. The question then was how quickly they could adjust, learn the Hebrew language, and so forth.

Russian political parties developed. For example, Sharansky, who came to Israel from Russia in the late 1980s, became an articulate spokesman for these Russian immigrants in Israel. Russian language newspapers bloomed. Of course, Hebrew language classes were available. A lot of areas in Israel became significantly Russianized, and some tension developed in these areas as a result of this development.

Ashkelon and Ashdod on the Mediterranean coast of Israel were newly developed port cities which had been significantly populated by Moroccan or Sephardic, oriental Jews. Over time, as the Russians moved into Israel and took over these areas, some tensions developed. However, to come back to your main question, the Russians kept on coming to Israel, believe me.

Q: Before we move to another subject, I guess that everything will be predicated on the Gulf War and its aftermath. What about the economy of Israel, prior to all hell breaking loose with this influx or immigrants?

BROWN: As always, it was the subject of spirited commentary on the U.S. side. Remember that before I came back to Israel as ambassador, there had been an economic crisis in Israel in 1984-85. Inflation had gone way up, to 400 percent and then up to 1,000 percent. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz stepped in and told the Israelis: "Okay, if you'll really tighten your belts and take draconian measures to curtail inflation, and if you undertake to reform your economy, we will extend you extra economic support." The Israeli economy is heavily socialized, if you will, or statist, with the government owning or controlling directly or indirectly great chunks of it. I recall that Moshe Arens [former Israeli ambassador to the United States and later Minister of Defense] used to call the Israeli economy a "Bolshevik economy."

A joint U.S.-Israeli economic committee was set up to meet semi-annually. A series of top level U.S. economists agreed to work on this aspect of the Israeli economy. Herbert Stein [former adviser to the President on economic affairs] is a good example. Meanwhile, under Shimon Peres as Israeli Prime Minister, draconian measures against inflation were taken. A general belt tightening program was undertaken. It was tough, but the Israelis did it. However, little progress was made under one Israeli Government or another on the structural, reform side of the Israeli economy.

By the time I arrived in Israel as ambassador, the U.S. side was beginning to get a little tired of meeting with the Israelis on a semiannual basis with little to show for it. Sessions of this joint economic group were slipped to an annual basis. I'll never forget Herb Stein coming over to Israel, meeting with the Israeli Minister of Finance and other top Israeli economists in various sectors, including the Bank of Israel, and finally meeting with Prime Minister Shamir at the Knesset [Israeli Parliament], because the Knesset was in session at the time.

As we started the meeting with Shamir, someone burst into the room and said that there was a vote coming up. Shamir said, "Oh, excuse me. You're doing a great job, but I've got to go now." That was the end of the meeting.

That conversation had begun with Herb Stein looking at Shamir and saying: “Nu?” [what's up]. In other words, what have you done and what are you going to do now? Shamir and his Government at the time were slipping and sliding because they weren't really willing to bite the bullet and face their problems through a basic, painful reform. Now, within Shamir's Government there were people like Arens who had a liberal economic outlook and Moda'i who came from a business background. Moda'i was Minister of Finance under Shamir. Moda'i had gone out and made money selling various products and held certain patents. So there were people within Shamir's Likud Government who were dedicated to breaking this socialist, statist lock on the Israeli economy. This was a combination which, over time and the many years of Labour Party control of the Israeli Government and the economy, with the support of the Histadrut [trade union federation], resulted in the emergence of a kind of feather bed, sweetheart arrangement between the government as the owner of many economic enterprises and the Histadrut labor unions. You find that around the world there are those kinds of attitudes and structural arrangements which are very hard to break.

Then you get into lip service. As the Israelis heard criticism from their true friends, such as Secretary Shultz and others in the U.S. Government, they would often pay lip service to the idea of structural change in the Israeli economy. They would say, “Give us more resources and then we'll work this out.” They were suggesting that this would enable them to carry out structural reform of the Israeli economy faster and further. From the U.S. viewpoint, that was a frustrating situation.

When you came down to a crisis, such as that involved in Russian Jewish immigration into Israel, you came pretty soon to the question of land. If you were going to settle these immigrants in Israel, under what circumstances could this be done? As I was saying, the question was whether you should settle the immigrants in camps or just let them go out and find housing and jobs on the economy. With the great influx of immigrants, the pressures on rents for apartments and so forth grew considerably. You found that the Government of Israel controlled about 90 percent of the land. The question was whether the government would give up this land. Would the government transfer it to the new arrivals and, if so, under what circumstances? These were very difficult questions. Then there was situation in the Knesset and all of the factionalism within any coalition government which would be relevant in this connection. So this created a form of gridlock which was very difficult to break.

Later on, jumping down to the period after my time as ambassador, Prime Minister “Bibi” Netanyahu was an outspoken proponent of breaking up this Bolshevik economy, privatizing and reforming it. However, he had his problems with his own coalition government. I remember a senior Israeli banker much later on, after I had left Israel, telling me that he had met with Netanyahu, when Bibi was in the final stages of his election campaign. They spent more than an hour discussing this situation. Bibi had said, “I am going to break the grip of those who have been stalling. We are going to liberalize this economy.” Well, it didn't quite work out that way.

The point that I want to make is that you have to be careful of stereotypes because the Likud coalition, for instance, had and has its own stereotypes. Behind these stereotypes there are all kinds of factions and cross currents as you'll find in many political party coalition. They can shift

and turn, depending on the circumstances. I'll give you an example.

I mentioned, in passing, former Secretary of State Baker's attempts to promote the peace process prior to the Gulf War. I recall visits by [Minister of Defense] Arens in the coalition government which, at the time, had both Labour Party and Likud representatives in it. This coalition government was dominated by Likud, but Rabin was also Minister of Defense. We set up a special channel of communications with Rabin when we were frustrated over the lack of progress in promoting the peace process. Arens, as Defense Minister, privately expressed the need to do something about speeding up the peace process. Prime Minister Shamir, as always, was reticent and often hesitant about taking action. Finally, as a result of debate within the Likud coalition, between Arens, Shamir, and others, with Rabin and Shimon Peres chipping in, or just chipping away, in the case of Peres, an Israeli peace initiative emerged. This initiative was presented by Prime Minister Shamir. It was a subject of great debate. Shamir gave, shall we say, a cut down version of what Arens would have wanted.

Many Israelis, and certainly those on the Likud side, loathed the idea of being dragged into a peace process involving an international conference. They were opposed, in essence, to the idea that Israel might be brought into the docket before an international conference and faced with a consensus of European, Third World, and communist countries, with perhaps the U.S. vacillating. To head off such a conference, Shamir called for a meeting of the Camp David signatories, that is, Egypt and Israel, with the United States, which had been a key player and observer. The Shamir formulation also called for some form of a dialogue with local or native Palestinians. There was a big debate as to whether they should have elections within the [occupied] territories. There was a considerable split over that, bearing in mind that traditionally the Israelis had tried to deal with the established, conservative, Palestinian hierarchy. That is, with the mayors and senior leaders in the Palestinian communities, who came from established families.

However, the Intifada was going on. The Intifada could be described not only as a revolt against the Israelis but also a revolt against the established, Palestinian hierarchical clan leadership. There were those among the Israelis, particularly Arens, who thought that you could run free and fair elections in the occupied territories and could find people who were articulate and with whom you could deal. These people would not necessarily be supporters of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. Of course, the Israelis had their own sources of information, and it was quite obvious that the PLO was dead against free, fair, democratic elections in the occupied territories at that stage, when much of the PLO leadership was in Tunis and had little control in the territories.

However, in all of this, as the Israeli finally came to articulate, through Prime Minister Shamir and Defense Minister Arens, a peace process initiative of their own, lo and behold, a split developed within the Likud. Ariel Sharon, David Levy, and Moda'i, three very different gentlemen, teamed together and declared that they were the Hishupkim, the constrainers. I think that Hishup means a "barrel hoop." These three broke off from the rest of the cabinet and announced that they disagreed with the Shamir initiative as giving away too much.

Now this was obviously an intra-party play here, as they were jockeying for positions in a

cabinet which was beginning to get a bit shaky. It was very strange indeed, an arcane kind of thing. You know, Prime Minister Shamir and Defense Minister Arens were being portrayed by people within their own party, Sharon, Levy and Moda'i, as being soft! Come on! [Laughter]

This is important background as we moved into the summer of tension which finally erupted into the Gulf War [in 1990 and 1991]. What had happened was that a rift had opened between Secretary of State Baker and President Bush, on the one hand, and Prime Minister Shamir and Defense Minister Arens, on the other. Remember that we had used a special channel. Rabin and Shamir knew about this. I expect that Arens knew about it, although this was never stated openly to me except in that midnight conversation I told you about, when Arens said, "I suppose that now you're going to tell Rabin," and I said, "Yes."

Secretary of State Baker had given a speech before AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee] in May, 1989. The speech contained some nice tips of the hat and so forth, but it also was a bit of a bombshell. Baker said in effect: "Give up your dreams of a greater Israel, stop building Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, and let's get on with business." I remember that I was standing against the back wall of the room where the speech was given. When Baker made this remark, there was a stunned silence.

I had already given Baker my initial assessment that, however tough he was and hesitant and resistant, Prime Minister Shamir could be brought to take part in a peace process. Having given Baker that appraisal, this was to be a continuing concern of mine. As time wore on, it was so frustrating and kind of maddening to see the way things dragged on. At the time Baker gave that speech, I wasn't particularly bothered about it. Nevertheless, what emerged was a growing lack of trust between Bush and Baker, on the one hand, and Shamir and Arens, on the other. In other words, the dominant Likud faction of the Israeli Government coalition.

I had mentors and worked hard at keeping up with things in Washington. However, no American official, especially one living overseas, can really measure the Washington scene in most instances as accurately as the Israelis. After a while I came to feeling that, they would conclude that the Baker speech meant, in effect: "No more Mr. Nice Guy," that Bush and Baker were out to get them and cut them down to size through an initiative that would amount somehow to putting Israel in the dock. This would mean a version of land for peace or a territorial compromise whereby, they feared, Israel would end up shorn of everything that it had taken from 1967 onwards. This would also amount to U.S. waffling on the whole question of Jerusalem. So, an important breakdown was taking place in terms of confidence in the dialogue between Israel and the U.S.

Q: Would you say that the Israeli attitude, as I have heard again and again in the interviews in this oral history, was that, "If you're not 100 percent for us, you're against us." In other words, instead of seeing the nuances in the appraisal of the situation between Shamir and Arens, on the one hand, and Bush and Baker, on the other.

BROWN: The Israelis are very astute analysts. I think that at any given juncture I think that they have available to them some very sophisticated analysis of the situation in the U.S., backed by their own polling. They have a tremendous database, if I can use that expression, covering

various portions of the spectrum of U.S. opinion. However, among some Israelis there has been a tendency over the years to err in portraying things that way. For historical reasons there was a certain paranoia among some Israelis and a suspicion of our motives. This is certainly understandable, given the enormous disparity between the U.S., as a super power, and a tiny country like Israel.

The Israelis also have their own historical recollections. The older generation of Israeli leaders is well aware that, notwithstanding all of the verbiage that had been expressed over the years in support of Israel, plus the money and very real resources given to Israel in war and peace, yet President Eisenhower had given Prime Minister Ben Gurion an ultimatum in 1956 to “get out of the Sinai, or else.” Going further back, President Harry Truman, although he was the first to recognize Israel [in 1948], had at the same time imposed an arms embargo on all sides, including fledgling Israel. Through all of these U.S. administrations there had always been some people, including Arabists in the State Department and others who had been highly critical of Israel. So the Israelis were well aware of that. However, younger Americans who had the task of dealing with Israel were sometimes somewhat deficient in corporate memory, let us say, on this issue of Israeli suspicion.

Q: During your time as ambassador to Israel, how did you do your own political analysis of who was calling the shots in AIPAC? The American Israeli Political Action Committee was a very powerful lobby. It was called the “Israeli Lobby” in the United States. Somebody, or some entity in the U.S., must have been directing how to analyze the impact of AIPAC.

BROWN: Tom Dine was the Executive Director of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. He and I had worked together many years previously in India, when he was one of Ambassador Chester Bowles' staff aides in New Delhi. He was one of Bowles' speechwriters and a real action man for the ambassador.

Q: However, behind this...

BROWN: I didn't really get into an analysis of the various factions of AIPAC. I was meeting all kinds of people, all of the time. I simply didn't have the time to get into that. When the AIPAC people came to us, they were pretty solid in their expressions of support. I didn't have many AIPAC people pulling me aside and saying: “What we really mean, or what I really feel,” is this or that, as opposed to what the AIPAC leadership was saying. Naturally, in an organization that large you will have...

Q: It was pretty solid.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Before we move on, I have a couple of questions. Going back to the Israeli economy, what was your own feeling, as well as that of the embassy, in addition to what Israeli leaders were saying, about the U.S. role in the Israeli economy? I would have thought that, in a way, it would almost have been pernicious. I mean that our government or Congress, almost at will, could bail out the Israelis and give them money. Then there were Israeli bonds and other forms of support

from the United States. The problem is that if Israel ends up being almost a charity case, this will tend to limit our own ability to encourage the development of a self-sustaining, Israeli economy.

BROWN: There were those in economic and intellectual groups in Israel, particularly on the Right, who were coming to the conclusion, when I arrived in Israel as ambassador, that the time was overdue to reform the Israeli economy by privatizing it. These groups felt that there was a certain amount of risk in letting things go on the way they were, because the net result of this would be to perpetuate the status quo.

This was a delicate matter, whether the Israeli Government had been controlled by the Labour Party or the Likud coalition up to that point, including the time I spent in Israel. Any Israeli Government desired to maintain and, if possible, increase the flow of American resources to Israel. Of course, the Russian Jewish immigration flow into Israel provided yet another reason for maintaining or increasing American resources earmarked for Israel. The argument went: "Yes, yes, we should privatize and liberalize. However, in the meantime we need the money to do this or that." Meanwhile, that Israel's economy was already changing dramatically. The old stereotype of the agriculturally based kibbutznik economy was passe. Those living in the kibbutzes in Israel had declined in numbers and now amounted to about one or two percent of the total population. However, in terms of the elite group in the Israeli Defense Forces and in certain other areas the kibbutzniks exercised an influence far greater than that statistic would indicate.

There had emerged some interesting Israeli economic think tanks. A leader of one of them called on me and said that on the one hand, his group stood solidly behind the Likud version of security. That is, Israel should keep control of the Occupied Territories and watch out for security threats now and in the future. For example, if Saddam Hussein in Iraq were to take over Jordan, Israel would face a tremendous peril. Therefore, Israel could not just give away the Jordan Valley, and the Golan Heights. However, that same think tank, and I've forgotten the name of it, argued that the U.S. should apply pressure to privatize and liberalize the Israeli economy. Otherwise, nothing would get done.

There was another consideration. There was great disillusionment with Prime Minister Shamir in the Labour Party. This was particularly the case with those who had Leftish, academic backgrounds. Over time, some of these people became so distraught over the Likud Government's position vis-a-vis the peace process and all of that, that one of them, in despair, said to me on one occasion: "You ought to cut off aid to Israel." I said, "What?" He said, "You ought to cut off aid because there is no other way in which Shamir will change his mind." What he meant was that the U.S. ought to topple the Shamir government by cutting off aid.

I immediately responded: "I am not going to get into that game. Forget it!" I could appreciate the despair of people who held those views, but we weren't going to engage in that kind of behavior.

Now this takes us to the issue of playing in the domestic politics of the other side. There's been a lot of sanctimonious comment on this issue over the years. For example, AIPAC is only one of many pressure groups. It is the largest, but there are many different types of Jewish-American lobbies. Their approaches to members of both Houses of Congress and their political activities

on behalf of Israel are well reported. However, let's not kid ourselves; when we invest \$3.0 billion a year in the Israeli economy, we are bound to have an effect. When we opened up a special channel via the American ambassador's secure phone to the Israeli Minister of Defense, Rabin, in connection with the peace process, we were playing a role in the Israeli domestic political game. Of course, there are various degrees of involvement, and it is important to distinguish between them. In effect, the Israelis played a lot more in our backyard than we did in their back yard.

Shamir's followers felt threatened, particularly after the speech in May, 1989, by Secretary of State Baker to AIPAC which I mentioned previously. We had already opened a serious dialogue with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. This speech was taken to mean that we were seriously moving ahead to put pressure on the Israelis on the basis of land for peace, and that we expected them to make territorial concessions to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. On a worse case basis they could infer from the speech that they stood to lose much or all of the Golan Heights and to face the emergence in some form of a Palestinian entity. This was despite the fact that the official U.S. position, as earlier articulated by Secretary of State Shultz on behalf of the Reagan administration, had been that there should be no Palestinian state. We were opposed to a Palestinian state under the PLO, with its terrorist background.

Nevertheless, the Shamir supporters saw by various means what was going on under the Bush and Baker administration. This seriously concerned the Israelis, and they began to crank up a campaign with their friends in Congress. The State Department received letters from large numbers of members of Congress, expressing great support for Israel and concern that things should be done in the right way, and so forth.

I think that that contributed to the determination of President Bush and Secretary of State Baker to play things very close to the chest and to use a form of stealth in this area, as far as Israeli politics were concerned. So I think that this was a very important part of the political and economic background as we entered the summer of 1990.

Q: Before we discuss the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, I have two other questions. One of the things that has struck me, and please correct me if I am wrong, but I look at Germany before the rise of Hitler and I look at the United States, particularly after the influx of German Jews in the United States. I think what a wonderful boon we have had in terms of artistic growth and so forth. I am a movie fan. The movies owe so much, in particular, to the German Jews. The same thing applies to music, books, and other areas of cultural activity. I know that as a kid I learned so much about what was involved in growing up as a Jewish boy in New York, because I read so many books about it.

I have been struck by the underwhelming impact of Israel in the artistic world in the United States. I'm thinking of movies in particular. I don't know much about the impact of Israel on movies and literature. Compared to the artistic talent that is in Israel, for some reason it just doesn't seem to translate out to very much in the United States. Could you comment on that?

BROWN: That's interesting, Stuart. Let's put another spin on it. From the time I arrived in Israel as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in the embassy in Tel Aviv, and certainly later on, when I

served as ambassador to Israel, I was profoundly struck by the enormous, cultural base within Israel. You could consider this as a base imported from outside Israel. I used to say, and I don't think that it would be much of an exaggeration, that, after serving in so many countries, I had never seen so much culture in the world, per capita, as I did in Israel. I'm speaking not only of the great Israel Museum up in Jerusalem, or the Tel Aviv Museum. My goodness! Down at the provincial or town level it was amazing to see the number of thriving museums. These were museums that not only had art to display, but offered interpretive classes in creative art appreciation and education, using their local art holdings as platforms.

The number of concerts and the range of musical activity was astounding. It seemed that most towns and cities of any size had symphony orchestras. By the time I returned to Israel as U.S. ambassador, apart from classical music, there was a full spectrum of jazz, rock music, and so forth available. When I first arrived in Israel, I was struck with what I would call an Ashkenazi Jewish culture, the kind of art that was prevalent in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s and so forth. When I returned to Israel, I could see that there had been a distinct evolution in which the Sephardic and Oriental Jewish traditions were growing. I felt that there was a great, cross-cultural development here. We also saw that there was more intermarriage between members of the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities.

So, in my view, there was a cultural boom going on in Israel. And the Israelis became more high tech in their outlook, going into video and TV. When I was in Israel as ambassador, TV really took off. They turned to CD ROM [Compact Discs, Read Only Memory] software. The Israelis began to score very high in European TV song competitions. They have this split, where part of the reaction, if you will, to the U.S.-Israeli relationship is a desire by many people in Israel to continue to be recognized as a part of Europe. Indeed, many Israelis say, "There is where the bulk of our trade is, and there is where so much of our cultural flow should be, back and forth." However, they have one, major problem. That is, the attitude of many European governmental elites vis-a-vis Israel is very ambiguous, to use a rather charitable word. These Europeans are often perceived by Israelis as anti-Israeli and, in some cases, anti-Semitic. So, it's a mix of these attitudes.

Yours is an interesting observation, as far as Israeli impact on, let us say, U.S. culture. As the Israelis were highly nationalistic in their linguistic approach, they were putting out Hebrew language films, which very few American Jews could understand. I can understand more Hebrew than your average, American Jew. The emphasis on Hebrew as the national language also meant that Yiddish has suffered badly in Israel. So that posed a barrier for older American Jews who understood Yiddish. In sum, there is a major linguistic problem involved here. How many people in the U.S. are really interested in going to a movie theater and seeing a dubbed Israeli film? On the other hand, some of the Israeli vocalists are very impressive. In terms of classical, jazz, and Sephardic music, certainly on the Jewish circuit here in the United States they were making inroads. However, the reception has not been akin to what you have just described.

Q: What about the role of the orthodox [Jewish] establishment in Israel? Does that have much of an influence on Israeli artistic development?

BROWN: I think that there is a widening divide between secular and ultra-orthodox Jews. A

large percentage of the artistic group in Israel would be over on the secular side of that divide. That is not to say that the ultra-orthodox, have no artists, musicians, and so forth. Actually, they have quite a few. As far as attitude is concerned, of course the ultra-orthodox are horrified by bare bodies, bikinis, or the portrayal in art of nubile creatures, and so forth. I assure you, however, that there is a lot of music played in the ultra-orthodox community. There is a lot of religious art, at least their form of art, as well. (End of tape)

I might make a further comment about Jerusalem, and particularly the American consulate general there. Let's do an historic tour, bearing in mind that long before the State of Israel was established, long before the existence of Tel Aviv, and long before the existence of an American embassy in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem was a holy city. In that holy city was an American consulate.

Q: In fact, the consulate was first opened in 1845.

BROWN: Yes, and for a long time that office was the site of the United States representation in Palestine. There were consulates there of other countries as well. The Spanish consulate was in Jerusalem prior to the establishment of the United States consulate general. It represented the Spanish King, one of whose many titles was, "Protector of the Faith," the "Protector of Jerusalem," and so forth.

Tel Aviv developed from the status of a tent city, and there was nothing there for many years in terms of official U.S. representation. The American consulate in Jerusalem was the only U.S. office in Palestine. With the establishment of the State of Israel and the arrival of Ambassador McDonald as the head of the American Mission in Israel, it wasn't long before tension developed between the new American embassy [in Tel Aviv] and the consulate up in Jerusalem. Some of the staff of the consulate general in Jerusalem tended to look on the American embassy as pro-Israeli and pro-Jewish. This attitude was reciprocated in broad terms over the years by some of the staff of the American embassy in Tel Aviv, who looked at the consulate general in Jerusalem and its backers in the State Department as a bunch of Arabists.

The legal aspects of this situation were such that the United States officially viewed Jerusalem as an international city known as a "corpus separatum" [separate body] whose final status was still to be determined. As a result, the consulate general in Jerusalem never sought recognition, nor was it recognized officially, diplomatically, or in consular terms by the Government of Israel. Bear in mind that for years, as the Government of Israel began to move piecemeal up to Jerusalem, it was warned by most governments, including the United States Government, not to do this. These governments warned the Israeli Government that they would not do business with the Government of Israel in Jerusalem. The Government of Israel was advised that it should remain in Tel Aviv and conduct its affairs there.

However, as time went on, pieces of the Government of Israel moved up to Jerusalem, including pieces of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These pieces became larger and larger. Israeli Prime Ministers moved to Jerusalem, and I am speaking of Labour Party Prime Ministers in particular, long before the Likud Party's Prime Minister Menachem Begin moved his office and official residence to Jerusalem.

In all of this many Israelis had a stereotyped view of the American consulate general in Jerusalem as a pro-Arab outfit servicing Arab interests. That is a gross distortion of the reality, but it was a widely held Israeli perception.

Now, as a consular institution, the American consulate general in Jerusalem serviced the passport and visa needs of a growing population, many of whom were Jewish, including ultra-orthodox Jews. The Consular Section of the consulate general in Jerusalem was over on Arab side of the city.

I think that I may previously have touched on the sensitivity of the relationship between the embassy in Tel Aviv and the consulate general in Jerusalem when I spoke of my time as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in the embassy in Tel Aviv. That is, during the period from 1979 to 1982. Bear in mind that very senior and very capable Foreign Service officers were appointed to positions on the staff of the consulate general in Jerusalem.

Although the consulate general was relatively small, it was completely independent, so it did not have to clear with the embassy its correspondence to Washington. It had its own consular responsibilities and its own reporting goals and objectives assigned by the Department of State. If the consul general in Jerusalem felt like it, he or she could send off a first person or whatever other kind of message to the Department, completely independently of the embassy in Tel Aviv.

The embassy, of course, was much larger than the consulate general. Given past firefights between the two posts in previous years, when Ambassador Sam Lewis and I were in Tel Aviv, and Brandon Grove was the Consul General in Jerusalem with Jock Covey as his Deputy, we did everything that we could to minimize friction and to establish cross cultural contacts between the two posts. In some cases we arranged for the rotation of officers back and forth between the two posts on a voluntary basis. Ambassador Sam Lewis made a pronounced effort in person, which I tried to emulate, to brief the consul general in times of crisis on developments in and around the consulate general. When Phil Habib [Deputy Undersecretary for Political Affairs] and Ambassador Morris Draper were engaged in shuttle diplomacy involving Lebanon in 1982, they stayed in the residence of the consul general in Jerusalem, rather than at the King David Hotel. Habib drafted and sent his cables from the consulate general, as necessary. Phil Habib talked to the Israeli Prime Minister on the consul general's telephone, went over to call on the Prime Minister from the consul general's residence, and so forth.

So Jerusalem was not an isolated post, and obviously both the consulate general in Jerusalem and the embassy in Tel Aviv had to exercise as much diplomacy as they could toward each other. However, there was a constant danger, in connection with one episode or another, that some American Foreign Service officer would inadvertently create friction through something he might say.

I don't recall whether I've already given you an account of the experience of a congressional delegation, led by then Congressman Lester Wolff, a Jewish Member of Congress from New York. I think this happened in 1982, when I was DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] and maybe Chargé d'Affaires. I briefed CODEL Wolff and took them up to their hotel. We then handed them over to the consulate general for a further briefing. Unfortunately, an officer in the

Consulate general, while briefing the Congressmen, was fiddling with Christian religious beads [a Rosary?]. This impressed Congressman Wolff and his associates as follows. Wolff referred to “That SOB [i.e., the officer from the consulate general whom I mentioned], “waving his Palestinian beads at us throughout the whole briefing.” This officer's presentation, which was obviously designed to give them a consulate general perspective, deeply offended Wolff and other members of his CODEL and was seen by them as Anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian. When he returned to Washington Congressman Wolff made a spectacular affair out of this incident. He wrote a letter to the Secretary of State, demanding that he “bring the consulate general into line with U.S. policy.” He asked how this kind of thing could happen.

The Secretary of State was compelled to write a letter of reply, assuring Congressman Wolff and others that we had a unified policy in Israel and that the American ambassador and the consul general were reading from the same sheet of music.

That background made a deep impression upon me. Before I leave that period I might note that, in those days, the consulate general was a key link with and, within its sphere of responsibility, maintained liaison with the UN commander in Jerusalem, who was, at that time, a Finnish general. The UN commander supervised the bits and pieces of UN personnel assigned to UNTSO [United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization] and other organizations which had military observers in Lebanon and along the Israeli-Lebanese border.

All in all, the consulate general performed very important functions and was an important institution. None of the Foreign Service officers assigned to the consulate general in Jerusalem had an exequatur issued by the Israeli authorities and none had official standing in the eyes of the Israeli Government. It was often viewed with suspicion by many senior Israeli officials. In reporting terms its consular district nominally included the whole city of Jerusalem, as well as the West Bank of the Jordan River. As far as political access was concerned, it was constrained vis-a-vis the Jewish element of Jerusalem, which tended to stay aloof. Obviously, the consulate general was inundated by representations made by Palestinians over the years, in which they described what they regarded as the savagery, unfairness, and inequity of Israeli Government behavior.

When the Israeli settlement program really got under way, this involved the Israeli Government by a variety of means, some sophisticated and some less so, in expropriating land which the Palestinians considered as theirs. Often, these lands were wilderness areas, if you will. However, as the Israelis sequestered these lands, there would be Palestinian rural residents who would protest that “This was our land for generations.” The Israelis would say, “Prove it.” The Palestinians would usually be unable to prove it to the satisfaction of the Israeli authorities, who were tilted against the Palestinians anyway. When court cases on these matters were tried, and sometimes they were, with left-wing lawyers representing Arab clients, most often, in my recollection, the Arab plaintiff would lose, because he was up against the Government legal apparatus, which had done its homework.

Indeed, regarding the sequestering or expropriation, if you will, of land, the Israelis could and did cite British rules and precedents in administering the previous, League of Nations Palestinian Mandate. The British had been pretty adept at doing what they wanted to do and finding legal

means to justify this.

Against this background, when I came back to Israel as ambassador, I felt that it was essential to establish and maintain good relations with the consulate general. I did what I could in this respect. I urged my DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] and senior officers of the embassy to do everything that they could to overcome this division between the two posts and minimize friction.

By now, of course, the settlement programs of the Israelis had reached a really high pitch. We're talking now about a big, organized approach to this matter. This activity might involve Israeli groups making a sudden appearance in the middle of the night with earthmoving equipment. We're no longer talking of Israelis with just picks and shovels. We're talking about organized, fully funded, and sophisticated establishment of settlement outposts out on some knoll or hill and rapidly expanding from that point. It was the consulate general's responsibility to spot and pinpoint these developments and describe what was going on. As it did so, of course, consulate general officers were subjected to surveillance by Israeli authorities, who often came to regard these officers as poking their noses into places where they shouldn't, and so forth.

So this was a never-ending struggle. We just had to work at this problem all of the time. Fortunately, we had good leadership provided by our consuls general in Jerusalem and the deputy principal officers, who recognized this and worked with us. However, you could never relax. You just had to keep working at it.

Q: Who was consul general in Jerusalem when you arrived in Israel in 1979?

BROWN: It was Mike Newlin followed by Brandon Grove. When I returned later as Ambassador it was Phil Wilcox. These gentlemen had very impressive backgrounds and were outstanding, senior officers.

As I have said, this situation was, is, and will remain something which has to be worked on all the time. I think that the consulate general in Jerusalem is now the sole, independent consulate general in the Foreign Service.

Q: Yes. The formerly independent consulate general in Hong Kong is now under the embassy in Beijing.

BROWN: By the way, speaking of Hong Kong, when the return of Hong Kong to the motherland of China got under way, I remember warning those who were going to supervise our consulate general in Hong Kong, one of them a particular friend of mine, of this Jerusalem experience. This might sound totally removed from the situation in Hong Kong. However, in the nature of things I thought that this deserved watching, and I understand that they have their problems as well between the consulate general in Hong Kong and the embassy in Beijing.

Q: I'm sure, because this process has been going on since 1949...

BROWN: Furthermore, there is a natural tendency by American ambassadors to attempt to fold

consulates general under their wing, so to speak. Remember, watch the money flow. For example, when I was in Singapore in 1962, this office was transformed from being an independent consulate general, with very substantial responsibilities, to being a constituent post of Embassy Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur had grown from being a tiny consular post to a full-fledged embassy. The American ambassador in Kuala Lumpur who, in his day, had been an independent consul general in Singapore, moved to cut Singapore to being a post with a Class 3 or Class C cashier. That is, money had to flow through the embassy in Kuala Lumpur to the consulate general in Singapore and, with it, the power of decision. That's the nature of our business.

Much of the budget for the consulate general in Jerusalem was handled through the embassy in Tel Aviv, and much of the money flowed through us. I'm talking now, not just about State Department activity, but other U.S. Government services as well. It's a very complicated, delicate business. You have to be careful as an American ambassador not to let a cloud grow there, knowing that the funding flows through your embassy to this independent consulate general.

Q: Did the role of the Israeli Mayor of part of Jerusalem seem significant to you at that time?

BROWN: Well, Teddy Kollek had been Mayor of Jerusalem for many years. He was a very gregarious, significant figure. He was delighted to welcome the American consul general, but he was equally delighted to meet with the American ambassador. For our part the relationship with the Mayor was within the jurisdiction of the American consulate general.

Any Mayor of Jerusalem would naturally seek to have meetings with the American ambassador. However, we made sure that such meetings were arranged through the American consul general in Jerusalem, so that it remained clear that contacts with the Mayor of Jerusalem were within the purview of the consul general. Important elements of symbolism are involved here. You will find accounts of this symbolism and the related tensions over the handling of high level U. S. visitors in Ambassador Sam Lewis' memoirs of his tour of duty in Israel.

When we had senior level U.S. official visitors in those days, the Israelis tried to push such visitors to go to places in Jerusalem, including the Wall, which had been under Jordanian control until the 1967 war when the Israelis took control and declared Jerusalem to be forever undivided. Some people used to call it the Wailing Wall or the Western Wall. Some of these visits were especially delicate from the point of view of the consulate general, such as a visit by the Vice President or even by the President of the United States. The symbolism attached to visits to places which were outside the old West Jerusalem was very tricky given the official stance of the United States that the status of Jerusalem was to be determined later on, and its status as a *corpus separatum*.

During the period after 1967 Israeli power grew rapidly. The city had been forcibly unified under Israeli control and the Israelis unilaterally expanded its borders. Mayor Teddy Kollek did what he could to break down the barriers between East and West Jerusalem. He was frustrated, beyond a certain point, by the refusal of the Arab Palestinian leadership to go beyond accepting water and also money for their schools and hospitals. The Arab leaders balked at being incorporated

through Kollek's rather liberal vision into a Jerusalem organized as a sort of London, with boroughs and free elections. Most Arab residents of Jerusalem boycotted the opportunity to vote in Jerusalem-wide elections, even though they were not Israeli citizens.

During my time in Israel Teddy Kollek was succeeded as Mayor of Jerusalem by Olmert, who was a flashy political operator from a prominent Likud family. He had assiduously cultivated his own American contacts over time. He had, and still has, aspirations to become much more than the Mayor of Jerusalem. In his efforts to defeat Teddy Kollek, an old, established figure, as Mayor, Olmert wooed ultra-orthodox, Jewish voters. The ultra-orthodox, Jewish population of Jerusalem has grown by leaps and bounds over the years. Any Mayor of Jerusalem would have to have his lines out to the religious community, and certainly Olmert promised them enough to get their votes. So that continues as an ongoing saga.

The point I want to reiterate is that, even now, as times change, the American ambassador to Israel, and his staff, have to be extremely conscious of the delicacy of the situation and the role of the American consul general in Jerusalem. Of course, that concern has to be reciprocated.

Q: Now we turn to the summer [of 1990]. Saddam Hussein, the President of Iraq, had been making noises about war in the Middle East. There was a very sizeable, American community in Israel. In fact, many Israelis have two passports [American and Israeli], don't they?

BROWN: Oh, yes. By the way, if I may interject a comment at this point. In the 1940s and 1950s there was a very rigid U.S. approach to dual citizenship. The Department took the view that an American citizen could hold only one passport. However, over time, there was an erosion or liberalization of this position.

Q: The U.S. Supreme Court played a role in this.

BROWN: Yes. As a result, many Israelis, some of them senior senior figures, carried U.S. passports. I may have told this story, but one day after lunch, when I was DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], I was coming into the embassy in Tel Aviv. I saw an Israeli soldier with an automatic weapon slung over his shoulder and a yarmulke on his head, coming into the embassy. I asked him: "Where are you going, young man?" He said, "To cast my ballot as an absentee voter." This was in the elections of 1980. That would have been unthinkable during our earlier careers in the Foreign Service. The fiction was that this young man had been drafted or conscripted into the Israeli Defense Forces and had no choice in the matter. Therefore, he didn't lose his American citizenship, and he could be a dual citizen. There were Israelis who not only had dual citizenship but had multiple passports.

Q: I was just thinking that war clouds were gathering. There was a distinct threat by Saddam Hussein, who was not somebody whom you could just dismiss. You had this large, quasi-American group there in Israel, whatever you want to call it. What did you do about getting ready for the possibility of hostilities, in terms of evacuation? I'm not talking now about the embassy staff. I'm talking about ordinary Americans resident in Israel. What kinds of things were you doing about this?

BROWN: Let me come back to evacuation matters more specifically later. Like all Foreign Service posts, we had a monitoring system, broken down regionally within the country, to cope with possible disaster, whether earthquake, war, or other difficulties. Our embassy's Consular Section reported that as the tension grew, American residents of Israel began to check to make sure that their U.S. passports were up to date. We could see and feel that process going on.

Things began really to heat up after Saddam Hussein's remarks on April 2, 1990, that if war came, he would liquidate half of Israel by chemical warfare. Incidentally, as I read Charles Freeman's account of his time in the Middle East, during which time he learned Arabic, Chas says that Saddam recalled that Israel had attacked the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981. Saddam then said that, if Israel attacked Iraq again, the Iraqis would liquidate half of the Israelis by means of chemical warfare. That may be true, although it was certainly not my understanding of Saddam's remarks that he qualified his threat. I suppose that you would have to dig out FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service] accounts of Saddam's speech. In my recollection, what came across was a relatively stark message that, if war came, he would liquidate half of Israel with chemical weapons. That's the way the Israelis read his speech.

I started to detail this in my previous remarks. The temperature of public opinion in Israel rose, particularly after August 2, 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait. We had meetings within the embassy with many American citizens who inquired about what was coming, what would happen, and so forth.

The Israeli gas mask distribution system was activated. The masks had not yet actually been distributed, but the word was going out that the Israeli Government had the necessary equipment on hand. Of course, we told American citizens of this announcement. Then we got into a difficult dialogue, with American citizens asking us whether Saddam Hussein would use conventional, nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. They would ask us what we had to counter such attacks. American citizens would tell us: "You say that one of these gas masks is waiting for us in an Israeli warehouse. Will this gas mask be able to cope with VX, Sarin, or mustard gas? By the way, if the attack is with mustard gas, what about my skin? Do you have something beyond masks? Do you have rubber suits?" And on and on,

My conversations on these questions with people in the Department of State in Washington were largely over a secure phone. The information I obtained was not very satisfactory. Ambassador Charles Freeman, in Saudi Arabia, certainly had his problems dealing with similar inquiries.

My principal contacts in the State Department were with Jock Covey as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs under Assistant Secretary John Kelly and, eventually, Ivan Selig, who was Under Secretary of State for Management. It was with one or both of these officers that I got into some pretty heated conversations when I reported that there was growing consternation among American citizens in Israel about gas masks. I learned at a meeting within the embassy that personnel in the Office of the Defense Attaché had been issued gas masks, or at least that the officers had them, although their family members might not have had them. I was informed by these officers in the Department that this was impossible and was assured that: "We, in the State Department are the ones who authorize such distribution and we haven't authorized it." I said, "Would you like to have me read you the serial numbers on the gas

masks?" So there was a jolt for those people in the State Department back in Washington. As I mentioned previously, Ambassador Chas Freeman had a similar problem with the Department.

As the tension grew and we sought specific information, we sometimes got what we felt was a pretty cavalier response in these telephone conversations. At one point I was told: "If we ever thought that Saddam Hussein would attack Israel with poison gas, we would have all of you out of Israel in no time." I remembered those remarks later on.

By August 2, 1990, Israeli Minister of Defense Arens was seeking to arrange a detailed dialogue with U.S. Secretary of Defense Cheney and the American establishment on preparations for war. Arens wasn't very happy with what he was getting. He was getting a pat on the back and was assured: "Don't worry, we're looking into this problem," and so forth. It is in the nature of Israelis in such circumstances to want to have the United States speaking to their needs. You can do that at a professional, technical level. That is, our attachés speaking with their Israeli military counterparts. However, the feeling that Minister of Defense Arens and his associates had was that they were being left behind and sort of left aside and being regarded as just another irritant by U.S. officials who were trying to manage these problems.

In previous remarks I mentioned a little sidelight here when Mohamad Bassiouni, the Egyptian ambassador in Tel Aviv, assured me, as late as August 2, 1990, that the Egyptians knew Saddam Hussein well, and that President Mubarak of Egypt had a special relationship with him. Mubarak had been assured by Saddam Hussein that Iraq was not going to invade or attack Kuwait. Ambassador Bassiouni said that President Mubarak knew Saddam Hussein well because he had been a student of Mubarak's of some kind in Cairo and that the Egyptians knew how to handle him.

That line changed 180 degrees overnight when on August 2, 1990 Saddam Hussein's army invaded Kuwait.. President Mubarak was livid, and Bassiouni, his ambassador to Israel, informed me that the Egyptians had known Saddam Hussein, this SOB, for a long time. He was nothing but a thug and prone to betray his friends and allies and so forth. I was barely able to keep myself from laughing out loud on this occasion.

Q: When Saddam Hussein and his forces invaded Kuwait, did the Israelis set up Defense Condition 3 or something like that?

BROWN: I can't remember what exactly they did, but the level of tension was palpably rising. At the professional, military level there were all kinds of talks going on. Of course, a lot of this had to do with gas masks and so forth.

We slowly got into a situation where the war clouds were gathering and it was clear that the United States Government, led by President George Bush, was preparing for the worst case. By late 1990 visits by American Jewish groups to Israel had declined. However, Russian Jewish immigration continued, right on through the crisis.

Q: Was this before we had started building up our forces in Saudi Arabia?

BROWN: I can't remember the specific details and I don't have any notes on this. However, as tensions mounted and the U.S. began to gear up in anticipation of combat, visits to Israel by large delegations of American Jews began to drop off very sharply. I remember, let us say, that by late October or November, 1990, these visits were down dramatically. I used to say that all was not lost in terms of Israeli-American friendship and that we had to continue to strengthen the bonds between us and prepare for the worst.

If I may, let me digress a bit here. As of about October, 1990, I would say, I tried to look ahead a bit. That is, I asked my political counselor, John Herbst [later consul general in Jerusalem and Ambassador in parts of the former Soviet Union], to look ahead to the possibility of war and what might happen after a war, in terms of renewing the peace process in the Middle East. This cable focused significantly on Syria. I assumed that war was likely and that there would be a series of political earthquakes that would come with such a war. I assumed that with such changes a unique opportunity might open up after the war for a revival of the peace process.

In this connection the Syrian dimension of the situation would be important. Now, as I mention this to you, I can't remember how far we had already gone in persuading President Assad of Syria to join the coalition we were trying to establish, if war came. I'm not clear on this in my memory. However, I mentioned that possibility in this cable. I sent off that message, repeating it to other posts. Ed Djerejian, later Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, was then ambassador to Syria.

Now, if I may jump ahead a bit, by February, 1991, I ordered another cable to be drafted, which I think was titled: "Road to Damascus." It referenced that earlier cable and said, "We are now at war, Syria has joined the coalition against Saddam Hussein, which is a remarkable feat."

Q: Absolutely!

BROWN: In this second cable I recommended that we look ahead to a peace process which would significantly focus on Syria. I said that I believed that the time would come to talk about territorial compromise on the Israeli-Syrian border on the Golan Heights. Of course, there was the Lebanese aspect of the border that would have to be dealt with, but the crux of the negotiation would have to be with Syria regarding the Golan Heights. No Israeli Government that I could anticipate would be willing to give up control of all of the Golan Heights, but it might very well be possible for the U.S. to broker a deal under which a significant part of the Golan Heights area was turned back to Syria, along with a number of security guarantees for Israel. I said that this negotiation would be a major challenge for the U.S. Government.

I repeated this telegram to our embassy in Damascus. Ambassador Djerejian immediately weighed in, following up this cable and saying that, of course, that was the way he saw things. However, he pointed out that President Assad would demand the return of all of the Golan Heights area. One has to distinguish here about what the Golan Heights area comprises. When you refer to the Golan Heights, most of us think of the heights of the Golan, that great cliff that dominates the Sea of Galilee. However, the Syrians insist on the return of all the territory that they held before June, 1967. That would include territory approximately 10 yards from the Eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. That would be the Syrian version of the negotiating package.

So let's return to the war clouds gathering in the fall of 1990 and the determination that we were going to war and our build-up in Saudi Arabia. Do you want to save this for later?

Q: I think that this is probably the best way to do it, because I think that it is best to handle this narrative in segments. So we'll pick this up the next time where we're moving into Desert Shield. One of the questions that I want to ask would be early on in the process, when President Bush and Secretary of State Baker were putting together this remarkable coalition against Iraq. In other words, how to keep the fly in the ointment, namely Israel, out of the negotiations. I would like you to describe your instructions and how you dealt with this problem, because the Israelis were obviously unhappy about how this was handled.

BROWN: Okay. I don't particularly like the expression, "fly in the ointment" to describe Israel. However, we'll talk about this matter later on.

Q: Today is September 15, 1999. Bill, we're still talking about the period which led immediately up to the Gulf War in 1991. Many people had been telling you that they knew Saddam Hussein. I would like to ask about the early period of the crisis, when the initial threats came out. This would have been in the spring of 1990, I guess.

BROWN: Particularly the speech or remarks attributed to Saddam Hussein on April 2, 1990. Speaking of the growing tension in the region and about the possibility of war, Saddam Hussein said something like: "We now have binary, chemical weapons. By God, if the Israelis come at us, or attack us, we will liquidate half of Israel with chemical weapons." That's the way Chas Freeman remembers Saddam's remarks. My recollection was that Saddam didn't qualify his threat by tying it to an Israeli attack, but even if he did, his remarks had a dramatic impact.

Q: Something which I didn't ask concerns the period before anything else happened. You could almost assume that the Israelis would put a couple of nuclear weapons on a plane and take off on an attack against Iraq. Was this one of your assumptions?

BROWN: No, not at that time, although, later on during this crisis the Israelis let our satellites have a peek at some of their Jericho missiles. They knew that that message would get around, and it did.

I think that at this juncture perhaps it would be worthwhile for me to try to examine for the reader or listener to this interview the Israeli baggage as they went into this situation, in strategic, emotional, and other terms.

First of all, old timers in Israel with military backgrounds would tell me personally of their vivid memories of a battalion or so of Iraqi troops deployed in Haifa and on the perimeter of Tel Aviv in 1948. I remember one Israeli figure who later became a diplomat who said that he had actually exchanged words with an Iraqi battalion commander in Haifa during the Arab nations' invasion which followed the proclamation of the State of Israel. So Iraqi forces were physically there on

Israeli territory.

I remember another Israeli old-timer, Mordecai Zippori telling me that he had been involved in a counterattack in 1948 against Iraqi troops at Petach Tikva, a suburb of Tel Aviv. When the Israelis overran the Iraqi position, they found the Iraqi troops manacled together in a trench so that they wouldn't run away. So for the old timers, it wasn't just a symbolic thing, that Iraq was just another of the Arab countries, like the Saudis and so forth. Iraq had sent troops to attack Israel. This all happened long before Saddam Hussein was in power in Iraq.

Furthermore, you should remember that in those very early days of the hostilities against the Israelis in 1948, the Iraqis were so virulently anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli that thousands of Jews living in Iraq fled the country and many went to Israel. To this day there is a considerable number of Sephardic, or Oriental Jews from Iraq in Israel. Incidentally, there is a community of Iraqi Kurdish Jews in Israel today. The irony of one of Saddam Hussein's SCUD missile attacks is that a SCUD landed in Ramat Gan, which was predominantly an Iraqi Jewish sector. I remember inspecting the crater left from the explosion of an Iraqi SCUD missile and the buildings demolished around it. It was remarkable that so few casualties were caused by it. Some people died of heart attacks, and there were other people wounded, but there was no large number of casualties.

By the way, Yitzhak Mordecai, a tough retired Israeli general, is a Kurdish Jew. When he retired, he then ran for the Knesset and became Minister of Defense. Initially, he was associated with Bibi Netanyahu. Later, he abandoned Netanyahu and formed his own political party. The Kurdish angle takes us to an interesting sidelight of which most foreign observers are ignorant.

Strategically, given the Israeli defense problem an important part of the Israeli counter to the Arabs over the years was their effort to keep the Arab world divided. That's a formidable task for tiny Israel, but they did what they could. They tried to form alliances with non-Arab, non-Muslim peoples in and around the area. So the Israelis were delighted to hook up with Iran under the Shah. They worked very hard to develop a relationship with Turkey, knowing that many Turks bitterly disliked the Arabs, considering them traitors who had broken away from the Ottoman Empire and cooperated with the British.

They also sought to work with Muslim minorities in the Middle East who were non-Arab in the conventional sense. For years, for example, the Israelis worked hand in glove with the Kurdish nationalists. Many an Israeli military or security type was in those hills of northern Iraq, with the Kurds, training, arming, and participating, if you will, in activities against the Iraqi regime of the time. For example, the former Israeli Defense Forces chief of staff, Rafoul Eytan, was a very hard-nosed anti-Arab figure. In his memoirs he harks back to the good old days when he was stationed in Kurdish areas of Iraq, working with the Kurds. I could name several other, prominent Israelis who had been involved with the Kurds in their revolts against the Iraqis.

With this background, Iraq was viewed not only as anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli but also, as a particularly virulent threat to Israel. I think that that is important to bear in mind. The Israelis had a certain respect or even anxiety for many years about the Iraqis, much more than they felt about the Saudis. The Israelis tended to view the Saudis as weak and corrupt, although potentially

dangerous because the Saudis had the money to fund Yasser Arafat and many other Arab radicals, like Assad of Syria. However, the Israelis did not consider the Saudis as a fighting, expansionist threat to Israel. Iraq was a different story.

Apart from the Iraqi nuclear threat, there remained, and still remains today, a strong, Israeli, strategic concern about the possibility that Iraq, under Saddam Hussein or anybody else, could easily overwhelm Jordan. From Baghdad it is an easy 500 kilometer distance to Amman, Jordan, and the Jordanian regime was, and remains, relatively weak. It has a nice little army, but it couldn't stand up against a massive, mechanized attack.

So the Israelis, both for political and propaganda purposes, as well as on the basis of their own, strategic analyses, were, and remain very concerned about the possibility of an Iraqi takeover of Jordan and of the possibility of the Iraqis appearing one day, in mechanized strength, at the edge of the Jordan Valley between Israel and Jordan.

Q: From your Israeli contacts, and particularly the military, and almost anybody that you would deal with in Israel had a military background, what were you getting about the Iraqi military forces? The Iraqis had just had this long war with Iran and come out relatively ahead, if you want to put it that way.

BROWN: It was a mixed view. First, strategically, the Israelis were satisfied, to put it mildly, to see this prolonged and bloody conflict between Iraq and Iran, over a period of seven or eight years. This conflict took a terrible toll on both sides. However, as we went into Desert Shield and Desert Storm, notwithstanding the Israeli propensity to hype the Iraqi threat to Israel as a whole and to Iraq's neighbors, the top Israeli military professionals had a rather poor regard for the Iraqi military in terms of their ability to fight a modern war. Having said that, of course, the Israelis had very good intelligence on the massive numbers of Iraqi tanks, artillery, aircraft, and so forth. So it was a mixed picture.

What they saw was the ability of the Iraqis to overrun Kuwait quickly. They also saw the ability of the Iraqis, if unopposed by a U.S. led intervention, to overrun critical parts of Saudi Arabia, all the way down to the oil fields around Dhahran. They considered this a distinct possibility and even a probability, in the absence of massive intervention of the kind which only the United States could mount.

Going back again to an Israeli perception of an Iraqi threat, one had to bear in mind that among the baggage that the Israelis carried was the nuclear, chemical, and more lately, the biological buildup of the Iraqi military establishment. This had so disturbed the Israelis already that this was the subject of intensive conversations between Prime Minister Begin and Ambassador Sam Lewis and the intelligence communities of both Israel and the United States. The Israelis saw what they regarded as our failure to cope adequately with the ongoing flow of German, French, Swiss, and other type high technology into Iraq. This technology was producing centrifuges nominally for power plants. However, the Israelis also interpreted these centrifuges as part of a massive drive toward achieving a nuclear weapons capability in Iraq.

In my earlier remarks, as you may recall, I mentioned the gap in handling this issue between the

outgoing Carter administration in the U.S. and the incoming Reagan administration. The Israelis had repeatedly warned us at a very senior level after high level, intelligence exchanges with the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] on this subject. Considering that we were apparently inert on this matter and that the U.S. attitude had been limited to asking for more time to work on the Italians, the French, and the Germans on nuclear matters, the Israelis bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June, 1981. This action produced a negative outcry at the time in the U.S. and a minicrisis in U.S.-Israeli relations. You may recall at the time that we temporarily cut off supplies of aircraft and aircraft support to Israel.

Q: As you look back on the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, what was your feeling on that? Was this a sort of tongue in cheek protest against the U.S., or did we see Iraq as a threat? Did we feel that: "Thank God that somebody did this, or..."

BROWN: Well, there was an outcry in Washington and some tough, critical statements by the some members of the Reagan administration. The Secretary of State at the time was Al Haig. If you look at remarks made about Al Haig's reactions to all of this, let alone his later remarks, you get the impression that even then certain Americans felt that the attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor was not all a bad thing. As time went on and we became increasingly aware of what was going on in Iraqi nuclear/chemical/bacteriological activities long after that bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, this attack was subsequently viewed as a good thing.

During the Gulf War I heard Secretary of Defense Cheney bless the Israelis for having undertaken this attack. He also said, "Thank God that you did it when you did it." So we need to distinguish between our reaction to the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear facility at the time, our subsequent views, and then our views during the Gulf War itself, as well as what we discovered when UN and predominantly U.S. inspection teams went into Iraq after the Gulf War and discovered the amount of progress which the Iraqis had made in terms of horrible weapons of mass destruction. As you look at Israeli-Iraqi relations during this period, they were marked by a technical state of war. Both Israelis and Iraqis have a very negative view of each other, to put it mildly.

On April 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein made the statement I have already referred to. Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Arens, whom I considered a friend but who was known in Israel to be hawkish called me in and asked me what the U.S. was going to do about this statement. That began the Israeli push, well-articulated by Arens, for concrete assurances, for increased cooperation to face this common threat to the U.S. and Israel. You should remember that at the same time the political relationship between the Shamir Government, in which Arens was the Minister of Defense, and Secretary of State James Baker was not good. After a cut-down version of a Middle East peace process was articulated by Israeli Prime Minister Shamir, President Bush and Secretary Baker attempted to shape things in their own way. As a result, the peace process went nowhere, and there was bad feeling on both the Israeli and U.S. sides. The Arab Intifada [uprising] in the occupied territories was continuing and was applauded by Iraq.

Within the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] there are many factions, some of them very radical. One of those factions was in Damascus, which directed fire and brimstone not only against the Israelis but against Yasser Arafat [Chairman of the PLO] for being soft. Another one

of these PLO factions, which is called “The Palestine Liberation Front,” (PLF) is headquartered in Baghdad. It was a particularly virulent terrorist group. This is the group which seized the SS ACHILLE LAURO, an Italian cruise ship, in the Eastern Mediterranean, and executed one of the passengers on it, a handicapped American citizen, Klinghoffer, in a brutal manner.

At the end of May, 1990, on Shevut, a Jewish religious holiday, a couple of terrorist speedboats headed for the shore of Israel, when many thousands of Israelis were on the beaches. The terrorists from one boat managed to get ashore, there was a firefight, and they were hunted down and killed. The other speedboat ran out of fuel close to my residence! The Israelis picked up this speedboat there, armed to the teeth.

It turned out that these terrorists were members of the Palestinian Liberation Front, a group headquartered in Baghdad, parts of which are now working out of Libya. Colonel Qadhafi had these people trained, they were put on a ship which somehow made its way through our satellite tracking system, and they were launched against the Israeli coast. However, these groups were launched too far out to sea. As a Palestinian terrorist of that time it was poorly coordinated and executed.

When the Israelis collected the survivors of this operation and interviewed them, they got a considerably detailed picture from them of what the terrorists were expected to do. It turned out that the plan was remarkably simplistic. That is, they were given a profile of the Tel Aviv skyline, as seen from the sea. They were told, “Here is the Hilton Hotel, here is the American embassy; go in and kill anybody that you can. Then somehow, after this, work out an escape route.” According to the Israelis, The American embassy in Tel Aviv was specifically mentioned as a target. The Israelis asked me if we would like to have our intelligence people interview these terrorists. I declined.

Then I sat down and wrote a cable to Washington, summarizing what had happened. I noted that there was a dialogue going on with the PLO in Tunis. In view of what had happened, I recommended that, unless Arafat immediately dissociated himself from this faction of the PLO organization, denounced them and did whatever was necessary to make his opposition to this operation clear, we should break off further contacts with the PLO.

I knew that this cable would not necessarily attract great acclaim from the administration in Washington. [Laughter] The Bush administration had assiduously followed up the trail which the Reagan administration had blazed for a probing dialogue with the PLO in Tunis, to be conducted by Ambassador Bob Pelletreau. Understandably, a great hue and cry went up after terrorist incident. About three weeks later the Bush administration declared that it was ending the dialogue with the PLO. It did so in a way which left me and others convinced that this was a most reluctant move and that it was hoped that, somehow, this obstacle could be overcome. However, once again there was an Iraqi element in all of this, even though the operation itself was launched by Colonel Qadhafi.

Q: I don't want to get you off track, but I would like to set the scene. During this period before the Iraqis attacked and occupied Kuwait, were we doing anything with the Israelis about their occupation of a strip of Lebanon immediately North of the border with Israel?

BROWN: Throughout my entire time as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in Tel Aviv, and I am referring to the entire 1979-1982 period, as well as this period of my tour as ambassador, we were working under UN Resolution 425, which was unfulfilled in a key respect. The Resolution provided that all non-Lebanese forces were to withdraw from the region occupied by the Israelis and their ally, the South Lebanese Army under Major Haddad. This was a mix of not only Christian Lebanese Arabs but also Christian Druze and Shia Muslims. So whenever we had a dialogue with the Israelis on that particular subject, we were constrained by the need to implement UN Resolution 425, to which we were a party. The Resolution meant in practical terms that the Israelis should pull out of Lebanon and let the UN monitor the situation. The Israelis weren't about to do that under the conditions which then prevailed.

You remember the Lebanese civil war of 1982 in the wake of the Sabra and Shatila scandal. There was a pull-back of Israeli forces orchestrated by then Israeli Minister of Defense Arens, followed by a further pull-back orchestrated by Israeli Prime Minister Rabin. Subsequently, there were periodic episodes of attack and counterattack in southern Lebanon. The Israelis continued air strikes against concentrations of what now had become known as Hezbollah forces. These areas were first held by Palestinian forces, and were later taken over by the Hezbollah brand of Shiite, Iranian backed forces, with the clear acquiescence of the Syrians. Syria was supposedly constrained by the consideration that Hezbollah forces should not go too far, but the Syrians, their assurances to the contrary notwithstanding, were allowing Iran to run weaponry and ammunition, agents, and so forth from Iran, through Damascus, into Lebanon, thereby building up this Hezbollah effort. At times the Israeli combat with Hezbollah paramilitary units was quite sharp. So our position, as conveyed to the Israelis, was that there should be moderation and restraint, as it always had been. Moreover, we were driven by support for UN Resolution 425. This meant that the Israelis should pull out of southern Lebanon.

Q: Did we protest from time to time about the continued presence of Israeli units in Lebanon?

BROWN: Sure, we protested, when we saw that an Israeli action or reaction seemed to have gone too far. My contacts in Israel on this issue included Uri Lubrani a senior civilian within the Israeli military security establishment. He was a highly experienced officer, an articulate gentleman who had great experience with Iranian and Arab issues. He could sit with you and lay out in the most detailed manner why the Israelis were in Lebanon and why they were doing what they were doing. He expressed his own, personal willingness to see things resolved in an equitable manner, if only he could get positive responses from the Arab side. Lubrani was involved in all kinds of quiet efforts to open dialogues with Hezbollah and Shiite representatives and, indeed, others in the Muslim world. These efforts generally came to nothing. At any given time he had all kinds of operations under way, many of which he would discuss with me in confidence.

The Hezbollah position was and is absolute rejection of Israel and a determination to push the Israelis, not only out of southern Lebanon, but out of Israel. They remained totally rejectionist in their expressed attitude toward Israel. In other words, they expressed commitment to the idea of the destruction of the Zionist entity and a return of Palestine to its Arab, Muslim owners.

Against this background, let's go back to April, 1990, and the American reaction to the developing crisis at that time. Shortly after the Saddam Hussein statement of April 2, 1990, to which I referred previously, a U.S. Senatorial delegation headed by then Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole visited the Middle East. It included Senator Dole, his wife Libby Dole, and a few others. I think that it included four Republicans, Senator Howard Metzenbaum [Democrat, Ohio] was the Democratic member of this Delegation. He was included to make the delegation bipartisan. In their various meetings they saw President Mubarak of Egypt. Then they headed for Baghdad. At that time I received an urgent message from Senator Metzenbaum. I ended up talking with his staff member, over an open line, from the Delegation's plane.

If I recall correctly, Metzenbaum's staffer said, "We're headed for Baghdad, and Senator Metzenbaum wants your clearance." [Laughter] Looking on this as a kind of "cover your posterior" approach, I said, "Well, if you're going there, you're going there. Good luck!" They went to Baghdad. From there they came to Israel. I received a somewhat unusual request from Senator Dole that he wanted a big press conference shortly after his arrival at the Hilton Hotel in Jerusalem.

Now, prudent leaders of congressional delegations to Israel usually save their remarks until the end of their visit, after they've seen the Israel Prime Minister and other Israeli big wigs. They usually try to wrap up the visit and put their particular gloss on it. However, Senator Dole had something he wanted to say in public on arrival in Israel.

So it was that Senator Dole held a large, very well attended press conference. The thrust of his remarks was that they had seen President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, they had queried him about his remarks on liquidating Israel. Saddam Hussein had stressed that he had no intent to launch an unprovoked attack against Israel. As far as the lurid accounts of Saddam Hussein's use of chemical warfare against the Kurdish population, and you remember those pictures of ghastly, gas attacks against Kurdish population centers in Iraq, Senator Dole said that Saddam denied that there had been any such gas attacks and offered him a helicopter to go around Iraq and see how the positive the populace felt about Saddam. Senator Dole prudently declined the use of such a helicopter, but wanted to pass on Saddam Hussein's assurances that he meant no ill will against Iraq's neighbors. The general thrust of Senator Dole's extended press conference was that Saddam Hussein was a man who might have made some intemperate statements, but he was a man with whom one could do business. Therefore, hopefully, there was no major threat in the region.

I would say that, as a public relations exercise, it was a disaster at the time. Here we had a very respected Republican leader in the Senate who was later to become a Presidential candidate, reassuring the Israelis and the world on the basis of his discussions with Saddam Hussein. This did not go down well in Israel.

Q: When a U.S. Senator comes in like that, you were the American ambassador, and I can see people in the Israeli Government coming up to you and saying: "Nu?" [What's up?]. [Laughter] What do you do and how do you react to this?

BROWN: How do you respond? You say that the man has just been to Iraq. He tells you what he

said in public. You have to weigh this statement. Certainly, his intentions were good. You add that you don't have to point out that Senator Dole was the Senate Minority Leader. Let me add a vignette on Dole: during one of Shamir's visits to Washington he had a breakfast meeting with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Committee Chairman Senator Pell [Democrat, Rhode Island], Senator Jesse Helms [Republican, North Carolina] and Senator Dole were present at this meeting. There was a good turnout, of the kind that an Israeli Prime Minister usually gets. Shamir was given an opportunity to speak and then the Senators made remarks.

At this session, the Intifada came up. Some of the Senators present at the meeting expressed their concern over the handling of the Intifada and received a typical, Shamir response. In all of this, of course, Senator Jesse Helms was very supportive of Israel. At the same time Senator Dole was looking pretty sour. As this meeting ended, Senator Dole walked past me, looked at me, paused, and said, "Boy, if this guy [Shamir] had been from South Africa, we would have really raked him over the coals!" So, shall I say, Senator Dole displayed a manner that the Israelis considered unsympathetic, if not hostile, to Israel, at that particular stage.

However, one always has to temper these impressions because Senator Dole's viewpoint and that of many members of Congress, whatever they said publicly, were affected by the Israeli handling of the Intifada and of the peace process. Remember that the first peace initiative was portrayed as coming from Prime Minister Shamir. Shamir's reaction to the handling of that episode by President Bush and Secretary of State Baker in 1989 and 1990 left much to be desired, to put it mildly.

As tension in the Middle East mounted Israeli Minister of Defense Arens presented proposals for a cooperative effort to handle this threat to our respective national interests. As he did this, the American establishment was obviously getting antsy [disturbed]. It didn't want to jump into bed with the Israelis in handling the emerging crisis. It was working hard to contain the crisis in its own way. It didn't want to be seen to be coordinating with the Israelis.

Israeli Minister of Defense Arens was mounting these probes, these direct inquiries, to U.S. Secretary of Defense Cheney and others. Arens was making trips and was getting a polite but unmistakable stiff arm from the U.S. This was sort of cyclical. As he got the stiff arm, he continued on, and, of course, the Israelis were working through other channels, congressional and so forth, as the heat built up.

On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Now, the fat was really in the fire and, with it, Israeli Defense Minister Arens intensified Israeli requests for a coordinated effort to deal with the situation. When you got down to the nitty gritty, what the Israelis wanted was better intelligence on the precise locations of Iraqi missiles which might be used to attack Israel. We had done some overflights of suspected missiles in northern Iraq. On their own, as well as through intelligence exchanges with the U.S., the Israelis knew that the Iraqis had moved SCUD missiles, some of them fixed and some of them mobile, to what were called the H2 and H3 airfields in northern Iraq. From these positions a modified SCUD would have the range to hit Israel.

As time went on the Israelis, by one means or another, developed the intelligence that, not only

were these missiles in northern Iraq but these missile deployments were increasing. These missiles were pointed at Tel Aviv or Haifa. So there was a lot of activity on the part of the Iraqis going on in northern Iraq, concurrently with other things. Arens' requests increased, and now what he wanted was very specific. He wanted live, real-time intelligence on what was going on there. He wanted photographs of the targets which would enable a sophisticated recipient of these photographs to pinpoint Iraqi targets.

The U.S. was not providing this target information to the Israelis. We were talking about intelligence exchanges in more generalized terms. We said that these Iraqi missiles were deployed in northern Iraq, but we were not providing the Israelis with specific, reconnaissance photographs of either the H2 and H3 SCUD missiles, both fixed and mobile, or anything else, out of fear that the Israelis might go overboard and resort to some preemptive action against these targets. Secretary of Defense Cheney was polite and friendly in response to these requests from Israeli Defense Minister Arens, but he continued to stiff arm these requests.

Within Israel itself, as we got into the latter part of 1990, the political position of the Shamir Government was weakening in domestic terms. This was almost a normal development for an Israeli coalition government. Remember that this was now the second Shamir cabinet. The Labour Party was excluded after Shimon Peres misplayed his hand in January, 1990. The new cabinet had growing, internal frictions as groups within Likud led by Ariel Sharon, Moda'i, and David Levy, three very different figures, wanted more power and more leverage on Prime Minister Shamir.

In an effort to strengthen his coalition government, Shamir began to try to attract small, extreme Right Wing parties such as that led by Rafoul Eytan, whom I mentioned previously. He was a former Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces and was a very hard, hawkish individual vis-a-vis all Arabs. Another retired general, Ze'evi, who was nicknamed "Gandhi," was the head of a two-man extremist political party named "Moledet," the Hebrew name for "the Hammer." Ze'evi was an advocate of transfer. That is, the expulsion of the Palestinian population from the occupied territories, in the absence of a major change in attitude on the part of the Palestinians. Moledet was a really hawkish party. That was the kind of internal development occurring within and around the Likud.

As the political tension mounted, the Constrainers, Sharon, Moda'i, and Levy, were critical of everything that Prime Minister Shamir and Minister of Defense Arens did. So this affected not only internal, domestic policy, but it produced a hardening among those whom I mentioned in Likud who were critical of the government. This had an extra-deleterious effect when the Gulf War finally came. Arens and company were pressing for target reconnaissance photography as part of a live, real time intelligence exchange. Trips were being made back and forth. The administration of President Bush was saying, in effect: "Look, we'll manage this. We'll certainly keep Israeli interests in mind. However, don't muck things up, don't do anything pre-emptive. Let us go about our efforts to form a Grand Coalition against Iraq."

When President Bush committed troops to Saudi Arabia, we witnessed the extensive, continuing buildup called Desert Shield. When the Israelis looked at this enormous buildup, they continued their efforts by proposing a direct relationship with General Norman Schwarzkopf [Commander

of Central Command and of the buildup of forces committed to Desert Shield, as well as of combat operations under Desert Storm]. This was turned down flat. We said that we would manage this relationship through Washington and that we would give the Israelis what was necessary. However, we made clear that we would manage it our own way.

Q: Were you in the position of trying to say to the Israelis: "Come on, fellows, you understand what the situation is." The Israelis had to know that they could screw things up if they got too close to what we were doing.

BROWN: I had my role and I had my scripts. I can remember situations when Arens was pressing me, along with Washington agencies, for a commitment to provide target photos of Iraq. As I knew what the Washington line was, I was saying: "Will you promise not to attack the Iraqis?" Of course, Arens wouldn't do so. I would then have to report his refusal to provide such a commitment.

Remember that the atmosphere at times was clouded by other, extraneous issues. For instance, as we had been for some time, we were upset about the Israeli relationship with South Africa. There was and had been developing in South Africa a missile program which had progressed so far that we could anticipate the deployment of missiles in South Africa which had a remarkable likeness to the Israeli developed nuclear capable Jericho missile. We were aware of big contracts involving large amounts of money. I had already previously broached this subject with Israeli Minister of Defense Rabin and, later, with Minister of Defense Arens. The Israelis did not take kindly to such approaches. They told us that they had no nuclear cooperation arrangements with the South Africans. They told us that these are well-paying contracts which have to do with conventional matters related to space exploration but not matters involving mass destruction or nuclear weapons.

Well, we were very concerned about this. From time to time I would make strong demarches on this subject. These were not appreciated, particularly when I made them at this time, as Desert Shield was going on. Either under instructions or not under instructions, I also raised with the Israelis their technological exchanges with the People's Republic of China, because I felt so strongly on the subject. We were aware, over time, that the Israelis had been providing the People's Republic of China with fairly sophisticated technology, for example, the PYTHON weapons system. The PYTHON was an Air to Air Missile developed by the Israelis which gave them a BVR [Beyond Visual Range] capability to acquire and hit an aerial target. This made it a deadly and very important advance in aerial warfare. I told Arens that this kind of equipment could change the balance of forces over the Taiwan Strait. I told him that Israel should not be doing this. There were some spirited exchanges with Arens over that matter as well. Again, Arens was particularly irritated that we were raising this kind of subject, given the Iraqi problem. I guess that he felt that it was inappropriate.

We didn't think so. These were issues which came up concurrently, and I, as an old China hand, was particularly zeroed in on the PYTHON Air to Air missile and let this be known.

The enormous U.S. buildup in the Gulf area continued. Saddam Hussein showed no sign of backing down. The overall situation showed more and more the likelihood that war would break

out. As the Israelis looked around, they were still getting complaints from the Europeans and others, including ourselves, about the Intifada and the situation in the occupied territories [of Palestine]. The Israelis saw us forming what they regarded as a very strange coalition of countries opposed to Saddam Hussein, and I give full marks to President Bush and Secretary of State Baker for having been able to do so.

This coalition against Saddam Hussein included, among others, Israel's hated enemy, President Assad of Syria. Just a word here. The long, protracted conflict between Syria and Israel was also marked, not only by the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973, but also by the whole conflagration in Lebanon. In 1982 the fighting in Lebanon resulted in the Israelis shooting down considerable numbers of aircraft of the Syrian Air Force and the destruction of numbers of Syria's T-72, Soviet-furnished heavy tanks. The Israelis also destroyed a goodly proportion of Syria's radar and anti-aircraft defenses in Lebanon and also took on Syrian troops stationed in Lebanon and defeated them as necessary in 1982.

Armed conflict between Israel and Syria goes way back. There were all kinds of firefights which took place before 1967 on the Israeli-Syrian front. Once the Israelis took over the Golan Heights in 1973, President Assad was very careful not to precipitate conflict in the Golan area. Rather, he shifted his efforts into Lebanon and into housing and hosting all kinds of ultra-radical terrorist and PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] groups and then gradually, over time, supporting the Hezbollah, in Lebanon. Moreover, over time President Assad was developing his own missile and chemical warfare program, as well as the beginnings of a biological warfare capability. In terms of strike capability and time to target, missiles fired from Syria don't have to travel 500 kilometers, as a souped-up SCUD missile later did when it was fired from the H2 or H3 airfield areas in northern Iraq. Missiles fired from Syria can hit their targets in Israel in almost no time at all. In fact, Syrian aircraft, including the MiGs and so forth which they have, can take off from Syrian bases and can be over Israel in one minute or less. I remember that during my time in Israel a disaffected, Syrian pilot suddenly zoomed in and landed on an Israeli airfield. He was barely discovered in flight by Israeli radar when he was landing in Israel. Suddenly, he was on the ground in Israel.

So to see Syria included in the coalition built against Saddam Hussein did not exactly please the Israelis because with it came the glamor of being a member of such a coalition and nice words being sent to President Assad. A meeting took place between Presidents Bush and Assad in Geneva or Vienna. Bush and Baker didn't come to Israel to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Shamir. So a new relationship was developing between the U.S. and Syria. From our viewpoint this was understandable because it was a remarkable achievement to get Syria into the coalition against Saddam Hussein, even if Assad did nothing but move some troops to the Iraqi border. The Israelis were none too happy about this, but they had to swallow it.

Q: While you were getting this, did the Israelis develop a new respect for the United States from the fact that, by God, when the chips were really down, the U.S. was putting our troops where our mouth was.

BROWN: Yes, the Israelis followed the U.S. scene very carefully, of course. However, the scene was somewhat muddled by the fact that the Democrats in Congress and some defense experts,

including retired Admiral William Crowe, went along with the buildup against Saddam Hussein but were also looking for a non-violent, peaceful resolution of this crisis.

Q: The embargo on the shipment of U.S. food and other goods to Iraq was approved at about this time.

BROWN: The embargo was approved, but it didn't have much of an impact on Iraq. The closer we got to open conflict with Iraq, the more concern was articulated on the American scene. Arens and company followed this development very closely. I think that their analysis was that war would come, but there was a concern that the U.S. might just back down rather than go to war.

By December, 1990, the U.S. buildup was so enormous that I would say that Arens and the Israeli defense establishment had concluded that: a) Saddam Hussein, who was so stupid in so many ways, would probably not back down; and b) that the U.S. was now so publicly committed to combat by this massive, growing presence in the Middle East that we wouldn't back down, either. Indeed, we finally got a UN resolution approved which set January 15, 1991, as a deadline for an Iraqi pullout from Kuwait, or else.

I would like to pause at this point and describe a vignette which took place in early December, 1990. This involved a very painful experience for me and highlights the dilemma which I felt at the time. In the midst of this enormous U.S. buildup in the Gulf area, in the midst of all of these Iraqi actions, including the invasion of Kuwait and the butchery that Iraqi forces perpetrated, and their other actions and the revelations of what the Iraqis had done, one a weekend in December, 1990, I received information that the Iraqis had just launched what appeared to be two or three, SCUD missiles from the area around Basra, in southeastern Iraq, to the Northwest. They impacted at a range of around 500 kilometers from the point at which they had been fired. Had these missiles been fired from H2 or H3, their line of flight would have taken these missiles directly to the Tel Aviv/Haifa area. This information was obviously of enormous import to us and to Israel as a likely target.

I immediately charged my Defense Attaché and my CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] Chief of Station with getting clearance from Washington to pass this information to the Israelis. I tried to obtain clearance myself over the secure telephone available to me in the embassy in Tel Aviv. This happened on a Saturday or a Sunday, I can't remember which. Certainly, it was over a weekend. We could not get any action out of Washington. We tried repeatedly, through different channels, but, over and over again, we were stonewalled. I was really pressing my CIA Chief of Station and my Defense Attaché for action. It was obvious that the necessary clearance from Washington had to come through one or both of those channels. My staff tried repeatedly to obtain clearance to pass this information but could not get it.

At this time a Senator visiting in Israel. Maybe it was Senator Oren Hatch [Republican, Utah]. He was due to see Israeli Minister of Defense Arens that evening at about 6:00 PM local time. I was scheduled to accompany the Senator on this call. I pressed all day long in anticipation of the meeting with the Defense Minister that evening. I hoped that I would receive authorization to pass on this vital intelligence information of deadly import to Israel. I thought of this problem in

terms of our main objective of keeping the Israelis on the reservation and not doing anything, by commission or omission, which might prompt the Israelis to launch a pre-emptive strike against Iraq. That could have been disastrous at that stage to the coalition against Iraq and our more general objectives in the area.

All day, all afternoon this process went on of trying to obtain clearance to pass the information to the Israelis. No positive reply was obtained. Our Defense Attaché was specifically prohibited from passing this information to the Israelis until clearance was obtained from Washington.

The meeting came between Israeli Defense Minister Arens with the Senator. Arens gave a very serious briefing on the overall situation and his desire for the right kind of U.S. help and so forth. As the meeting broke up, I asked for the opportunity to meet separately with Arens. We said good-bye to the Senator who left, accompanied by other embassy officers. Arens took me into his office, and we were there alone. I sat down and said, "Have you got a map of Iraq handy?" He picked up his phone and asked him to arrange to have someone bring a map of Iraq. It was remarkable how long it took, at least five minutes, before the map was brought. This was a rather strained period. Obviously, Arens was looking at me, wondering why the American ambassador was asking him for a map of Iraq. Finally, the map appeared. The officer who brought it left Arens' office. We spread the map out on his desk. I said to him words to the following effect. "Look, my friend, I am putting my testicles in your hands. There has been, I am sure, a misunderstanding. You are going to get this information. It's just that it's a weekend, and you know how it is on a weekend in Washington, so that formal clearance hasn't come, but I'm sure that it will come. Don't jump to the wrong conclusion." I pointed to Basra on the map and said that the Iraqis had just launched, that day, two or three missiles from about here to about there (I pointed to the two places concerned.) on about a 500 kilometer trajectory.

Q: You mean that this was a test launch. This was not a real missile launch. I want to clarify this point.

BROWN: Yes. This was a launch within Iraqi territory of missiles on a trajectory of about 500 kilometers. I said that it was a launch on a Northwesterly trajectory from here to here (pointing to the map), impacting around there. It didn't take Arens long to figure out that that was the approximate distance from H2 or H3 to Tel Aviv. I emphasized that I was sure that Arens would get this information through regular, security channels anyway, but I just wanted him to know of this development.

As I said this, internally I was sweating bullets. I was very security conscious and very much aware of the clearances in process and all of that. However, I just felt that this had to be done if we were going to maintain a semblance of confidence and trust in achieving our main objective which, as I said, was to keep the Israelis away from launching a preemptive strike at Iraq and keeping them on the reservation.

I left Arens' office at about 6:30 or 7:00 PM. My Defense Attaché called me and said, "You're clean, because the clearance has just come through." That episode is set forth in Arens' book, Broken Covenant. In it he said that I told him that I was putting my life in danger. No, I didn't say that. I said that I was putting my testicles in his hands. [Laughter] Secondly, he says in his

book that the follow-up message didn't come through for a couple of days or weeks, in any case much later. That's not accurate. According to my Defense Attaché, the clearance came through just as I was giving Defense Minister Arens the information on my own authority. This is the kind of problem that you can run into in crisis situations like this. You just have to exercise your judgment. As I look back on this episode, I can see that it was a reflection of how uptight Washington was on a weekend with this kind of information.

Later on, I raised this matter with Judge Webster, then Director of CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. He gave me a peculiar response, to the effect that he had been at a Washington Redskins football game, and there was a communications problem. My own suspicion was that this was probably a decision made by General Brent Scowcroft [National Security Adviser to President Bush]. Scowcroft had a pretty hard view of how to handle such matters. However, I felt that it would have been most damaging to our interests in Israel had we not passed that information on.

Q: Oh, absolutely! Was it the type of thing that you could have reported to Washington: "Unless otherwise instructed..."

BROWN: No. I'd used up my bargaining chips and I'd pressed my Chief of Station and Defense Attaché to the limit on this matter. So there you are. Occasionally, you run into that kind of dilemma. You hope that you won't, but if it does, you have to use your best judgment.

After Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz refused Secretary of State Baker's last approach and was asked, on camera, I think, "If it comes to war, does this mean war with Israel?" He replied: "Absolutely." I don't believe that he qualified that by conditioning it on an attack by Israel.

By now the internal demand within Israel for the distribution of gas masks was in full spate. The Defense Ministry did not have enough masks to provide them to the whole population of Israel and of the occupied territories. To minimize the possibility of panic, Arens resorted to partial distribution to the population of urban centers. For this he was heavily criticized by Ariel Sharon, Moda'i, and David Levy. Remember that Levy represented the Moroccan, Sephardic element of the population of Israel. Subsequently, Arens was forced to issue gas masks to all Israeli inhabitants of Jerusalem and to do the best he could.

Then came the cry: "What about chemical warfare?" It was a very difficult task for the Israeli political and military leadership to handle. However, by stages we were issued gas masks in cardboard boxes, which we carried around. Mothers with tiny infants were issued with portable, crib-like devices.

Remember, Saddam Hussein had claimed to have a binary chemical capability. In this context "binary" meant that you could take two chemical substances, shovel them into a SCUD missile nose cone, and they would react with each other on impact to turn the subsequent product into a weapon of mass destruction, whether it was Sarin, VX, mustard gas, or another exotic, terrible weapons system. Tensions were running higher all the time, and there was an increasingly shrill call by Arens and other Israeli leaders for photos of Iraqi missile emplacements.

Now that the U.S. ultimatum to withdraw from Kuwait had been given to the Iraqis and rejected, the pressure increased from Arens to let the Israelis know what our plans were. The Israelis wanted to have immediate, direct contact with the U.S. on the basis of a real time intelligence exchange basis. The Israelis wanted to be plugged in to General Schwarzkopf's command in Saudi Arabia. They wanted to know our plans. They said that we should know that, if Israel was hit, the Israelis had their own plans, and so forth.

Then began our effort to hold the Israelis on the line and keep them on the reservation. In this regard we set up a special, dedicated communications system called "HAMMER RICK." Using this system, Secretary of Defense Cheney and Israeli Minister of Defense Arens could communicate directly with each other on a radio telephone. Under this system, when one person speaks, the other person is cut off. Then the other person has his chance to speak, and the first person is cut off. And so it goes, back and forth. In response to obvious needs we also set up a special alert arrangement through the "HAMMER RICK" system whereby when our satellites spotted the launch of an Iraqi missile, the information would be immediately relayed to Tel Aviv so that the Israeli populace could be instantly warned.

In response to the Israeli request for real time photographs, the answer was that the U.S. would handle that question in our own way, bearing Israeli interests in mind. When that message was received, the decibels rose on the Israeli side because they wanted the real stuff in time and they wanted to be plugged into General Schwarzkopf's command. They let us know, in no uncertain terms, that they had their own contingency plans. The general tenor of their comments was: if the Iraqis strike us, we'll strike back. The Bush administration extracted from Israeli Prime Minister Shamir a commitment not to preempt without provocation. However, Shamir would not promise not to react if attacked by the Iraqis.

In this effort Paul Wolfowitz [Under Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs], for the Pentagon, and Larry Eagleburger, who was Deputy Secretary of State, both well and favorably known to the Israelis, were dispatched out to Israel, just before our first strikes against Iraq. Their task was to talk with Prime Minister Shamir and reach an agreement under which, not only would the Israelis not preempt but also would not react militarily if attacked. They also told the Israelis that on January 15, 1991, hostilities with Iraq would begin.

Now the request that the Israelis would not react militarily if attacked by the Iraqis was an extraordinary request, given Israeli history. We should recall that, in 1967, the Israelis were not first physically attacked by the Arabs, but the Arab buildup reached the point that the Israelis felt, for all intents and purposes, an Arab attack against Israel had already taken place. In effect, they launched on warning. They knew that an Arab attack against Israel was coming in a short time. So, in 1967, the Israelis launched a preemptive attack.

Now we were asking the Israelis to make a commitment not to react militarily, even if attacked by Iraq. In essence, Eagleburger and Wolfowitz assured Shamir that the U.S. would take care of the SCUD missiles at H2 and H3 in northern Iraq. We said that we would devote a major (by implication even a disproportionate) effort to that. If, in spite of our efforts the Iraqis managed to attack Israel with SCUD missiles launched from H2 and H3, Eagleburger and Wolfowitz called on the Israelis not to counterattack. They said that we would continue to devote great resources

to take care of this threat against Israel. Furthermore, the U.S. didn't need Israeli forces to be involved in the attacks on Iraq. This could lead to disastrous results, and we could end up shooting each other down. Shamir told Eagleburger and Wolfowitz that while they would not attack Iraq preemptively, the Israelis were not going to commit themselves not to attack Iraq if attacked by Iraq. These conversations were now taking place at 2:00 or 3:00 AM. At one stage Eagleburger said that we could not give Israel the identification modems, or signals for our aircraft operating in the area, and Israeli air operations without those identification signals could be disastrous.

Q: Today is September 3, 1999. Bill, do you want to continue with your discussion of the Eagleburger-Wolfowitz conversations with the Israelis?

BROWN: Fine. Let me again remind our readers or listeners that in this, as in all other instances, I have no notes. It is now nearly nine years after the event, so, in view of the frailties of my memory, this has to be checked. Various memoirs can be double-checked on this.

Just to pause a minute and review. Here we were on the eve of the Gulf War. The Israelis were very disturbed by Saddam Hussein's rhetoric and by their past war experience with the Iraqis. There was an additional factor here, the Jordanian factor. If I may deal briefly with this tangential matter...

Q: Yes.

BROWN: There had long been a relationship between various Israeli governments and King Hussein of Jordan. Over a protracted period, of time there had been clandestine meetings at the highest level. For example, Prime Minister Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan, or other Israeli figures would put on disguises and go to meet the Jordanians. There had been meetings on a yacht in the Gulf of Aqaba. I'm not saying that they took place very frequently, but there had been meetings with King Hussein of Jordan. Clandestine messages had also been passed through one channel or another.

However, the Israelis had also fought with the Jordanians who, in 1948, had seized what we call the "West Bank of the Jordan River," as well as the portion of Jerusalem inhabited by the Arabs. The Jordanians had stayed there, in armed force, as an occupying power. The Jordanians had formally, and unilaterally annexed the West Bank. I believe that this annexation was recognized only by Pakistan and one other country. The Jordanians were expelled from these occupied territories during the war of 1967 after Jordanian forces attacked Israel. There had been border incidents since then. There had been disputes and even minor firefights over water from the Yarmuk River where the Yarmuk River joins the Jordan River, when the Israelis found out that the Jordanians were illegally from the Israeli point of view, diverting that water. Formally, the two countries remained at war. At this stage, although Israel and Egypt had negotiated and signed a peace treaty, the Israelis were technically in an ongoing state of war with Jordan and with most other Arab countries.

In addition to this, during that fateful summer of 1990 the late King Hussein, under pressure, began to take some actions which were very disturbing, from the Israeli point of view. I can't recall them all, but there appeared in Jordan an Iraqi Air Force element. This unit began to exercise in Jordan, sometimes nominally in conjunction with Jordanian air units. Jordan was obviously under pressure. It was gravitating more and more toward Iraq, as the tension mounted in the Middle East. This made the Israelis very unhappy and, of course, it didn't make the U.S. happy at all.

By January, 1991, Jordanian units began to go on a reinforcement and alert basis along their side of the Jordan River. The Israelis began to ask themselves what this portended. Was it just Jordanian nervousness or did it portend, perhaps, in the worst case, an invitation or pretext for the Iraqis to move into Jordan. Suddenly, this could pose a massive, mechanized threat to Israel. This was a very disturbing development as well.

There was a strong feeling on the streets of Amman. At least 60 percent of the population of Jordan was composed of Palestinians. The figure may be as high as 80 percent, but it is somewhere in that 60 to 80 percent range. The Palestinians, and certainly Yasser Arafat [Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization] were applauding Saddam Hussein throughout this whole crisis. During this period of heightened tension, the influence of the Iraqis and Palestinians on King Hussein was obvious, and there were several, other negative developments which I cannot recall. However, taken altogether, it was an unhappy, disturbing extra element of concern for the Israelis.

Q: Through our ambassador to Jordan or through the State Department, or through the Israelis, with their rather constant contact with the Jordanians in one place or another, were markers being put down, such as: "Don't do this, or that will happen," and so forth?

BROWN: I can't remember specifically, but I'm confident that such markers were being put down from the American side. We were leading the coalition against Saddam Hussein, and King Hussein's actions were undermining it. His rhetoric, that of the then Crown Prince of Jordan, his brother, and of the Jordanian media was subversive to our overall efforts.

As the embargo against Iraq in the Persian Gulf went into effect and was tightened, the Iraqis became more and more dependent on the overland supply line, which ran from Aqaba [at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba], which could accommodate fairly large ships, then by heavy truck up to Amman and over to Baghdad. The squeeze began there as well, in terms of a coalition maritime force. This was a subject of increasing tension, as the U.S. dominated force was out to stop war materials going into Iraq. There was constant squabbling as to the contents of these ships. Over a protracted period, representatives of the coalition maritime force were boarding ships which were moving through the Strait of Tiran into the Gulf of Aqaba and unloading their cargoes at Aqaba, [Jordan]. So there was further contention there.

Again, as time went on, there were questions of money, as the total, coalition squeeze tightened on Iraq. The status of Jordan remained a contentious issue throughout all of this. The Iraqis stepped up their presence in Jordan and exploited it. At times one felt that the checkpoint on the Iraqi-Jordanian border in fact was like a sieve, as goods which might have military value flowed

around this point in the desert. We were pressing the Jordanians, and they were making excuses.

The second Eagleburger/Wolfowitz mission took place shortly after the outbreak of the Gulf War when in spite of our bombing of fixed Iraqi missile emplacements, and in spite of our use of PATRIOT anti-missile batteries, Iraqi SCUDS fell on Tel Aviv and Haifa. Eagleburger and Wolfowitz urged the Israelis to maintain a low profile and stay put. They promised that we would devote even greater resources to the bombing of SCUD missiles, both static and mobile. The Israelis countered: "We have never, in our history, had to rely on anybody to defend us and, if we continue to be attacked, we can respond." Eagleburger refused repeated requests by the Israelis to prepare joint plans. Some Israelis then said that if we wouldn't prepare joint plans with them, then, if attacked, they could counterattack using their own plans. Given the geography, there is only one direct route to go from Israel to Iraq, and that's through Jordan or else through a small slice of Syria. However, the real answer is through Jordan. The Israelis said that it would be regrettable, but if the Jordanians sent up aircraft up to try to prevent the use of a corridor over and through Jordan, then they would have to take out the Jordanian air force.

That view, expressed by some Israelis below Shamir, created great consternation among the Americans. Eagleburger told Prime Minister Shamir that a refusal to accept our proposals followed by an Israel air attack against Iraq might create a situation where we could not provide Israel with the identification codes for our military aircraft, and a disaster could result. This very clearly meant that in the fog of war we might inadvertently end up shooting down Israeli aircraft or they Israelis might inadvertently shoot down ours.

When Eagleburger and Wolfowitz got back to the hotel from their conversation with Shamir, they reported by secure phone to National Security Adviser Scowcroft and Secretary of Defense Cheney. Eagleburger was talking to Scowcroft, and Wolfowitz was talking to Cheney, on secure phones out of our Control Room in the Hilton Hotel in Jerusalem. I think that Secretary of State Baker was in the Control Room over at the White House, although I am not sure of this. When the import of what Eagleburger had said to Shamir sank in, there was a bit of a flurry, and Eagleburger called back to Prime Minister Shamir in the middle of the night. Eagleburger said something like this, "Mr. Prime Minister, I'm afraid that I may have overstepped my instructions. What I meant was that, in extremis [in the last analysis], we will not cooperate with you on any joint operations. However, what we could do would be to stand down." That is, if after suffering heavy casualties Israel were to launch a counter attack on Iraq by air, and if we had adequate information of this, we could stand down or step aside.

Q: In other words, we could get out of Israel's way.

BROWN: Yes. Meanwhile the situation was a very dicey as the SCUD attacks continued. Within the embassy in Tel Aviv we had all been issued with gas masks. We had them at our side 24 hours a day. We also had put up plastic sheeting, as people did throughout Israel, in at least one room above ground in our homes and within the embassy. Until then Israel had been geared for conventional air attacks and had specially constructed shelters in hotels and municipal buildings. In houses people very often had their shelters for an explosive attack by conventional warheads. Now, we had to consider a chemical warfare attack and, therefore, you wouldn't want to go down below ground. You had to go up and get into an airtight, plasticized room, put on your gas mask,

and try to survive. So that had all been prepared. The embassy had had its drills and everybody had been inspected.

Q: Were you losing personnel at this time?

BROWN: Well, there is another, painful subject. As the crisis mounted, naturally enough, we began to develop embassy plans for reducing the size of our staff radically. In the wake of the Iranian disaster of 1979 [when the embassy in Tehran was seized by revolutionaries], I swore to myself that if I ever became a chief of mission or had any power of decision over the matter, I would devise a plan under which I could run an embassy with very few, say five people: the ambassador, a communicator, a consular officer, and an administrative officer or two.

Now, obviously the situation in Israel was not the same kind of situation we had faced in Iran. However, I developed a plan for progressive, staged reductions in staff. As I tried to obtain approval for this plan from the Department, over the secure phone, I ran into a stone wall of opposition in the State Department.

The debate was really aggravating me and to my Washington counterparts. To this day I still don't have the full picture but I concluded that General Brent Scowcroft [National Security Adviser to the President] and probably other people as well, including President Bush didn't want the image of Americans leaving Israel to be displayed. They didn't want it for a variety of reasons, primarily because they feared that a drawdown in Israel might affect the enormous, American presence working in the oilfields of Saudi Arabia.

Q: And in support facilities.

BROWN: And in support facilities in what was the crux of the operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. There were surely other, political considerations as well.

You can draw all kinds of lines, including voluntary departure and the guidelines for it, the departure of non-essential people, and, in the last analysis, the directed departure of personnel. I struggled over this problem. I don't think that at this stage it is useful to talk about the rhetoric of the matter. However, I say that we had a really, potentially serious situation in this regard. If Saddam Hussein used these weapons of terror, directed against civilian populations, and if we did not get unnecessary people out of here, including wives, babies, other dependents, and eventually non-essential officers, we would be leaving ourselves wide open to all kinds of severe criticism. People might say, "You had all of this time. Why didn't you send some of your personnel home?"

Remember, as we get to the period that I'm now discussing, civilian airlines, except El Al [Israeli state airline], were canceling flights and the insurance rates on shipping were enormously increased, as insurance brokers prudently covered those contingencies. We didn't have an independent airlift in Israel at that time. This was a subject that really worried me.

Q: Also, the available, American airlift was pretty well tied up with the buildup in Saudi Arabia.

BROWN: Oh, yes. Obviously, we had figured out that the Iraqi enhanced SCUD missiles clearly had enough range to reach Tel Aviv and Haifa. Their warheads could be chemical or biological.

There was also the whole question of casualties and hospitalization. The Israelis have long had very sophisticated and detailed plans for military disasters, including gas attack and so forth. Their hospitals are geared toward treatment of these various contingencies. However, we just didn't know at the time what would happen in the last analysis. Perhaps by the time we would get a casualty to the hospital, he or she might be permanently crippled or dead. So there was a contentious dialogue going on all the time, largely between myself and Jack Covey and Ivan Selin in the Department of State. Perhaps I had better just leave it at that.

Q: I would have thought that when you consider what borders need to be crossed, the best thing would be to get buses and take the evacuees to Egypt.

BROWN: Well, if I may jump ahead a bit, there were differences of opinion within our official, American community. My wife, Helen, being a gung ho Foreign Service spouse, said, "I'm not going anywhere." However, a little later, after the first Iraqi SCUD missiles fell, I said to her: "You're going to Eilat" [on the Gulf of Aqaba], because we had figured out that the SCUD's couldn't reach Eilat. I said, "You're going down there. You're going to be a role model and you're going to lead a bus convoy." She vigorously objected but, finally, agreed. She took our cat and led a convoy of Embassy dependents down to Eilat, where we had leased hotel space for the period of the conflict.

Q: As this situation was developing, and I'm not talking about the war but the period just before the war, did you find that regular line people from the Foreign Service also wanted to get the hell out of Tel Aviv?

BROWN: Rarely. There was a particular case in a particular Section of the Embassy. The chief of that Section was sorely disturbed to report to me that one of his officers, an analytical type, wanted to leave the post with his wife. In that agency's history, it was a very gung ho group, so his superior, the Section chief, was very disturbed to tell me this. This involved an individual officer who was well-trained in the Middle East and well-trained in analysis of the Iraqis and so forth. This individual had concluded that, indeed, the Iraqis *did* have chemical warheads available to them. He believed that the Iraqis would not necessarily be restricted to the use of conventional, high explosive warheads on their SCUD's. Indeed, in retrospect, he was right. They had that capability. Analytically, he was correct as far as Iraqi capabilities were concerned. Thank goodness that Saddam Hussein did not use that capability.

Meanwhile, many dual citizen, Israeli-Americans were swamping the airlines to get reservations to leave Israel. There were strong opinions within Israel on this score. I certainly don't want to point the finger at anybody. These were highly emotional, personal decisions, but they certainly kept our Consular Section busy as people rushed to check their visas, get their passports renewed, and leave while they could do so.

Q: The same thing happened during the 1973 war, too.

BROWN: And Israeli Television occasionally would cover people with long beards and black hats, going up the ramp of an aircraft and into a plane. That was unfortunate in terms of the development of a possibly stereotype. That is, it was thereby suggested that not only ultra-religious Jews did not fight or contribute to defending Israel, but now were bugging out.

Let's move on, then. We were all geared up as an Embassy. We had special wardens, monitors, systems and radios tested. Everybody's houses had been checked. For this particular kind of very detailed planning, including reporting, we had things organized so that, if we were hit, some people within our Embassy could go out on the streets and reconnoiter a bit to contribute to our spot reporting.

So, early on the morning of January 17, 1991, the word came that the Gulf War had started. A massive bombardment of Iraq had begun. Not too long after that, I was on the telephone to Washington. I was operating out of my residence and had a very significant number of people with me, all with gas masks. My residence was sealed with plastic sheeting and so forth. I heard several loud explosions. As an old artilleryman, I picked up the phone and reported to Washington: "We're taking incoming fire from SCUDs," and said that our embassy teams were checking to see whether there were any American casualties. The Operations Center in the Department responded: "Yes, we're seeing it on CNN (Cable News Network)!" CNN and other networks couldn't identify where these explosions were occurring, for security reasons. However, they could give a pretty graphic account of what was happening. Israeli TV itself was on for 24 hours a day. We were off to war on TV.

The explosions were frightening to a people that hadn't previously experienced that. It turned out that, within the Israeli system there were some cases of minor panic. There were some false reports that someone could smell gas. They probably smelled cordite from the explosions.

Q: Or the explosions might have ruptured gas lines.

BROWN: Yes. We began to operate on a 24-hour basis. It turned out that Iraq launched, I believe, 39 SCUDs throughout the period of hostilities. Most of these were launched in the direction of Tel Aviv and some to Haifa. In all cases they were grossly inaccurate, but then they were a weapon aimed at spreading mass terror anyway.

The SCUD explosions had a shattering effect in residential areas. Groups of apartments were damaged or destroyed. Israelis generally live in apartment houses. Most of these apartments had been built in the 1950s or 1960s. They were fairly frail and vulnerable to over pressure waves [which exceeded atmospheric pressure]. So there were a lot of caved in apartments, some of them dramatically so. When you would drive by the site of an explosion, you would see the side of a building sheared away, with beds and other furniture hanging out. A lot of the windows were blown out. However, the number of direct casualties was miraculously low. It was said afterwards that only one person was directly killed by a SCUD missile. Some people were wounded, and then you get into the question of whether they were directly wounded or were wounded by the debris from the explosion.

There were quite a few heart attacks among the elderly. There were some other cases which

involved people and their protective kits. These not only contained their gas masks but also contained a syringe of serum against chemical attack. People were instructed that only in case of clear identification of the gas should people inject themselves in their thighs or buttocks. There were people who clutched these syringes, injected themselves in panic, and suffered the consequences thereof. The anger among the people at these SCUD missile attacks, of course, rose very high.

I've already related that when Larry Eagleburger and Paul Wolfowitz made their second visit to Israel, Arens was hinting that Israel might retaliate against the Iraqi SCUD attacks. [See above for the exchanges with Eagleburger and Wolfowitz during their second visit after the war had started.] I might just say that, although Israeli contingency plans were never revealed to us in detail, it didn't take a genius to figure out that the Israelis would go after the H2 and H3 airfield complexes and that they wouldn't necessarily rely on air attacks alone. The more common Israeli response would be to go in with commandos. They clearly had that capability with their C-130 transport aircraft.

By the time of the Iraqi SCUD attacks on Israel Arens reversed course in one sense. Just before the war began, we had been training Israelis to man and operate what were called PATRIOT anti-missile batteries made in the U.S. These were not really anti-missile batteries. They were anti-aircraft batteries, with the prospect or hope that the relevant software would be upgraded so that they could deal with incoming missiles.

Destroying a high-speed jet aircraft is one thing. Destroying an incoming SCUD traveling at missile speed is a different matter. The SCUD missiles would go up 100 miles or so in the atmosphere and then come down at you. This was a different matter, as we were to find out. To the initial offer of some second-hand F-15 fighters and a couple of batteries of U.S. manned PATRIOT missiles, Arens initially said, "No. We'll defend ourselves. Nobody has ever come in here to defend us." However, his own people were still in training on PATRIOT missiles in the United States. With the outbreak of war and the lack of any defense against incoming SCUD missiles, Arens reversed course. So in came several batteries of U.S. manned, PATRIOT missiles, carried on C-5 transport aircraft.

They were a sight to behold. The PATRIOT crews included some women, because structure of our forces was such that women were also operating this weapons system. The women were mostly enlisted personnel, but I think that there were a couple of women officers as well. The PATRIOT missile batteries were deployed in various places. One of them was emplaced at the old, civilian airport at Sedeh Dov, near the Tel Aviv power station. Another battery was deployed in open fields between Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion International Airport. When it rained, these areas often turned into a sea of mud.

When Eagleburger and Wolfowitz came for their second visit, the Israelis pressed even harder for reconnaissance photographs of Iraqi SCUDs and for a direct line into General Schwarzkopf's headquarters. It was obvious that General Schwarzkopf didn't want any such thing, and Washington was certainly backing him in this regard. Finally, a promise was made that General Olson, from Schwarzkopf's command, would come over and would be stationed in Tel Aviv. After several days' delay he arrived, but it was obvious that General Olson had nothing new to

give the Israelis.

The Israeli military were really getting angry, at this point. Therefore, we set up a special system whereby reconnaissance photos were first sent to Europe for processing. Then, from Europe they were sent into what had been my USIS [United States Information Service] Library, which had been converted into a Joint U.S.-Israeli Photo Intelligence Interpretation Center which was open 24 hours a day. If I may go off a bit on this tangent, I will tell you that I used the stereoscopic equipment myself. The Israelis would be given photos which showed tracks of mobile SCUD missile launchers. You would see holes in a highway or a large culvert made by U.S. bombs. However, never during this whole exercise was there ever produced a single photograph of a destroyed SCUD missile. You could see tracks that went down a highway and then into a culvert, and you could see a hole from an American bomb nearby. You could hope that, maybe, that bomb had destroyed a SCUD. However, there was never any proof of this.

Similarly, as the first PATRIOT missile batteries were fired in Israel, they were in an automatic release mode. There were whole barrages of PATRIOT missiles fired up into the sky against these incoming SCUDs. Cheers went up from myself and all of those present who watched them. The PATRIOTs went up, and then you'd hear thunderous explosions. Washington was reporting a fantastic kill capability by the PATRIOT missiles. President Bush himself went to the Raytheon factory in Massachusetts and claimed that we had had something like a 95 percent kill rate. Well, this turned out to be absolute rubbish! In fact, I leave the evaluation of the PATRIOT missiles in Saudi Arabia to Ambassador Chas. Freeman. It didn't take long before the Israelis at the professional level turned from cheering, to very serious skepticism, to outright disillusionment. As the Israelis were taking their own photos of the interface between our outgoing PATRIOTs and the incoming SCUDs, and then the aftermath, they determined that, at best, we might have hit one SCUD out of the 39 fired at Israel. Fortunately, the SCUDs were terribly inaccurate. Some of them landed in the Mediterranean Sea. My wife was once playing mah jong in Herzliya Petuach, a suburb of Tel Aviv, while wearing her gas mask during a SCUD attack. She heard a particularly loud explosion probably 500 yards away from her out on the Mediterranean. It really jolted her mah jong game!

We were awfully lucky. Moreover, there were a few humorous moments. Among these, I remember Larry Eagleburger, by now carrying a cane and wearing cold weather boots, slogging through a muddy field, going from PATRIOT launcher to another, then holding a press conference in the auditorium of the Hilton Hotel, his boots covered with mud up to his shins. This made great press copy. Of course, Larry Eagleburger is always great copy.

The spectacle of American troops in the SCUD batteries defending Israel was remarkable. People turned out from all over Israel to watch them. They brought cakes and entertained our troops, many of whom, both officers and the enlisted, were African-Americans or Hispanics. A lesser but still significant number of them were women. The Israelis were not used to women in a combat role. There are women in the Israeli Army, but they were not in line combat outfits. I suppose that one could have argued that PATRIOT missile batteries, as originally configured, were not considered line combat outfits. However, these were certainly line outfits. And here were American women operating these missiles. It was a remarkable display. The Israelis did all that they make our troops feel at home.

However, behind all the camaraderie, at the Israeli professional and leadership levels, there was a lot of heartburn and a lot of very heavy questioning going on as the U.S. military and political establishments were claiming great success for the PATRIOT missiles.

Frantic efforts were being made to upgrade the PATRIOT fire direction software package. We would hear rumors that the American batteries of PATRIOT missiles in Saudi Arabia, which did intercept some SCUDs, had a better software package than those in Israel. We had to assure the Israelis, that our batteries assigned to Israel had the latest features. There was a lot of diplomacy conducted at the political-military level. There were Israeli military personnel stationed in all of our PATRIOT missile fire direction centers, so that they could absorb, first hand, exactly how we were handling the missiles. We had people in the Israeli fire direction centers, so there was a warm feeling between military personnel at the battery level.

As the defeat of Iraq became obvious there was an influx of Congressional and other visitors. American politicians wanted to be photographed with American troops, in action, defending Israel, in a common effort. We had to suit up each and every one of these visitors with gas masks and brief them, upon their arrival at Ben Gurion International Airport.

The pattern which emerged was that, over time, the Iraqis, now under attack and fearing daylight U.S. bombing raids, would wait until dark, launch their SCUDs missiles. That meant that we were vulnerable to SCUD missiles, beginning at about 6:00 PM.

I'll never forget the visit of Congressman Tom Lantos [Democrat, California], a survivor of the World War II holocaust. You may remember that I handled the Taiwan-instigated Henry Liu murder case, which was in his constituency, back in my days in Washington under Wolfowitz. I took Congressman Lantos and his charming wife to the residence of the Deputy Mayor of Tel Aviv, which had been damaged by a SCUD missile. The whole house was askew. The building had been condemned for human habitation. The Deputy Mayor's family was trying to salvage what they could, after living there for decades. Congressman Lantos, charming wife, and I received permission to go upstairs in the house. There we found a collection of dolls scattered across a bedroom floor. The dolls had been knocked out of the closet by the SCUD explosion. The cheekbone of one of the dolls had been broken and was missing. Lantos reached down, picked up this doll, turned it over, and looked at the broken cheekbone. He just emotionally blurted out: "Budapest, 1944." He had undergone bombings there as a young boy. All around us apartment after apartment had badly damaged. Beds and other furnishings were hanging out of the buildings. It was a very moving experience. The SCUD missile had detonated about five feet above the street in downtown Tel Aviv. Thank God that a lot of people were not killed!

I remember another visit by Congressmen Solarz and Ackerman [Democrat, New York], a prominent, Jewish Members of Congress. It was a typical, Solarz itinerary. He wanted to see everybody and do everything. His program showed arrival at about 4:00 PM, a briefing by me, then a trip by car to the site of a missile explosion, then over to see a PATRIOT missile battery. Out came the TV cameras and interview after interview. I had a little surprise for Congressman Ackerman. I had previously learned that there was an ethnic Korean Second Lieutenant in a PATRIOT battery, who was a graduate of West Point. When I asked him where he came from, it

turned out that he was from Congressman Ackerman's district. I had him brought in and trotted him out for the TV cameras. On camera, I said to Congressman Ackerman: "You may remember that you appointed him to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point." The Congressman said, "Oh, yes, I remember him very well!" He put his arm around the lieutenant's shoulder, and this was altogether a great, TV photo opportunity.

Finally, I said to Congressmen Solarz and Ackerman: "Gentlemen, it's now 5:45 PM. We have about 15 minutes left. It can soon really get hot around here. These soldiers will probably have to go into action. You've now been briefed, you've seen the missile battery site and you've seen the troops. Rather than go back to the Embassy for a further, extended briefing, I suggest that we send you up to Jerusalem." SCUDs were not hitting Jerusalem, probably because of the Arab population and the Muslim holy sites up there. Solarz said, "No, let's continue. Let's go to the Embassy." So we went to the Embassy and up to the conference room next door to my office, which had been turned into a sealed room. By now almost everybody in the Embassy had left, as it was wartime.

I started to continue the briefing. Suddenly, the air raid sirens went off. If I may pause here, the HAMMER RICK communications system, of which I have already spoken, gave us about three or four minutes' warning time from the time of launch of an Iraqi SCUD from H2 or H3. When the siren sounded, I said "Now, gentlemen, you will put on these gas masks. I will notify Washington." We got the gas masks on them, I went next door, called the Operations Center in the Department of State, and asked them to notify the offices of Congressmen Solarz and Ackerman, telling them that they were in the Ambassador's Conference Room. I said that we were under attack but were okay.

I went back to the Conference Room, and there were Solarz and Ackerman, mumbling with their gas masks on. Months later, when the war was over, Solarz said to me and to others that he had met many Ambassadors and in many situations. However, this was the only time in his 17 year career in Congress that an Ambassador resorted to shutting him up by putting a gas mask on him!

I mentioned that Jerusalem was never subjected to attack by SCUD missiles during the Gulf War. However, at the time, you never knew where they might hit. When those sirens went off, they sounded all over Israel and the occupied territories.

This takes us to another, unfortunate aspect of the whole situation. That is, the Palestinian reaction. Just as there was dancing in the streets of Amman, [Jordan], when the Iraqis launched their missiles against Israel, to the great consternation of Tel Aviv and also Washington, so there were also reports of Palestinians dancing on their roofs in the occupied territories. They were reported to be shouting, "Utrub, utrub," meaning: "hit them (the Israelis) again, hit them again, harder, harder."

One has to be careful here. I was told that in such places as the outskirts of Haifa and elsewhere, some Palestinian Israelis or, as the Israelis used to call them, "Israeli Arabs," would offer an Israeli Jew shelter if he were passing by their home when the air raid alarm went off. There were some such cases. They did this on humanitarian grounds. However, the stereotype and the

widely-shared, Israeli image was that Palestinians, in the occupied territories, were all cheering as these Iraqi missile attacks were going on. Jordanians were widely reported in Israel to be dancing in the streets, and Palestinians with them. Perhaps most of the “Jordanians” dancing in their streets were really “Palestinians.” I don't know. But that's the sort of unfortunate image which emerged, and for which the Palestinians were to pay a price.

Of course, Yasser Arafat's rhetoric throughout the whole Gulf War was supportive of Saddam Hussein. That was to be very significant later on, as we drove the Iraqi Army out of Kuwait. The Kuwaitis then turned on the Palestinians, who had performed very important functions in Kuwait. They were often the managers of services and can do kind of people. They were deported en masse from Kuwait, having been portrayed as collaborators with the Iraqis. A great number of them ended up, guess where? In Jordan, because nobody else would take them.

In the middle of all of this I got a call from Washington, asking me to go in and arrange for the release of a prominent, Palestinian academic who had arrested by Israeli security authorities. I met with Yusip Ben Aron, the Director General of the Israeli Prime Minister's office, and Eli Rubenstein, the Secretary of the Israeli Cabinet and said that Washington has instructed me to request that this gentleman be released. They were livid! In essence, they said, “Hell, no! This guy, with his cellular phone, was in contact with a PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] member in Tunis, during the SCUD attacks.” They said that the Tunis contact, said, “Listen, I've got a friend here who'd like to have a word with you.” That person then got on the phone and asked this Palestinian in Jerusalem where the SCUD missiles were hitting. This person was the Iraqi Ambassador in Tunis.

According to Rubenstein and Ben Aron, the Jerusalemite said, “Well, they hit here and there.” Eli and Yusip then indulged in some strong language and said, “That SOB is under arrest and that's where he belongs.” I said, “Gentlemen, first of all, you know and I know that he was talking hot air. He had no more idea than the Man in the Moon as to where, specifically, this or that SCUD hit. This guy was a resident of Jerusalem, and no SCUD missiles hit up here. So the guy was blowing gas, okay? From your viewpoint such conduct is atrocious. On the other hand, let's just say that it was foolish. I realize that this was most unfortunate behavior, but let him go.” Well, the Israelis weren't about to let him go immediately, though eventually, they did.

Q: As you were talking about this, you mentioned, off-mike, the report that Arab Palestinians were cheering on the Iraqis. I assume that this kind of news was played up in the Israeli press.

BROWN: Yes. It was just another, very unfortunate episode which contributed to the worst kind of Israeli stereotype of Palestinians, and Arabs in general. According to this stereotype, the Arabs are an unremittingly brutal crowd. This is too bad when one considers that these Arabs are human beings. Many of them are honest, ordinary people. It is sad to see such stereotypes spread around.

I'll go on, since you've raised this issue. On the whole business of how Israel handled the Intifada over the years we made many demarches. During my time, I made them personally, and my officers did, too. Sometimes these were made by instructions from Washington and sometimes without instructions, when we saw what we considered to be overly harsh Israeli reactions to

Palestinian Intifada incidents. The Palestinian arrested by the Israelis were routinely incarcerated and subjected to interrogation, under the old, British system of administrative detention in Palestine which avoided full, civilian court procedure. In various cases the Israelis destroyed the homes of the Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities. Their family residences were blown up or bulldozed, and the family members had no recourse.

On one occasion Richard Shifter, then Assistant Secretary of State for Humanitarian Affairs, visited Israel. Dick was Jewish himself, had a distinguished career as a lawyer, and oversaw the preparation of the annual State Department Human Rights Reports covering the whole world. For Dick's visit I had requested a meeting with the Israeli internal security service. This security service was commonly called the "Shin Beth," or the "Shabak." Traditionally, one never revealed the name of the incumbent directors of that service. Now that he is retired, I can say that the name of the Director of Shin Beth at the time was Jacob Perry. Perry had taken over as director in the wake of a public relations disaster. Some Palestinian terrorists in Gaza had carried out a particularly heinous deed. They were captured by Shin Beth operatives and died immediately afterwards. This was covered up at first but then it was revealed.

Q: This was the bus incident, wasn't it?

BROWN: Yes. There was a great scandal, and the chief of the Shin Beth was forced to resign. Perry succeeded him. There was a prestigious commission appointed to investigate the matter, the Agronit Commission, which issued both a public report and then a classified report that wasn't given to us. The classified report went into the question of guidelines on how much pressure could be applied to prisoners under interrogation. This was a very delicate, complex subject.

When Shifter and I talked with Perry, some senior staff members of his service were present. We got into interrogation techniques and were told that the Israelis very frequently picked up the same person on multiple occasions because, once released, these individuals would frequently get into trouble again. They would also relate to their colleagues the details of Israeli interrogation techniques. Therefore, we were told, the Israelis had to resort to a variety of psychological gimmicks including placing a hood over the suspects' heads, using special sound effects, etc. to make the suspects feel uncomfortable and apprehensive without actually hurting them. There are all kinds of techniques in use all over the world for this. It's rather a grim kind of business.

On this occasion Perry took a pencil and lightly ran it over the thigh section of his trousers. Then he said to me: "No officer under my command is allowed to do more than that, or even that, without my permission." This was a rather dramatic statement to make in view of the reports of brutal interrogation. I leave it to the reader to draw his or her own conclusions, but it was a statement by which Perry accepted full responsibility for what was going on. He assured us that the application of pressure on detainees was all "controlled and within the limits."

During our interview with Perry a very thick album of color photos had been placed on the table for our perusal. One of Perry's senior officers asked, "Would you like to see in detail what Palestinians are doing to each other, as they skin each other alive and tear each other to bits?" "

He was referring to Palestinian attacks against those who had been suspected collaborators with the Israelis. We said, “No, thank you very much,” because I knew that it was a very grisly collection. Professionally, you have to be very careful in such circumstances.

I'll give you another vignette, and I'm not making excuses of any sort for the Israeli military or security services. We flew down to the headquarters of the Commandant of the Gaza Sector, Major General Vilnai [later a cabinet minister]. He gave us an overall briefing and then summoned into his command bunker, a group consisting of both officers and enlisted men. Some were from the infantry, and some from the Israeli Military Police. They were a mixed group all of whom spoke English. The general said, “You may ask them any question you want, anything whatsoever.” So Assistant Secretary Shifter asked questions on the rules of engagement.

I fixed my attention on one of the officers among them, a lieutenant colonel who was a battalion commander. I asked him: “Why are you, a colonel, carrying a sniper scope on your rifle?” He said, “Because my command to the people in my unit is: 'If you see something which is aggravated and explosive, I want you to come to me, personally, as soon as possible. If possible, I want to deal with this problem myself.’” In other words, he said, he preferred to fire the first shot himself. I said, “But why the sniper scope?” He said, “That is to minimize the possibility of a lethal effect.” Speaking of lethal effects, the Israelis were firing rubber bullets. A rubber bullet is a rubber cased, metallic object which can cause great pain if it hits the human body. If fired close enough to the targeted individual, it can actually kill him. It certainly can fracture a bone and cause significant damage.

I relate that incident for what it's worth. One last scene in that respect is that when we left that same bunker room and headed to another room, I spotted something to which nobody had called attention. It was a paper target reversed. It was in a corner, with a wooden stick behind it. It had obviously been used on a firing range.

So with my Marine Corps background I reached through a pile of trash and pulled the target out of the corner. I turned it around and was so struck by what I saw that I called Assistant Secretary Shifter over. I said, “I want you to look at this target. You'll notice that the shots on the target are all in the legs, hand drawn below the printed torso. From this I conclude that at least this target was used in an exercise in which people were being told: 'Shoot them in the legs,' as opposed to the torso.” I said, “Dick, I have to tell you something. In terms of rules of engagement I'm an old Marine, and I shoot with the Marine Security Guards for practice wherever I've been stationed. The rules of engagement for a Marine Security Guard at an American Embassy are as follows: 'Hold your fire as long as you can, but if you're fired upon or otherwise seriously endangered and you have to respond, shoot to kill.' In all of our target practice for Marine Security Guard units, a hit off the torso is a “miss.” We shoot for a 'head kill,' a 'heart kill,' or as close to them as we can get.”

Well, as I said, I do not in any way wish to exonerate the Israelis. This was just a professional comment on...

Q: Also, the Israelis have been dealing with this problem for a long time. For us, when you can't kill too often, and you're dealing with something like the Intifada, or...

BROWN: The Palestinians were throwing heavy bricks or stones and using slingshots and various things which put out people's eyes and sometimes cause death. God help the Israeli soldier who make the wrong move and blunders alone into a Palestinian mob. If a buddy of yours gets brutally killed by a mob, you are likely to react harshly, whether you are an Israeli or anyone else. This kind of experience tends to harden you. They may well have reacted overly harshly, but the Israelis were trying, in their own way, to cope professionally with a very difficult situation. While we felt that our criticism was warranted, the Israelis believed that their response was also warranted.

Q: A question on the same subject, but bringing it back to the same time line. You had Palestinians who were not friendly to the Israelis. The members of the Israeli security forces were undergoing a certain amount of hostile fire and suffering injuries. Were you getting reports from our Consulate General in Jerusalem, or from your own officers in the Embassy, including from the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], that a crackdown on the Palestinians during this time of combat had been ordered by the Israelis?

BROWN: If you're asking about the time of the Gulf war, I frankly can't remember. My suspicion is that all eyes, Israeli and Palestinian, were glued to the TV set or to the sky in the evening for SCUDS, that the Israelis imposed a heavy curfew on the Palestinians and that Palestinian attacks on members of the Israeli security forces at this time probably diminished. That's just my impression, nine years after the fact. I don't have anything more precise than that to offer.

Q: If you don't have any memory of that, it probably shows that everybody was kind of waiting. Did the Israelis mobilize their forces at this point?

BROWN: Oh, yes. They were on a full alert. Israeli Defense Ministry officials were clearly implying, without giving specific details, that the Israeli forces had practiced and were rarin' to go against the airfields at H2 and H3 in Iraq. All that Arens was waiting for was the go ahead signal from Shamir.

I spoke with an Israeli general afterwards who volunteered to me that he had opposed Arens' approach. You'll find this subject dealt with in Arens' book, Broken Covenant. There were differences of view among professional Israeli military officers, let alone the division between Prime Minister Shamir and Arens. Arens was pressing Shamir to give him the green light to attack the airfields at H2 and H3, using a corridor through Jordan. This meant that, if the Jordanians tried to stand in the way, there was a strong likelihood of a conflict between the Israeli and Jordanian defense establishments.

President Bush was personally prevailing on Prime Minister Shamir not to do this. Meanwhile, Arens and company constantly pressed us to give them more information so that they could satisfy themselves that we were doing everything we could to destroy the Iraqi SCUDS. With this, over time, came mounting criticism from the Israelis of our efforts. The Israelis said to us: "If you're devoting all of this effort, why isn't it working? If you can't do the job, well, we can do it, one way or another." However, Arens was being thwarted by his own Prime Minister, who

was much influenced by President Bush.

There were those within the Israeli Defense Forces who were answering Arens along the following lines: “Look, the Americans are doing our job. The net effect of all of this effort is to severely damage Iraq's military capability. In a strategic sense the Americans are doing our work for us. They've been pounding Baghdad on a sustained basis, for 40 days and nights in a way that we can't do. So why do we have to intervene? If we go through the Jordanian corridor and into H2 and H3, we will encounter a high degree of risk, as far as Israeli casualties are concerned, and anger the Americans.”

Arens did not reveal to us that he was facing this dissent from at least some officers. However, this kind of professional debate was going on. His senior military officers were not completely united behind Arens, as he made very strong statements to us. He was an old time, patriotic Israeli, brought up in the tradition that: “We defend ourselves and we react instantly and decisively to an attack.” To sit there, as Israeli Minister of Defense and remain passive through SCUD attacks, was virtually intolerable. I suppose, from his viewpoint, this might also set a terrible precedent for the future. In some unforeseen, future contingency, Israel might be asked to do something similar.

Through it all, I felt that Prime Minister Shamir's reaction, in yielding to President Bush's requests, was surprising, given Shamir's background. However, had a SCUD missile hit an Israeli hospital, a school, or a major group of civilians, or a barracks - like the one in Saudi Arabia, where we lost some 20 Americans killed and, perhaps, 90 wounded - who knows How Shamir would have reacted? I don't think that in such a case Shamir could have restrained the Israeli military any longer. It was really a remarkable response by Shamir in overruling his own Defense Minister.

As I said, we had a Joint Photographic Interpretation Center at our Embassy, which I visited periodically. The U.S. side never produced photographic confirmation of a single kill of a SCUD missile. General Olson was replaced by General Armstrong who was articulate and made a far more convincing appearance of trying to respond to Israeli requests for more information, more photos, and so forth. However, like the rest of us, General Armstrong was working to keep the Israelis on the reservation. He gained the respect of the Israelis.

As time went on, the number of SCUD missile attacks diminished. They appeared to go more wildly off any conceivable target. In fact, I think that the last or the next to the last SCUD missile had a concrete warhead, instead of a high explosive warhead. It landed way out in the Negev desert. Baghdad announced that they had attacked the Israeli nuclear weapons plant at Dimona. The missile hit nowhere near there. It became obvious that, for whatever combination of reasons, the SCUD attacks against Israel no longer amounted to much. However, we never knew, right up to the very end, whether a SCUD missile would come down on Israel with terrible, lethal effect. [Addendum: I was happy to hear Secretary of the Air Force James Roche state in a speech at Palm Beach Florida on January 18, 2004 that during the Second Gulf War of 2003 we provided the Israelis with full, live coverage of our operations against Northern Iraqi military installations.]

After the SCUD missile attacks were over, the HAMMER RICK communications arrangements remained in effect for quite a while. The Israelis joined in hailing President George Bush and General Norman Schwarzkopf as great heroes. Eventually, the American PATRIOT missiles were withdrawn from Israel.

The Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, General McPeak, also visited Israel. When he came, he delivered a grand briefing to the Israeli military establishment. He had a surprise for me when he landed at Ben Gurion International Airport. Toward the end of the line of visiting U.S. generals, colonels, etc., a young captain with a moustache appeared before me. It took me a while to realize that he was my son, Alex! He had been a B-52 pilot and now was stationed in Saudi Arabia, flying a VIP [Very Important Person] aircraft. When the Air Force Chief of Staff learned that Alex was in Saudi Arabia, without my knowledge he had Alex join his party in Turkey, and they flew into Israel.

The Israelis were intensely interested in the professional briefing on how the air war had been conducted. It was magnificent. "Buster" Clausson and company were superbly equipped by experience, training, and background to manage the air campaign. Very few, if any Air Forces in the world could have done this sort of thing. Even the British Royal Air Force, who were perhaps the most professional air force after our own Air Force, would have had a hard time in launching this kind of complex sustained attack against Iraq. This was primarily a U.S. effort, but it was also an international effort, using British Tornados and French aircraft among others.

Of course, the Israelis were intensely interested. I would add that my own impression was that in retrospect, we had learned a lot from the Israelis' 1982 effort against the Syrians in Lebanon. That combined attack, on or about June 8, 1982, which simultaneously took out the Syrians' Soviet-built MiGs, tanks, radar and anti-aircraft missiles, as well as other concentrations of weapons systems, all at the same time, was a magnificent victory, which was fully absorbed by our professionals, when the Israelis gave us their readout in 1982.

Q: Did you pick up from the Israeli professionals any form of disquiet, which must exist in all military forces, as they looked at the beginning of smart bombs, the logistics, and the ability to project force abroad, which seemed to be more and more exclusively an American achievement?

BROWN: No, but I'll come back in a special discussion of that. The Israelis themselves were developing these weapons and projection capabilities. Some of this was shared between the U.S. and Israel, some of it was a joint operation and some of it was unilateral. All kinds of subsequent squabbles emerged as to the perceived linkage of American technology. This is a very complex subject. Two sides decide to develop something jointly, or along dual tracks. They agree to share the results with each other. One side winds up turning out a product which it shares with the other side. The other side, let us say that in this case it is the Israeli side, takes this product and keeps working at it. They develop a further refinement of it, for their own use, and then turn around and market an intermediate version. The American side says: "Hey, that's our technology." The Israelis say, "Wait a minute, no. We did this 'add on' and so it's our product." You get into all kinds of ongoing squabbles on matters like this, and it's still going on. You may remember that I mentioned at least one instance of heartburn over Israeli sales to the Chinese Communists, particularly of sophisticated air weapons.

By this time the Israelis had already developed some highly sophisticated smart bombs and used them on the Lebanese front. When they went after Hezbollah bunkers and so forth, in some cases they were using some pretty sophisticated equipment. This takes you into another area. We had this joint military, consultative committee which would meet semiannually. Americans, both civilians and military, and Israelis got together and talked in real, professional terms, looking at possible scenarios and so forth.

Over time, one side or the other would try to enhance the Israeli-American relationship, although we were not formal, treaty allies. However, as one side or the other tried to enhance the relationship, we got into questions like: "Couldn't we do some military exercises together?" It was almost always the American side that was disappointed at the Israeli response. Things would often work out: "Yes, you can come here to Israel and train." It was exceedingly important for the Marines and other units in the U.S. Sixth Fleet, for instance, to be able to come to Israel, get R&R [Rest and Relaxation], repair vessels, up to and including an aircraft carrier in Haifa, and go out and do some port visitations and so forth. By my time in Israel the arrangement had been made that Marines were quietly but effectively training in Israel. As an old Marine, I went out with U.S. Marine units into the boondocks [rural areas] of Israel and accompanied them on a couple of maneuvers. It happened during my time in Israel when the Israelis, in response to our request, said, "Okay, you can have this wide area in a desert canyon situation, you can employ and fire your artillery, if you want to use it in a joint exercise using only American forces. If you want to run some tanks and armored cars and use some air force units and your own form of joint operations, here are the limits of your range. Here's what you can do."

I would talk with U.S. Marine commanders, and ask, "How do you like this; is it useful?" They would say, "Absolutely! We can't do this anywhere else in the Mediterranean area. There's always one excuse or another from the host country. Israel may be a small country, but they're giving us some remarkable terrain in which to exercise. It's deeply appreciated because, as Marines, we really have to be up on our toes. You can't do this on board ship and you can't do it during an average visit to another country in the Mediterranean." So it was very useful.

I'll give you another example. In May, 1990, a U.S. Apache helicopter unit secretly arrived from Germany. Their Apache helicopters had been disassembled, moved to Israel, then reassembled at an Israeli air base in the Negev Desert area. I went down there to join them. I talked with the colonel and the other U.S. officers, who were very excited. I went up in an Apache helicopter. They put me up in the front of the aircraft, with that special, optic device set up for one eye. The pilot, a warrant officer, showed me what this aircraft could do. I'd be looking out at a range of 10,000 yards, and suddenly the object would appear to be only 10 or 100 yards in front of me. He could pop up from behind a hill, shoot his ordnance, and pop back down, using periscopes. He showed me how they could do this at night, and so forth. It was very exciting.

We flew back to base and talked with the colonel commanding this unit. I asked him: "How does it go in Germany?" He said, "We can't do any of this. We can't do what we're doing in Israel today in California or Nevada, due to the environmentalists lobby; there are all kinds of range restrictions." Little did I realize that this unit, only months later, was one of the Apache units that went into Saudi Arabia. This was a magnificent, training opportunity for an outfit that was

shortly to distinguish itself in combat.

Q: Yes, it dropped down on all of the Iraqi early warning radar on the first night of the air war.

BROWN: Yes. The Israelis would tell us: "That sort of thing is fine. You come here, you want to train, go ahead. We'll observe." However, when the Americans asked, "How about having our pilots dog fight with your pilots?" The answer was: "No." American forces have run exercises for foreign pilots out West. I forget what it's called. [Actually, "Top Gun"] Foreign pilots who undergo U.S. Air Force training programs often take foreign aircraft and run them against the American F-15 and the F-16 aircraft. Of course, the Israelis have their own F-15s and F-16s, which they have upgraded, using their own modifications. Naturally they're always asking for the best and latest U.S. equipment, and they would play with it. However, the Israelis steadfastly declined to do dog fight with us. This attitude sort of ticked off some of our Air Force officers.

Ben Noon, the commander of the Israeli Air Force, would tell me, in a more candid moment: "Look, we think the world of your pilots, and we're glad to offer them these training facilities. However, we have a problem. It's not intentional on your part, but as we see you training with Arab Air Forces, our intelligence indicates to us that your expertise rubs off on them. If we train with you, some of our tricks will rub off on you, and there is a distinct danger, from our viewpoint, that will somehow be conveyed to a potential, Arab adversary." It was as simple as that, from their viewpoint. This is a difficult problem. Of course, American pilots would say, "Well, I would never do such a thing."

Q: American pilots might say, "That's a good trick. Let me try that. Here is a trick I learned. Why don't you try it?"

BROWN: Perhaps that concern was exaggerated in the Israeli mind. That's not for me to say, but it was there.

Q: I would have thought that they would have welcomed this proposal to get closer to the U.S.

BROWN: They feel that the U.S. has a magnificent Air Force. However, they feel that theirs, that is, the Israeli Air Force, is la creme de la creme. It's an Air Force which has to fly over a postage stamp. In flying terms, Israel is a postage stamp. Flying combat aircraft there requires taking unique risks. Highly sophisticated techniques are involved. The Israelis feel that they can't take risks by divulging everything to us. I think that that about summarizes the attitude. It's also an elitist attitude.

Q: Yes. The other side of it, as you know, is that, if you want to have a good Air Force, you have to train like hell. The other thing is that you need to choose your enemies. In that case, you should choose the Arabs.

BROWN: The Israeli Air Force is an elitist outfit. It has a competitive operating system, which is almost mind-boggling. Every flight that every pilot takes, no matter what it is, flying anything from the latest F-16 to the lowest Boxcar [transport aircraft], is rated competitively. It's a brutal system. The bottom 10 percent of the F-16 pilots are winnowed out and shunted down to F-15s,

F-4s or, if necessary, to transport aircraft. It's a brutally competitive system designed to keep them on their toes.

Well, at this point we've reached the end of the Gulf War [1991].

Q: Why don't we pick this up the next time? There are some questions that I would like to ask about the situation at the end of the war. How does that seem to you? I think that for many of us who've looked at this period, we ended the war 24 hours too soon. What analysis were you getting on this matter? We can talk about this next time.

BROWN: Let me get in a brief word now. On the one hand the Israelis had tremendous admiration for the results we achieved, the way we did it, and so forth. Do we still have time on the tape?

Q: Yes.

BROWN: Secondly, from a professional, Israeli viewpoint, they never had, nor, from their viewpoint, will they ever have the luxury of the kind of huge, extended buildup of Desert Shield over a five or six month period. Nor will they ever have the opportunity to launch an extended massive aerial bombardment of 40 days and nights like the one which preceded the actual launch into combat of U.S. ground forces. From the Israeli viewpoint, that is just not in their capability. So the Israelis have a mixed reaction to our modus operandi. They study our techniques but they can never pass on to their students that this is the way to conduct operations. From their viewpoint, their operations have to be stealthy, very rapid and deadly in their initial impact.

Thirdly, as far as our handling of Saddam Hussein is concerned, Prime Minister Shamir was quoted as saying that he almost fell off his chair when he realized that we weren't going to capture Saddam Hussein, seize Baghdad, and so forth. This is not the Israeli style. The Israeli style is to go for the jugular vein, get a firm grasp on it, then squeeze it and bring your adversary not only to a military capitulation but a political settlement as well. We saw that with the encirclement of the Egyptian Army East of the Suez Canal during the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and the chagrin of Henry Kissinger as the Israelis squeezed the thirsty, hungry Egyptian Army. We saw this also in Lebanon and the installation of a new government in 1982. We saw it in the way the Israelis handled the Syrians in that encounter, besieged Arafat in Beirut.

Now, I would imagine that the Israelis were agog, not so much at the military portion of the Gulf War, when General Schwarzkopf dictated the terms, but rather the political aspect, where, as Ambassador Chas. Freeman points out, we ended the war without any direct, political commitment by Saddam Hussein to treat with us. Ever afterwards, the decisions that followed were unilateral, UN Security Council Resolutions, which were terribly important but to which Saddam Hussein and his propaganda apparatus said, "We never agreed to this." They took the view that the war was over and what right did we have to punish them unilaterally on the basis of non-fulfillment of something that they never agreed to in the first place?

Imagine, before I end this portion, what would have been the situation if the Israelis had attacked H2 and H3, not only by air attacks but with ground troops consisting of a commando force. You

can bet your bottom dollar that they would have had an extended stay. There would have been a tremendous commotion within the coalition and especially in Washington and a great deal of heartburn at the Israeli reluctance to leave the H2 and H3 area. If they had seized that area, perhaps with significant, Israeli casualties, they might very well, in Israeli style, have held on unless and until the Iraqi Government came to terms with them. That could have been excruciatingly painful and highly embarrassing for us, given the way that we handled the end of the Gulf War.

Q: Okay. We'll pick this up the next time with the postwar peace process. I would also like to ask about something we touched on before, Jonathan Pollard.

BROWN: Okay.

Q: Today is September 10, 1999. Bill, one thing I forgot to ask. During this time, when you were an Ambassador in the Middle East, I imagine that you were somewhat au courant of what was happening in the area. Was there any discussion with people from Washington who came to see you or who were on the circuit about how to end the Gulf War?

BROWN: No. I don't recall anybody asking me that.

Q: This is not surprising, since the Bush administration didn't tell General Schwarzkopf anything. However, the subject had to come up some time.

BROWN: Well, I do not recall anybody coming to me, among our many visitors, and asking how we were going to end the war or should we discuss with the Israelis or others how we should do it. The war was just ended.

Incidentally, by sheer coincidence, I had lunch with someone yesterday who knows Bob Gates [former Acting Director of Central Intelligence]. During the Gulf War Gates was seconded, if you will, to the NSC [National Security Council] under General Scowcroft. My friend said that, shortly after the end of the Gulf War, when he and Gates got together on some other subject, Gates took great pride in saying that he had originated the idea of the Hundred Hours War. That is, bringing the war to an end quickly. Gates asked my friend what he thought of this. My friend replied that he thought that it was a stupid idea and contrary to U.S. interests, etc. Gates looked very unhappy about this because he had taken great pride in bringing the war to an end quickly.

In conversation with my friend yesterday, my response was: "My goodness. Bob Gates, a professional intelligence officer, who had gone all the way up to being Deputy Director of CIA...

Q: He was appointed Director of CIA by the President but never really was confirmed in the job.

BROWN: Yes. That he should wander this far into a blatantly political spin doctor kind of suggestion. However, these things happen to some people as they rise in position and mix with others. So I pass that on for what it's worth.

Q: It's very interesting. I think that, whenever a discussion of the Gulf War comes up, many people feel that it ended prematurely.

BROWN: Well, the story I heard yesterday was that Gates took credit for the idea of the Hundred Hours War and that he sold it to General Scowcroft and his people. When this idea was put to General Colin Powell, Powell was reportedly non-responsive. However, once they had adopted the idea, Powell then contacted General Schwarzkopf. You have Ambassador Chas. Freeman's report that Schwarzkopf said, "Well, at least we achieved the main goal, which was to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait. We achieved about half of my own, secondary goal, which was to cripple the Iraqi Republican Guard. If you all feel that way in Washington, so be it." And that is reportedly the way the Gulf War ended.

In our last conversation you asked me about Shamir. (End of tape)

If you recall, you asked me how the Israelis felt about how the Gulf War ended, and so forth. I do not recall any high level critique raised with me while I was Ambassador to Israel, although later, when Prime Minister Shamir was interviewed, he said that he had nearly fallen off his chair when he heard of the way the Gulf War was ending. That is, adopting a partial military solution and not fully crippling Iraq. And there was no political agreement by the Iraqis with us, by which they signed their name to a political settlement. However, there we are.

Now, before we go into anything else, I wonder whether I could do a side note, based on a reading of the New York Times the other day, and relating to remarks I made recently about the interrogation and handling of Palestinian prisoners back then. You will recall my account of Assistant Secretary Dick Shifter's trip to Israel to discuss the issue of human rights with Jacob Perry, the Director of Shin Beth, or Sha Bak. Perry told Shifter that none of his officers were permitted to apply significant, physical pressure on a prisoner without Perry's okay. I remarked on the findings by the Agronit Commission following a previous scandal involving a couple of Palestinian terrorists who had committed murders. These terrorists had been killed in situ while they were allegedly being brought back to headquarters. A great scandal resulted, the Director of the Shin Beth was ousted, and Perry was installed in office as his replacement. There was also a classified portion of the Agronit Commission's findings, which was not revealed to us, except for the fact that the classified portion concluded that "a moderate amount of physical pressure" could be routinely used. Then there was a great squabble about what is "a moderate measure of physical pressure."

The New York Times reported the other day that the Israeli Supreme Court admitted that this was a very difficult decision and one that will cause no small debate in Israel and in Israeli society. It would be illegal to continue applying that standard. That is, to apply a "moderate amount of physical pressure" on a routine basis because, whatever the Israeli Supreme Court felt about the merits of the need for Israeli security, the Court felt that this position was legally untenable. That doesn't completely eliminate the possibility of the use of physical pressure in special cases, but obviously the Israeli Supreme Court was speaking to sustained criticism, both international and domestic, against the interpretation of a "moderate measure of physical pressure," which included such things as violently shaking the prisoner.

Q: Violently shaking a prisoner could break bones, and so forth.

BROWN: As well as putting a hood over their head, putting a prisoner in specially uncomfortable positions, and so forth. On that subject I remember that, when we were talking about such matters, it was obvious from the Israeli account that they felt that they faced a dilemma, because so many of these people being interrogated were multiple offenders. When one of these people was released, he would give all of his friends an account of precisely what he could remember of the forms of interrogation to which he had been subjected. So when these friends of the former prisoner were picked up, they wouldn't be psychologically as vulnerable and so forth. As that school of Shin Beth thought runs, you have to keep coming up with new techniques of exercising pressure on prisoners. This is very difficult to do.

Throughout it all, there is a distinct element of humiliation for the prisoners. The Israelis would let their prisoners reach the point where they had to go to the toilet. However, they didn't let them go to the toilet, and the prisoners often would have to relieve themselves in their pants. There were all sorts of stratagems of this kind, which are used around the world to humble or humiliate prisoners and therefore make them more vulnerable to interrogation.

At the end of our last session you asked me to touch on the Jonathan Pollard case.

Q: I thought that we had touched on it before, but maybe we didn't.

BROWN: I don't recall that we did, or at least not in any detail. I don't think so. Anyway, let me give you my own feelings then and now on the politics of the case.

I was always very hard line on the Pollard case. I was not in Washington when it happened. I think that it became public knowledge in 1985. I felt outraged at this dastardly behavior by Pollard. He passed on to the Israelis the equivalent of a large roomful of documents covering the most highly classified materials. At the time I was quite happy that the judge trying the case threw the book at him. This was a case of treason of the first order, in my view, and Pollard's behavior warranted the death penalty, a sentence to life imprisonment, or at least a very severe sentence.

I never believed the Israeli account that this was a rogue operation, a line to which they adhered during my tenure in Israel. It was supposedly a rogue operation under Rafi Eytan, who was a long time security intelligence specialist in a special unit of military intelligence. The Israelis, like ourselves, have several different arms of intelligence, and this was a particular cell within what I might call special operations within Israeli military intelligence.

By the way, in the Israeli system the head of military intelligence is the supreme intelligence officer. He wears two hats as the Director of their equivalent of the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and also as the Director of Central Intelligence. The Director of Military Intelligence is an Israeli general, to whom that special unit reports, along with other intelligence organizations. I just couldn't believe and don't believe to this day that this was merely a rogue operation, unauthorized above the level of Rafi Eytan. Rafi was a long time intelligence operative.

When I was Ambassador to Israel, approaches would frequently be made to me, primarily by Eli Rubenstein, who was Israeli Cabinet Secretary, and who, at the time of the Pollard episode, was Deputy Chief of Mission [DCM] of the Israeli Embassy in Washington. I think that, at one time, Pollard tried to follow an automobile carrying Eli into the Israeli Embassy. Pollard was denied access to the Embassy by the guard. Eli is a good friend of mine to this day. I don't know whether Eli felt an extra sense of compassion or attachment to Pollard, given the fact that he was the DCM of the Israeli Embassy in Washington when this all took place. In any event, Eli mounted quite a campaign with various interlocutors or high level U.S. officials trying to get a pardon for Pollard.

I remained a hard liner on that score. It is now 1999. A lot of time has passed. Pollard has spent a significant stretch of time in prison. A lot of this time has involved very restrictive confinement, solitary and so forth. My thoughts now tend toward some commutation of his sentence, if you will, notwithstanding the fact that Pollard was guilty of dastardly deeds. When you look at other cases, you realize that no two cases are exactly alike. However, I think that I would now tend toward some commutation of his sentence, but until now I have been very hard on this case.

Q: There's been a recent story about the Pollard case. I haven't read it, but I have seen reports about it. The article is by Seymour Hersh, an investigative reporter for the "New York Times." In the article it is stated that Pollard received instructions from his Israeli handler or case officer to get further information of the kind that he had been supplying concerning American submarine movements, which he had access to. According to Hersh, our knowledge of Soviet submarines was something that the Israeli intelligence people couldn't care less about. However, the knowledge of how we were dealing with Soviet subs would be a very good card to play in trying to get Soviet Jews out of the Soviet Union. Was that factor ever brought up while you were dealing with this case?

BROWN: No, and frankly I don't believe it.

Q: I understand that, supposedly, there were reports to this effect, but you say that you knew nothing about them.

BROWN: No.

Q: Some day we may know.

BROWN: Certainly, it never came up in my time.

Q: Were you ever called upon to make any representations to the Israeli Government on the Pollard case?

BROWN: By the American Government? No. I would report the fact that Eli Rubenstein approached me, but I really don't recall anything from Washington in this regard. Early on, there was another aspect to this case. Before my time, the U.S. Government slapped the wrists of certain, high-ranking Israelis, including Moshe Levi, Chief of Staff or Deputy Chief of Staff of

the Israeli Defense Forces, who were in positions of great, military authority at the time. The Israelis were not completely forthcoming about letting some of the officials within the Israeli Government involved in the case be interviewed by U.S. authorities. In retaliation the U.S. denied visitor's visas to the Israeli officials most directly involved. This was taken as a great affront by them. Early during my tenure as Ambassador to Israel, I would get approaches from these officers, to use my good offices with Washington. As I say, I did not believe that this incident was a unique rogue operation carried out without the knowledge of the top Israeli military brass, including at least the Director of Israeli Military Intelligence. Therefore, I didn't have much sympathy for such approaches.

Q: Again, while we're on this subject, did any manifestation come up, while you were dealing with the Israelis on this case, of the Israeli attack on the USS LIBERTY? Was this...

BROWN: Let me say something about the attack on the USS LIBERTY. There was a strange, little vignette, or two sub-vignettes, if you will, involving it.

The first one was that in 1988, as word got around Embassy Bangkok that I was going to be Ambassador to Israel, my secretary told me one day that one of our communicators in the Embassy wanted to call on me. As I did not know the individual or at least did not know him well, I thought that it was to say goodbye, or something like that. Lo and behold, when the individual appeared in my office, he informed me that he had been a member of the crew of the USS LIBERTY. On behalf of his old crewmates, he presented me a copy of a book about the attack on the LIBERTY, written by one of the ship's officers. The communicator was very solemn, when he gave the book to me, and he said, "As a representative of the survivors of the LIBERTY, I would like you to read this book." I said, "Thank you," and he left. That's the first vignette.

I read the book and I must say that it is a remarkable account. The audience may recall that, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the USS LIBERTY, an American spy ship, positioned itself roughly off the coast of the Gaza strip. It was a signals eavesdropping ship. Israeli aircraft and torpedo boats attacked it over a period of many hours, with some interruptions, notwithstanding the fact that its officers and crew claimed that the ship was flying a large, American flag when the attacks occurred during broad daylight. The attacks involved strafing, bombing, and torpedo attacks. The ship almost sank, and, I think, between 20 and 30 lives were lost. Many members of the crew were wounded. The ship finally made it back, under tow, to an Italian port. There was a very considerable hue and cry over the incident. There was a great deal of understandable bitterness on the part of the survivors and the U.S. Navy.

The Israelis always maintained that this was a terrible accident. They finally offered some form of indemnification. As U.S. public opinion swung to the side of the Israelis in the wake of the 1967 War and, later on, as Israeli-American relations warmed up during the 1973 War, this episode faded into the background.

Q: But it would come up from time to time.

BROWN: Yes. Let me now give you another vignette which was a bit of a surprise to me. Rabin

was Defense Minister in the Shamir Government until Labour Party was excluded from the Shamir Government in early 1990. Around this time Rabin and I left a social function at about the same time, and we were standing on the steps outside of the house where the function had taken place. Rabin turned to me and said, "By the way, I just want to emphasize something regarding the USS LIBERTY. That was a terrible accident. I was in the command bunker and I can tell you that it was a terrible mistake." To this day I do not know what occasioned Rabin's remark. Rabin was usually pretty tight-lipped, almost always got straight down to business, and seldom went off on tangents. I think that that was characteristic of the man. There must have been something that impelled him to make that unexpected remark.

Q: This incident hasn't gone away. Well, let's go on. The Gulf War was now over [1991]. By the way, were you getting any reverberations from the war and how the United States had performed?

BROWN: Oh, yes. Of course, the Israelis were intensely interested in the war, from a professional viewpoint, in a sense all the more so because they had been deliberately cut out of the fighting. Then the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, General McPeak flew into Israel with Buster Clausson.

I believe that I gave you an account of the heavily-attended, standing room only review of the air campaign. McPeak introduced Clausson, who gave, I thought, a fairly detailed account of how we conducted the air campaign. This was a very sophisticated operation, involving multinational forces, but with the U.S. Air Force playing the major role. The aircraft involved ran from B-52s to FB-111s, F-15s, and F-16s. Of course, Clausson, who was running the campaign, had to deal with many, conflicting demands from the various elements of the U.S. military. He had to make tough decisions but he stuck with his plan, after adjusting it as necessary.

In the course of that visit by General McPeak, a question came up which I alluded to in my earlier remarks. That is, it is a standard practice for U.S. Air Force officers to try to get the Israeli Air Force to conduct joint training, including dog fighting exercises. The Israelis had always been rather standoffish on this subject. Bin Nun, the commander of the Israeli Air Force, confided to me that the Israeli Air Force was afraid of leakage of tactics and techniques to the Arabs. Not necessarily deliberately by U.S. pilots, but these pilots later on might engage in similar, professional exercises with Arab pilots, Israel's adversaries. However, General McPeak's attitude was: "To hell with them. We're good enough. I'm not in any sense going to be a supplicant to the Israelis in that regard." When he was a fighter pilot, he had previously flown various exercises with the Israelis and he had appropriate regard for them. However, he didn't feel like asking for any favors.

Other things came up. The Israelis had a "Popeye," air to air missile, which they had developed to the point where it could do a u-turn if it missed a target which engaged in evasive tactics. The missile could double back and hit the target. The Israelis wanted to sell that missile system to us. If I remember correctly, General McPeak was interested in it but wasn't about to convey to the Israelis that we were going to fall all over ourselves, pricewise or otherwise, to get it. We had our own weapons systems.

That particular subject came up after I retired, following my service in Israel when Dick Cheney was Secretary of Defense. There was a question as to whether there was U.S. technology in the "Popeye" and, if so, were the Israelis selling this technology to other countries. This takes you into a field which is highly contentious. I may have mentioned before that the U.S. and Israel did a lot of joint research work. A breakthrough might take place on a product which would then be jointly shared. Sales to a third party were to be by joint consent. Then there would be cases where the U.S. side would say, "You're selling our jointly developed technology." The Israelis would say, "No, we did an update, which made the new weapons system a strictly Israeli product. We're not violating any agreement." And you would get into a controversy.

It was not only the Israelis who did this. There were other countries with which we would get into such controversies.

A number of such issues were bubbling along during my time in Israel. I was aware of them and believe that I recounted to you that I made a demarche on instructions on the allegation that the Israelis were selling the PYTHON air to air missile, which was lethal beyond visual range, to the People's Republic of China [PRC]. I felt that this ran strongly against our national interests. That is, maintaining a balance in the Taiwan Straits area was in our national interest. If the PRC were to get these PYTHON missiles in significant numbers, particularly the more advanced PYTHONS, we would be faced with a problem. The earlier model PYTHON was rather big and heavy and was comparatively clumsy. However, over time, if it developed into the anti-missile missile that we had, it could have very deleterious effects on the Taiwan's Air Force as it was equipped at that time. Remember, at that time the most modern fighters that Taiwan had were Northrop F-5s (although they were developing their own Indigenous Defense Aircraft). That was the latest aircraft that we would sell them. They felt that this aircraft was very inadequate, so it was a very delicate subject to me, at the time.

Now, as to the feeling in Israel at the end of the Gulf War. On the one hand President Bush, Secretary of State Baker, and the American Government were flush with victory, and that glow certainly extended to popular opinion in Israel. We had badly crippled Iraq, a primary strategic enemy of Israel's. There were those among the Israelis who felt that we should have finished the job and really destroyed the Iraqi Republican Guard. There were those Israelis who felt that we should have gone into Baghdad and extracted a political settlement, that we should have dispatched Saddam Hussein to oblivion, and so forth. You would hear views like that expressed in Israel and elsewhere around the world, including in the United States.

A secondary and very important subject among all of those in the region was what they could extract immediately out of the situation. There was talk of reducing the debt of those who had participated in defeating Saddam Hussein, for example, the Egyptian debt owed to the United States. This debt ran very high. Well, the Israelis felt that their debt owed to the United States was no small amount, either. Couldn't more be done to forgive that debt? There had been an enormous buildup of equipment in the Gulf area during the period of Desert Shield and then under Desert Storm. It was clear that much of this equipment was not going to come back to the United States. Everybody had their hands out for that equipment, and the Israelis were interested in that, also.

There was a joint strategic war stockpile in Israel. The Israelis asked us to move smart bombs and the more sophisticated equipment assembled for Desert Storm into it. That would take us into a subject which later on would become contentious, because the host country for these stockpiles rapidly acquires a distinctly proprietary attitude toward them. The Israelis were no exception in this respect.

We accommodated the Israelis to a certain degree. It was never enough to satisfy their appetites fully, but there were adjustments made in those areas. The Israelis saw us extracting money from the Saudis for this or that operation. If the United States could get money from the Saudis, the Israelis hoped that they could also get money from the Saudis in the service of their interests. So there were a lot of issues of this kind under discussion.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Cheney made a visit to Israel and had very detailed and sensitive conversations with Israeli Minister of Defense Arens. They knew each other and had a good relationship. I would rather not go into the sensitive subjects which they discussed, at least at this stage. From my previous remarks you can gather some flavor of that. By the way, as Cheney was finishing up a visit to Israel and I was just putting him on his plane, I recall asking him whether he could help me break through a bureaucratic obstacle. The Marine Security Guards and Defense Attaché personnel assigned to the Embassy in Tel Aviv, who had manned the HAMMER RICK communications system on a 24 hour a day basis, frequently under Iraqi bombardment, had been told that they were not eligible for the campaign ribbon for Desert Storm. I felt that their contributions were important enough that they ought to qualify for this ribbon. So I asked Secretary Cheney to break through this bureaucratic obstacle. He nodded, and some weeks or months later, the Marine Security Guards and the Defense Attaché people were made eligible to receive the ribbon. This episode shows how things work out at times. The military has its bureaucracy and its definitions. Sometimes you have to shake the tree in that regard.

We were now in the period when the U.S. launched its peace initiative for the Middle East, following the Gulf War. On or about March 12, 1991, Secretary of State James Baker arrived in Israel for the first time. He had blocked any other Bush Cabinet member from visiting Israel, except, of course, Dick Cheney after the Gulf War. Baker wanted to manage our contacts with Israel out of the Department of State.

Baker's initial meetings during this visit were friendly. I have to pause here and remind you a little bit of Israeli political history. David Levy, a Moroccan born Israeli who had been unemployed and then was a manual laborer, had joined the Likud Party and had risen up over the years to be Minister of Housing. As Minister of Housing he had dealt with settlement housing outside Jerusalem and so forth. By the time that Prime Minister Shamir's peace initiative was announced in 1989, Levy had become an outspoken, vociferous critic of the peace process advocated by Shamir. He had joined Moda'i, Ze'evi, and Ariel Sharon in declaring the Shamir proposal a sell out of Israeli interests. As I said before, they declared that they were the "Constrainers." Levy did this in a highly opportunistic manner to get more power and position for himself. By the time that Baker arrived in Israel, Levy had been installed as Foreign Minister. So here you had a man who both privately within the Likud Party had been through stormy party sessions, and publicly had criticized the peace process initiated by Prime Minister Shamir and

Defense Minister Arens which had been endorsed by the United States.

However, now David Levy was Foreign Minister. His actions from then on reflected the ancient, political adage, "Where you stand depends on where you sit." One of Levy's key officers was Eytan Ben Tsour, who was head of the North American desk in the Foreign Ministry. Ironically, is again the Foreign Minister in 1999, and Eytan Ben Tsour is now the Director General of the Foreign Ministry. Back then Eytan and I were very good friends and professional counterparts. He had approached me and said, "Bill, forget all of the hawkish things that you have heard about David Levy. I know him. I was Consul General in Los Angeles when he visited L.A. a number of years ago. David Levy is ready to deal. Baker's host and first interlocutor should be Levy, the Foreign Minister of Israel." I dutifully passed on these views.

When we got down to the real nitty gritty details of who would meet Baker at the airport and accompany him up to Jerusalem and who should be the first to receive Baker in Jerusalem, Eytan's argument was compelling that it should be Levy, who was very sensitive. Apart from the obvious protocolary requirements, above all, Levy really wanted to play in the big leagues. He wanted the public spotlight on him as a dynamic Israeli Foreign Minister. In the Israeli pecking order the Foreign Minister is very important. Many an Israeli Prime Minister (including Shamir) had previously been Foreign Minister.

Well, Levi's desires were accommodated to the degree that on the first trip David Levy met Secretary Baker at the airport, and they drove up the hill together to the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem. Levy was thus able meet with Baker in his office, then come out to make a statement before a large press audience, introduce the Secretary of State, and bask in the glow of the ensuing publicity. However, everyone knew that we would then be going on to the Prime Minister's office and that Israeli Prime Ministers run the show as far as U.S.-Israeli relations are concerned.

Secretary of State Baker accommodated Levy on this initial leg of the visit. We then went from the Foreign Ministry to visit Yad Veshem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. Baker went through this exhibit and made the proper kind of remarks that a visitor makes after seeing that expose of Hitler's crimes and slaughter of the Jews during World War II. Then Baker went in to see the Prime Minister and had a relatively affable meeting.

At this point Secretary Baker had been on the road for over a week, so he could give graphic accounts of the Kurdish refugee problem, since he had visited the destitute Kurds in northern Iraq. He then proposed in general terms to reopen the peace process.

I won't go into all of the details. From March to October, 1991, Secretary Baker made nine or 10 trips and orchestrated a great campaign, which culminated in an international conference held in Madrid, Spain at the end of October, 1991. Getting from March, 1991, to October, 1991, became a grinding, really energy-focused process that went through many iterations and caused a lot of heartburn en route.

On his first visit to Jerusalem, having met with Shamir, Secretary Baker also met Palestinians in the residence of the American Consul General in Jerusalem, which was just a couple of blocks

from the King David Hotel, on the Western side of Jerusalem. These Palestinians were predominantly, although not exclusively, from the greater Jerusalem elite, if I can use that expression.

They included Faisal Husseini and Hannan Ashrawi, a Christian Arab who had an American Ph.D. and lived in Ramallah. Another one was Sari Nuseibah, of a prestigious, Jerusalem family. His father had been Governor of Jerusalem, and a minister in the Jordanian Government. There was also a scattering, which varied from meeting to meeting of such figures as the moderate Christian Mayor of Bethlehem, Elias Freij, others from, say, Nablus, Ramallah, and, occasionally, Al Agah from Gaza. It was obviously very difficult for them to agree among themselves who would should be their leader for such meetings. It became apparent that they were reporting to Yasser Arafat in Tunis, but they were largely without direction from him.

That relates to the way Arafat handles things. He didn't want to give any power to these people. What he wanted was an Israeli accommodation with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. That was politically not possible at the time. The Shamir Government was adamantly against it. Our own position was not to deal with the PLO on this subject, but to try and find a means to get Palestinians from the occupied territories to be members of a delegation that would be acceptable to the Israelis. That was a matter requiring extreme delicacy, given the guidelines which Shamir laid down for acceptance of Palestinian interlocutors: nobody identified with the PLO, nobody from East Jerusalem, nobody who had been deported, and no outsiders from the Palestinian diaspora. Shamir and company wanted moderate, clean Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza who were not affiliated with the PLO.

Well, that was a very tall order under the circumstances. Those Palestinians who showed up were powerless, after years of Israeli occupation. As a result of a lack of direction by Yasser Arafat, they were essentially on their own, and they resorted to fairly sharp critiques of the whole peace process and demands that the U.S. negotiate with the PLO, which they said was the only true representative of the Palestinian people. Secretary Baker would say, "Come on, let's get over that. Let's talk about the nitty gritty details."

Then there would ensue all kinds of complaints about Israeli occupation practices, and their own difficulties in getting through checkpoints. (End of tape)

If they couldn't get substantive concessions from us and through us, then they wanted as much as they could get, symbolically. For example, they didn't want to meet Secretary Baker in the residence of the American Consul General on the West side of Jerusalem. They wanted to meet him in Arab Jerusalem, which they termed Al-Quds, and the "capital of the future Palestinian State." Baker wasn't about to give them that, yet.

As I said, the first round of meetings in Jerusalem was rather affable. Baker was well prepared. His team, including Dennis Ross and Dan Kurtzer and Aren Miller, had really done their homework. I would like to pause here and give due credit to Dan Kurtzer, because his name isn't mentioned nearly as often as it should be as a conceptualizer in all of this. He happens to be a religious Orthodox Jew. He had served in the American Embassy in Cairo, where he is now our Ambassador. He later came to serve in Tel Aviv just as I was completing my tour as DCM

[Deputy Chief of Mission] under Ambassador Sam Lewis. He could read, write, and speak Hebrew. He was extremely intelligent and well read. He was determined to get a peace process going and to do everything that he could to push it.

[Kurtzer later became U.S. Ambassador to Israel.]

Secretary Baker sometimes referred to his staff as his food processors. You know, people who grind out new formulae, draft speeches, and so forth. Kurtzer's contribution was really remarkable throughout all of this. Dennis Ross, of course, had a great background and was Baker's key advisor.

As time went on, U.S. pressure increased on all other parties involved in the Middle East peace process. Let's just pause here and ask what the different parties wanted.

The U.S. wanted a successful peace process, based on an exchange of territory for peace, in accordance with UN Resolutions 242 and 338. You will recall that my first approaches to the Shamir Government at the end of the Reagan administration I had posed the question: "Would the Shamir Government be willing to proceed under the terms of the concept of 'land for peace?'" On the one hand I was rebuffed but I had nevertheless concluded that this could be done and had so recommended to Secretary Baker during my first trip back to Washington in the early days of the Bush administration. Naturally, we wanted arrangements that would afford Israel proper security. UN Resolutions 242 and 338 meant that there would be some sort of territorial compromise. We left this to the parties concerned to negotiate. We wanted a permanent peace and the diplomatic recognition of Israel by its Arab neighbors, accompanied by trade, tourism, and so forth. This implied the diminution of security threats against Israel.

What did the Arabs want? Well, at this stage, if I could simplify it, Syria wanted all of the Golan Heights on its own terms. The Syrian definition is not merely the Heights as such, but the line that existed prior to June, 1967. In some cases, as I've mentioned, this would extend to within 10 yards of the Eastern shore of the northern portion of the Sea of Galilee. Syrian troops had reached that point, and a DMZ [Demilitarized Zone] curved around there until the 1973 War.

The Lebanese wanted the Israelis out of Lebanon, and so did the Syrians. They wanted a complete Israeli withdrawal from the so-called "Security Zone" in southern Lebanon just North of the Israeli-Lebanese border. The Syrians also wanted to get out from under the cloud of being formally designated by the U.S. as a state supporting terrorist organizations. I think that this designation remains in effect today, although whether President Assad has managed finally to get out from under this cloud more recently, I don't recall.

Q: I don't recall, either.

BROWN: President Assad also wanted money in the form of aid to the very statist, stultified, calcified Syrian economy.

King Hussein of Jordan wanted to get out of the dog house. He had been openly identified with the Iraqi cause. All of his immediate explanations, and those of his brother, Crown Prince

Hassan, fell on unsympathetic ears at the time. The Saudis had cut off the subsidies which they'd been giving Jordan for years, amounting to millions of dollars. The Saudis also cut off Jordan's supply of oil. The TAP [Trans Arabian Pipeline] was cut off because of a) non-payment of previous debts and b) Saudi anger at what Hussein had said and done during the Gulf War. The Saudis were not about to accommodate him at that stage at all. So Hussein wanted us to lean on the Saudis to loosen up. Hussein also wanted an accommodation with the Israelis at minimum expense. His great fear in all of this was akin to an Israeli concern. That is, the emergence of an independent, Palestinian state, sandwiched in between Jordan and Israel, bearing in mind that the population of Jordan is about 60 percent Palestinian. The Hashemites in Jordan had a fear that, a Palestinian state would foment a political movement which might endanger the Hussein regime in Jordan. So, Hussein wanted money, he wanted to get out of the dog house, and he wanted an arrangement which would preclude a Palestinian takeover of Jordan.

Hussein also wanted a settlement of another great concern of his, namely, Syria. Over the years President Assad of Syria had repeatedly threatened Jordan by word and by deed. Hussein also wanted water. By this time Jordan was very short of water. The Yarmuk River runs between northwestern Jordan and Syria and flows into the Jordan River at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee. Apart from the contentious water dispute between Jordan and Israel, there also was Jordanian concern because the Syrians were beginning to dam up the tributaries which flow into the Yarmuk. There had been a proposal for a dam, to be jointly financed by Jordan and Syria, with the water to be shared, but this hadn't gone anywhere.

The Saudis wanted everybody to get out of their pockets. Everybody, and especially the United States, was extracting billions of dollars from the Saudis to pay for Desert Storm and Desert Shield. We were coming at the Saudis on behalf of supplicants, both near and far.

The Egyptians wanted forgiveness of their debt and surplus U.S. military equipment. In the afterglow of Desert Storm they wanted an increased flow of U.S. military hardware, both surplus, as well as the latest form of equipment, to flow into their military establishment. They took pride in the noble Coalition effort in which they had participated (although they hadn't done any fighting) and they wanted to share in the spoils.

The Kuwaitis wanted every last Palestinian out of their country as soon as possible. They viewed the Palestinians as collaborators of the Iraqis. By the time the Kuwaiti royal family moved back from exile in London, they had paid a significant part of the costs of Desert Storm. The Kuwaitis booted the Palestinians by the thousands or tens of thousands out of Kuwait. The Palestinians left Kuwait, essentially as refugees. Nobody else would receive them, so they flowed into Jordan. So the Jordanians had an extra problem with the influx into Jordan of thousands of more Palestinians.

Jordan also wanted the end of the embargo which had bottled up the Strait of Tiran [at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba]. There was Coalition inspection of shipping going into the Gulf of Aqaba, especially of all cargoes destined for Iraq. Jordan made a nice profit out of this trade with Iraq. Jordan wanted us to ease and lift the embargo on goods flowing into the Gulf of Aqaba, so that the Iraqis could sell them oil above board and all of that. The Jordanian economy was weak to begin with and was in a virtual state of wreckage by the end of the Gulf War.

What did Israel want? It wanted diplomatic recognition by its Arab neighbors; peace and security without giving up the West Bank of the Jordan and the Gaza Strip; and the end of the Arab embargo, which had had such deleterious effects on Israel on a worldwide basis. Among those countries which had succumbed to the Arab embargo against Israel was Japan. As Israel promoted exports of its newly-emergent, high tech products it wanted to break the remnants of the Arab embargo. It wanted the repeal of the UN Resolution which equated Zionism with racism. In the wake of the SCUD missile attacks against Israel, they wanted our PATRIOT missile hardware. We had provided Israel with PATRIOT missile batteries and PATRIOT missile training. However, after the Gulf War we pulled our PATRIOT missile batteries out of Israel. They would have preferred that we left them in Israel, but by now they had acquired some of their own PATRIOTS. They arranged to have the Germans pay for some of that.

A major Israeli priority was our aid in the development of the anti-missile ARROW missile. Before the Gulf War we had, among the joint projects under development with Israel, funded 80 percent of the costs of developing an anti-missile missile which the Israelis code named the ARROW. The ARROW was not the same thing as the PATRIOT. The PATRIOT was essentially a surface launched anti-aircraft missile which had been upgraded to cope with SCUD missiles. The Israelis were not very satisfied with what they had seen of the upgraded PATRIOT missile.

With our money and with our consent the Israelis had embarked on a joint project called the ARROW. The idea was that when you detected the lift-off of an enemy missile, you launched an ARROW high up into the atmosphere to catch the incoming missile at its apogee [highest point], at least. That was a highly sophisticated challenge. No other country had succeeded at this, but the Israelis had very good technicians and felt an urgent need to acquire this weapons system. A sophisticated, warning system would go with the ARROW, so that they could identify the trajectory of an incoming missile as far out as possible, and then launch an ARROW in time to catch this incoming missile before its descent, at a terrific velocity, through the stratosphere. It would be awfully hard to intercept it from then on.

This produced an intensified effort. The Israelis wanted more money for it. They ran into an element within the U.S. missile community that said, "What we need is a theater-wide missile, a worldwide missile, or a Star Wars missile." There were lots of related U.S. plans, none of which had gone beyond the drawing board. These different plans were competing for development funds. So the U.S. military was split on this subject. Those who advocated the development of a missile which would deal with a regional problem advocated support for the ARROW missile. Others said, "This is mighty expensive stuff, and it comes at our expense." They advocated easing up on the ARROW and developing became known as the THAD, a much longer range weapons system.

Q: Theater range missile.

BROWN: It would be a high altitude weapon with theater coverage or, if you will, the rebirth of what we had renounced in our missile negotiations with the Soviet Union. That is, the Star Wars kind of weapons system. Senior U.S. military officials came through to discuss this with the Israelis, who wanted details about this program. However, the Israelis pushed the ARROW

program as far and as fast as they could. This meant cutting corners, which then entailed some risk of failure. This weapons system was tried several times but, for one reason or another, it didn't work. However, eventually, it hit the target. Rather than hitting the incoming missile on a point to point basis, the ARROW missile relied on a buckshot or bucket effect. So, as it approached the incoming missile, it didn't have to hit it exactly, nose to nose. Rather, it relied on a kind of proximity fuse, if I may force this analogy. As the ARROW missile approached the incoming missile, the Arrow would fire a charge much like buckshot, and destroy the incoming missile or at least knock it off course.

Of course, there were those outsiders who would say, "This is essentially a missile system. You may call it an 'anti-missile missile,' but what you have is a new missile system."

Q: Then this involves the nuclear capability of the weapons system.

BROWN: Israel was in peril of being lumped with the likes of such countries as Iraq, Syria, and North Korea as we came up with our strategic missile regime. We considered a system under which we compel all of these, and other countries to adhere to our version of a missile regime as follows: 'Thou shalt not launch missiles capable of more than a certain range, say, either 300 or 500 kilometers. Thou shalt not launch a missile with super velocity.'" This concept later on caused a lot of heartburn in Israel when they saw themselves in risk of being named as being in violation of or not adhering to the missile regime.

The first Baker visit was rather friendly, although the Secretary was beginning to drop markers on the Israelis and the Palestinians. In essence, he said to the Israelis: "We're not going to deal with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] on this. However, you've got to deal realistically on this matter, you have to appreciate our limitations and you will have to make substantive and symbolic concessions."

Shortly thereafter there was a U.S. request for a responsible Israeli to go and see Dennis Ross and Secretary of State Baker quietly. Dan Meridor was a brilliant young minister in the Shamir Government from a prestigious Likud-Herut family. Meridor nominally went to Washington for some other purpose but came back with a letter from Baker containing three, basic questions that were to set the scene for subsequent discussions. They were: 1) Was Israel willing to seek a permanent solution to Arab-Israeli problems, based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338, that is, embodying the concept of exchanging territory for peace? 2) Was Israel willing to attend a regional conference to be co-hosted by the U.S. and the Soviet Union? The Soviet Union was still nominally intact, but by now it was very much weakened. 3) Would the Israelis agree to a moderate-sized, Palestinian Delegation to consist of seven members or so which would not include people from East Jerusalem nor deportees? That harks back to the earlier 1989-90 debate on what kind of Palestinian the Israelis would be willing to deal with.

Those three questions were what the Israeli Government was now faced with. The answers were expected to be "Yes or No." Understandably, the Israelis were divided among themselves. Remember that Prime Minister Shamir had now brought into the government some ultra-Right types, including representatives of Tsomet, headed by Raful Eyetan, former Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, and "Moledet," which had either two or three members in the Knesset

[Israeli Parliament]. Moledet's leader was Ze'evi, whose solution for dealing with the Palestinian Arabs was to transfer them elsewhere. That is, send them to Jordan or wherever. Those groups vociferously denounced this whole idea, from the very beginning, as a sellout which would lead to perdition.

Within the Likud itself there were great divisions as to what they were after, what they would agree to, and so forth. I won't go into all of the details, because you could spend hours and hours on them. Prime Minister Shamir was typically himself. He was reticent, slow-moving, and tended to procrastinate. As such, he would drive people up the wall, including Secretary of State James Baker and some of Shamir's own people. As time went on, more and more pressure came from Baker, who developed a practice of visiting various capitals and giving the Israelis a general picture but not the real nitty gritty details of his discussions with President Assad of Syria or others.

In all of this, by the way, the Egyptian role would come into focus. The Israelis had long felt frustrated that their peace with Egypt was a cold peace. They had given up the Sinai Desert, including Taba, to the Egyptians. Taba was a tiny enclave on the Gulf of Aqaba between Israel and Egypt. However, the Egyptians remained aloof and cold. The Israelis wanted the U.S. somehow to overcome this Egyptian attitude. We also wanted a positive, Egyptian role in implementing a peace process. The Egyptians wanted the positive benefits which would flow from being in the limelight, but they didn't prove to be too useful.

Back and forth went Secretary of State Baker. He developed a style in dealing with the Israelis which personally I considered quite bothersome. In any event, it was obvious to me that if I was going to play a role here, as a loyal Ambassador I would have to mix it up with the Israelis. I had no qualms about that and I gave Secretary Baker my best advice as to the problems and how to overcome them.

Baker rapidly became disillusioned with Israeli Foreign Minister Levy. He saw that Levy was principally interested in gaining the limelight. Levy had some utility to us by posing as being accommodating, but only if he could gain some control, and the control remained in the hands of Shamir. Baker didn't want to stop by Levy's office any longer and just listen to Levy, whom he labeled as a gas bag. (Baker used pejorative terms for his interlocutors, which I'd better not go into.) Instead, Baker preferred to go straight to Prime Minister Shamir's office. So I would have difficulties with Eytan Ben Tsour, who was working for Levy. Eytan would say, "Well, couldn't Baker stop by Levy's office for a minute or two?" with the press outside, and so forth.

Baker talked with Prime Minister Shamir, and he would see Defense Minister Arens occasionally on the side. When Baker saw Shamir, the key sessions would usually end up with Shamir using Eli Rubenstein and Yusip Ben Aron to do the heavy lifting on the Israeli side. They would come, as always, fully prepared and with all kinds of arguments, counter arguments, and proposals for the U.S. to obtain concessions from the Palestinians and other Arabs, in addition to venting criticism over the way things were going. Shamir would just sit there and let the conversation go back and forth. It would end up with Secretary Baker speaking sharply to Rubenstein and Yusip Ben Aron, with Dennis Ross and me really taking them on. We would get into rather heated exchanges, while Prime Minister Shamir just sat there, rather Sphinx-like in his manner, to

Secretary Baker's frustration.

Then Baker would go and meet with the Palestinians. They were often, excuse the expression, sort of cry babies, whining and entreating him for help.

Q: What would they have to offer?

BROWN: They had nothing to offer, except the image of Palestinians meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State. They were always criticizing and requesting concessions. Through various channels it became obvious to us that they really had no clout and were sort of winging it as best they could figure, while trying to stay in the good graces of Yasser Arafat, 1,000 miles away in Tunis.

Q: I'm trying to get a feel for this. I would like to ask you about two things. First of all, you say that you were trying to give Secretary Baker the best advice and so forth. Did you feel that there was a mindset which had developed in Washington among Baker's group? They would sort of get their ducks in line in Washington and then almost feel that, once they had done that, they were sure that they had THE solution. Then they would come out to the Middle East and find themselves up against a different world. I know that we came up against this in connection with the Shultz Plan, when Secretary Shultz met with President Assad of Syria. Did you find that? And then I have another question.

BROWN: To a degree, yes, they were trying to apply a pre-determined solution. Now, they were not fools. We're talking about experienced people. Secretary of State Baker was a good leader. He came to the Middle East well-prepared. He brought a terrific team with him, which was up to speed and coming up with ideas and formulas and so forth. What about your second question?

Q: The second question is, was it implicit in everything that we were doing that we were talking to Palestinians who really had no clout or influence? Did we feel that we had to figure out what Arafat wanted? We already had talks going on with...

BROWN: At that stage things were so delicate that, whatever we thought on the side, the stance had to be, "Let's see if we can promote the formation of a native or, if you will, local Palestinian delegation and hope that Arafat would permit this delegation to go along with the game.

Q: Were you getting any input from Ambassador Pelletreau in Tunis? Was he part of the equation?

BROWN: He was doing his reporting, but I can't remember anything in particular of any note. Of course, the Palestinians would tell us, over and over again, that their real leader was Yasser Arafat. We would be in the position of saying: "Yes, but let's not get into that." We knew, of course, that the Israelis knew virtually everything that was going on. After a meeting with Secretary Baker, the Palestinians we were talking to would run out, pull out their cell phones, and start calling Tunis to report in to Arafat.

Q: You say that the Palestinians were going out and reporting to Arafat on their cell phones?

BROWN: Yes, they would immediately get out their cell phones and report to their colleagues who were working with Arafat in Tunis. Of course, the Israelis would intercept these reports and learn what the Palestinians said about their exchanges with Secretary Baker.

I think that it's worth a moment to pause here and speak of other atmospherics. First of all, the Israeli settlement activity continued. This was really angering Washington now. I've mentioned before how this kind of settlement activity had angered President Bush in 1989-90. Now, it made a very bad impression when Washington found out that Prime Minister Shamir was permitting settlement activity to continue. Remember that there had been a tremendous influx of Soviet Jews, and particularly Russians and Ukrainians, most of them coming from urban environments. Most of them wanted to settle in the belt around Tel Aviv, a small number went to settlements in the occupied territories. Remember that a number of these settlements were rather large. We're talking about communities of 10,000 to 20,000 people. These were virtually bedroom communities, from which you could be at a job in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem in 15 or 20 minutes. Considerable publicity ensued regarding both the construction and the extension of settlements, old and new. The Israelis had developed a tricky way of setting up a new settlement by labeling it an extension of an old settlement. I'd protested against this practice on many occasions.

Of course, it was an absolute demand of all Palestinians that this kind of settlement construction had to stop. From the Palestinian viewpoint, it even had to be reversed. Well, Prime Minister Shamir wasn't about to do anything like this. So this was a point of constant aggravation between ourselves and the Israelis.

Coincidentally, the Intifada was still going on, and there was a rash of ongoing, terrorist incidents against Israeli soldiers and civilians both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Some gruesome, murderous actions also occurred among Palestinians, chiefly against those suspected of collaborating with the Israelis.

As Defense Minister, was in charge of the occupied territories, Arens was in a bind. On the one hand, Arens had come to the conclusion that the Israelis had to deal with the Palestinians and that they could no longer hope somehow to solve this problem through the Jordanians or others. In conversations with me Arens was in effect advocating municipal elections. There were precedents for municipal elections in the occupied territories. This was a subject of contention because Arafat and company could see that the Israeli goal here was to circumvent any possibility of territorial concessions and, once again, go to the U.S. and the world and say in effect, "You see? We have found a local group of Palestinians who have chosen democratically elected village councils. We can do business with these people. They can control cleaning up their own streets, the water system, and that sort of thing. However, nothing more than that."

Prime Minister Shamir was also against elections in the occupied territories. He feared that this would lead to demands by the elected Palestinians for the establishment of an independent, Palestinian entity. Meanwhile, the Intifada and the rash of terrorist incidents continued. Arens proclaimed curfews in Gaza, which was then very heavily dependent on the Israeli economy for employment. 50,000 to 100,000 Gazans were coming across the border with Israel every day to work on farms and do the dirty work at construction sites. This was virtually their only means of

earning an income for a very young population of 700,000 which was increasing at an extraordinary rate. Proclaiming a curfew and stopping them from working in Israel was a very serious move. However, Arens, like Rabin before him, on occasion felt that there was no other way to deal with the problem of terrorism. The curfew would be proclaimed. It might be lifted a few days later, but as the terrorist incidents continued, this became a major problem. The situation in Gaza got so bad that the cry arose, particularly in the Likud camp led by Ariel Sharon, for tougher measures such as those which Sharon in the 1970s had imposed in brutally suppressing disturbances in Gaza.

So the atmosphere was by no means calm and cool. It was fractious. President Bush was angry with Prime Minister Shamir, and Secretary Baker developed the habit of stating to Shamir: "If you think what I'm saying is tough, Mr. Prime Minister, you ought to hear what my good friend of 30 years, President George Bush, is saying." The conversations between Baker and Shamir's entourage, myself included, at times became quite sharp.

Baker developed the technique of saying: "Look, I will try to accommodate your concerns here but I've got other concerns with the Syrians. If you will give me what is necessary to work with, I will accommodate you by a separate, side letter." The Israelis would say, "What are you promising the Syrians on this issue?" Baker would temporize in his answer. He would not reveal the nitty gritty details. Of course, the Israelis had their own means of trying to determine that.

Another technique of Baker's was to tell his Ambassadors, and that certainly included me, that there was to be no reporting of his conversations with either Israelis or anyone else. When he and I were alone, he would say to me: "I don't want that 'blankety-blank' AIPAC [American Israeli Public Affairs Committee] to know what's going on." So I prepared no cables or memoranda of conversations which Baker had. It all stayed with me. I had my notes of what was said at these meetings, which were subsequently destroyed. However, knowledge of what was said at these meetings all stayed in-house, that is, in Secretary Baker's entourage. We were instructed not to communicate, back and forth, with our other Ambassadors. I was not to let Ambassador Ed Djerejian [in Damascus] and other Ambassadors on the circuit know what was going on. That would all be handled by Secretary Baker's party. That was an interesting way to run a show...

Q: Yes, but in a way it was almost necessary because the leakage was so bad in the Department of State, considering the presence of friends of Israel in the political context that I can't think of any other way that you could handle this, over a period of time.

BROWN: Well, Stuart, you get into the question of professional, career Ambassadors doing their best to support a diplomatic campaign, and not just an individual visit by the Secretary of State. I feel, as a professional Ambassador, that it would have been useful to know a little bit more about what was going on elsewhere.

Q: I know. What I'm saying is that anything which came from the visits by Secretary Baker, if it went back to the desk in the Department of State, and God knows how this happens, but it's a truism that anything that you write about Israel, and this applies generally in the Foreign Service, is going to end up on a desk in AIPAC and with friends of Israel in the Senate and the House of Representatives. And probably before anybody else could read it.

BROWN: Okay, Stuart, but you would have to reckon with the likelihood that those same addressees would get their own version via the Israelis, anyway. Of course, Secretary Baker and Margaret Tutwiler handled press briefings exclusively. The press was along on all or most of these visits. Baker, using his food processors such as Ross, Kurtzer and others in his traveling party, would let out dribbles to the press. The Palestinians, of course, were had their own circuit.

I completely adhered to Baker's overall goal and objectives. I was a loyal Ambassador and did my best to contribute creatively. Indeed, I engaged in this effort in a spirited manner, using Secretary Baker's arguments with Eli Rubenstein, Yosi Ben Aron, Israeli Defense Minister Arens, and the Israeli Foreign Ministry. However, the atmosphere in which I worked was somewhat shocking, and the image that emerged was that the Bush Government was tough and harsh, vis-a-vis Israel. In effect, we were playing a strong hand and a rough kind of ball with the Israelis.

If I may switch over to the Palestinian side at this point, they were in a very difficult position, as I look back at it. They were always asking for something. At one point Faisal Husseini said to Secretary Baker: "You're talking to a dead man! Threats have been made on my life. There's threatening graffiti on the wall of my house. I have young children," and so forth. Faisal Husseini said that the Israelis were behind all of this. Baker responded, do you need security protection? Maybe we can train some Palestinian security types to give you appropriate protection. We have specialists in this field."

I remember a side conversation in this regard with the head of the Israeli Security Service. The Israeli smiled and said to me, "Yes, Faisal Husseini has problems, but they're not problems with us. His problems are with the Palestinians." The thrust of those remarks was: "If you Americans want to go off and train some Palestinian security people, good luck, but that's not the problem."

I can remember Secretary Baker straining to convey to the Palestinians that he was doing his best. He would imply that if they would only give him more to work with, perhaps he could help them more. Baker was an outstanding negotiator. He made you feel that, by God, he had gone the extra mile for you, but you weren't coming up with enough to give him what he needed to work with. At one point the conversation with the Palestinians in the Consul General's house in Jerusalem went to the point where the Palestinians were asking for an expression of "self-determination." There was a long pause, and Secretary Baker turned to his entourage and asked, "Why can't I use that expression?" Neither Dennis Ross nor anybody else said anything. Finally, I said, "Because, Mr. Secretary, that's political dynamite." For years U.S. administrations had adamantly opposed the use of the expression, "self-determination" for the Palestinians. This was a code word for an independent, Palestinian state, run by the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. I felt that at that point and in that kind of conversation I had to say this.

Well, as you can imagine, the Palestinians glared at me, and my name, as the American Ambassador to Israel, which was probably muddied anyhow as far as they were concerned, was muddied even further. However, that's what you have to go through.

Q: We'll play this back and we'll pick this up where you are talking about Secretary Baker

dealing with the Palestinians on the issue of self-determination.

Today is September 22, 1999. Bill, you were mentioning, while we were talking about these early negotiations with Secretary of State Baker on the Arab-Israeli problem, what the overall, strategic point of view was, as Baker saw it. Essentially, this was the American point of view.

BROWN: At the risk of some repetition, as I may not have covered this point adequately before, I would like to review the situation, from my viewpoint, at the end of the Gulf War in February-March, 1991. The main components of the situation, as I saw them, were as follows:

1) The Soviet Union had imploded. No longer were we dealing with the traditional, Cold War, balance of forces, play and counterplay, in the Middle East. Already, some time before, the Soviet presence in Syria and Soviet clout and support, in the sense of providing arms, subsidies, and personnel had declined. For many years the Soviets had had hundreds, if not thousands, of military personnel in the area. The Syrian armed forces, for example, were equipped with Soviet weapons. The Syrian Air Force had Soviet aircraft, trained along Soviet lines, and operated in terms of Soviet doctrine. All of this required a very hefty subsidy on the part of Moscow, using Syria to counter Israel and playing for the larger Arab vote as part and parcel of the Cold War struggle with the United States.

All of that was now gone. This meant that the efforts and past influence of Mr. Primakov and others in the Soviet Government, whether you were talking about the KGB [Soviet secret police], the Soviet military, and so forth, were very severely set back, if not wiped out. For all practical purposes, they were practically nil. For the sake of appearances, President Bush and Secretary of State Baker decided to continue going through the motions of having the Soviet Union co-sponsor activities in the Middle East, as we went along. However, that was just showmanship.

2) Secondly, although one can argue that Saddam Hussein and the elite, Iraqi Republican Guard should have been completely eliminated, a tremendous blow had been inflicted on Iraq, in terms of military clout and economic infrastructure. A series of restrictions continue to this. U.S. aircraft are still periodically bombing selected military targets in Iraq. One of the two great, strategic threats to Israel, that is, Iraq, had been knocked out for up to 10 years, depending on how the follow-up to the Gulf War went. The other threat remaining, of course, was Iran, which was farther removed from the scene but which was of concern to the Israelis, in terms of Iran's nuclear and missile potential. In negotiating, whether with the Israelis or with anyone else in what became a multi-faceted process culminating in the Madrid Peace Conference in October, 1991, this was of enormous importance.

Meanwhile, Jordan and the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] were both in the dog house. By word and deed they had acted in a most foolish way, from my viewpoint. Particularly with regard to the Palestinians, one could argue that poor King Hussein, caught between a rock and a hard place, may have felt that he had little choice but to act and speak as he did. However, the Jordanian economy, which was already weak before the Gulf War, was dealt a very heavy blow. The Saudis cut off their subsidy to Jordan, cut off the flow of oil in the pipeline into Jordan, and

simply would have nothing to do with the resuscitation of the Jordanian economy or the prestige of King Hussein in any form or manner. The same thing applied to the subsidies formerly paid by the Saudis to the PLO. For years the Saudis, through one means or another, whether private, public, or semi public, had allowed money to flow to Yasser Arafat and various factions in the PLO supporting him. That all stopped. As I mentioned before, Kuwait brutally expelled tens of thousands of Palestinians, charging that the Palestinians had collaborated with the Iraqi occupation forces in Kuwait. So this was a heavy, further blow to the Palestinians in general and to Jordan as well, because when the Palestinians were kicked out of Kuwait, no country would take them except Jordan.

Q: I might add that the Palestinians had publicly demonstrated support of Saddam Hussein on television, which was seen throughout the world.

BROWN: The image used in Israel at that time was that the Palestinians were dancing with joy on the roofs of their homes. Maybe this was an exaggeration, but it was a widely-held stereotype, as a result of which the Palestinians were in a really weak, negotiating position.

At the time there was a great rush to get the goodies in the form of equipment, etc, when the United States finished this major, overseas war effort. We spent a great amount of time and money transporting huge amounts of military equipment to the Middle East. Subsequently, much of this was then deemed surplus to our needs. Rather than ship this equipment back to the United States, U.S. logisticians began looking for ways to get rid of it in the Middle East itself. For the Egyptians, Saudis, the Israelis and others, these goodies were up for grabs. This was something that a negotiator like Secretary Baker could play with.

Inevitably, a cry came from the Egyptians for debt relief. The United States was in a position, if it wanted to, even though at the time our economy was not particularly prosperous, to reward countries which had supported the coalition effort against Saddam Hussein. We did so. The Egyptians' entreaties were answered by the forgiveness of \$7.0 billion in debt to the U.S., plus the flow of surplus military equipment and the maintenance of the annual, foreign aid flow to Egypt, which was roughly in the order of nearly \$2.0 billion.

The United States had emerged as "El Supremo" as a result of the Gulf War. We were unchallenged. There was no Soviet Union to contend with. We had pulled off a tremendous victory, which was called "The 100 Hours War," with great, added prestige accruing to us. As a result of the Gulf War President Bush was at his height in terms of popularity. Congress, whatever its earlier misgivings about getting into the war, was now, elated. The President's reception by Congress after the end of the war was tumultuous. He was given great acclaim for his achievement.

So, when Secretary Baker toured the Middle East, he had a tremendously favorable, negotiating position. I would add one other thing which was not commonly referred to at the time, and may still not be. Although, the Israelis had emerged relatively unscathed, and miraculously so, in view of 39 SCUD missiles launched against Israel, their economy had come to a grinding halt during the war.

Israel had been transformed in the years since I was there as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], 1979-82, into an increasingly, high tech economy. During the Gulf War, as I traveled around Israel on a sort of morale enhancing tour of Israeli industrial and scientific enterprises, I remember visiting a high class firm that made equipment for administering CAT scans. This is a big, highly complex piece of equipment.

Q: Perhaps you could explain what a CAT scan is.

BROWN: Okay. This equipment is built into a horizontal receptacle which measures your brain waves and whether you have cancer here or there, as well as other disorders. This equipment is large, extremely complex, and very expensive. One set of this equipment was selling then for at least \$500,000. The Israeli-made CAT scan was meeting and beating Japanese and U.S. CAT scans, which had heretofore been regarded as the best in the world. When I talked to the CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of this Israeli company at the time, he said that the market situation for this equipment was disastrous. News of the SCUD attacks on Israel had caused potential customers around the world to ask, "How can we be sure that equipment ordered from Israel will be delivered?" As a result, orders for this and other hi-tech equipment had taken a beating.

Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was then a private person, remarked to me at the time, as did Defense Minister Arens, that the Israeli economy was at a standstill. Factories had been closed. The Israeli people had been instructed to stay at home. So the Israeli economy came to a grinding halt. This revealed to me a unique Israeli vulnerability which I had not previously appreciated. When faced with conventional war previously, the Israelis had struck hard and fast struck across their borders. Until the SCUDs attacks of 1991, those wars had been fought elsewhere, outside of Israel or on its borders. The SCUD attacks set in train a new, extra dynamic: the quest for an anti-missile missile and a kind of brand new, radar system which could detect incoming missiles at supersonic speeds, launched from great distances.

This situation also must have set in mind for some Israelis the need for adequate settlements and turning Israel's diplomatic resources to cope with the emergent threats of the future. Not only from Iraq, but...

Q: When you mention settlements, you're not talking about housing on the West Bank of the Jordan, for example, where people lived.

BROWN: No, I'm talking about peace settlements to be negotiated to replace hostilities. Such peace settlements were needed to bring more order and predictability into the region.

These, then, were some of the main factors that Secretary Baker and his outstanding team in the State Department, including Dennis Ross, Dan Kurtzer, Aaron Miller and others, could bring into play. What I'm talking about now is a process involving eight trips to the Middle East between March 12, 1991, through mid-October, 1991, culminating in the Madrid Peace Conference, which started on October 30-31, 1991.

I have to give Secretary Baker and his entourage full marks for pulling off a diplomatic coup. They deserve great credit. I would also note, on the Israeli front, as former Secretary Kissinger

and others have said, the Israeli negotiating style is little short of maddening. The Israelis often go into arcane arguments and attempt, over an excruciating length of time, day and night, to extract maximum advantage over as broad a spectrum as they can. That is a well-known pattern in the eyes of professional American negotiators. You find this pattern way back in the time of David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, and right on down to the present. Of course, individual Israeli negotiators have their particular traits. Much has been written about Menachem Begin and the negotiations which led to the Camp David agreements. On that score you should also consider Ambassador Sam Lewis' contributions.

In this particular case Prime Minister Shamir's personality and style included a pronounced reticence in front of a U.S. negotiator. Shamir had a distinct tendency to procrastinate in making decisions, particularly tough decisions. This tendency made it even more difficult to negotiate with him. Shamir's way of handling Secretary Baker presented its own problems. Shamir would receive Baker in the Prime Minister's office. Shamir would sit under a stern portrait of Jabotinsky, the revisionist right-wing Herut/Likud visionary, who was well known for his view that Israel should control "both banks of the Jordan River." Shamir would seat Secretary Baker to his immediate right, with myself and Dennis Ross, to Baker's right. To Shamir's left would be Yusip Ben Aron, the Director General of the Prime Minister's office, a former Israeli Foreign Service Officer of pro-Likud, hawkish sentiments, and Eli Rubenstein, who had served many different Israeli Prime Ministers and administrations and who had taken part in many negotiations.

Very often Shamir would just sit there and let Ben Aron and Rubenstein pick holes in any presentation made and ask a whole series of penetrating, difficult questions, which would lead the conversation on and on. Shamir would often preside over such a meeting in relative silence, until it really boiled over. Then he might say a word or two to calm down the atmosphere.

Well, a process like that could be very frustrating for a man like Secretary Baker, who wanted to move on and had a lot on his mind. His itineraries were complex. He would be moving on from seeing Prime Minister Shamir to go to see President Assad up in Syria. Then he might be going to Saudi Arabia to see the Saudis. Baker had many other items on his platter, as well as the peace process itself. The fact that Shamir had his own splits within Likud also further complicated the process. Shamir's coalition government had been in office for some time, and like all Israeli coalitions which have been in office for a time, it was beginning to come apart at the seams. The Right Wing splinter parties in Shamir's Government, which provided him with a majority of five or six seats in the Knesset, were to the Right of the Likud. They were named: "Tsomet," headed by Rafal Eytan, former hard line Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces and "Moledet," led by Ze'evi, another, former general who advocated the transfer of the Palestinians from the occupied territories to elsewhere...

Q: We call that process "ethnic cleansing" these days.

BROWN: Well, transfer was Ze'evi's expression, and he could cite historical precedents in other countries, including the United States...

Q: An example is the Cherokee Indians.

BROWN: Right. Another of the Right-Wing splinter parties was Tehiya, led by Yakub Neeman.

These splinter parties, and Ariel Sharon within the Likud, were harping away against Prime Minister Shamir's allegedly giving away the farm. They were calling for larger, not smaller settlements in the occupied territories. They were calling for much tougher measures against the Intifada, which, while it was showing some signs of fatigue, was nevertheless a very, very disconcerting phenomenon. They advocated stronger measures in Lebanon, where President Assad of Syria was squeezing the Christian Lebanese more and more tightly, thereby giving more play to what became known as the Hezbollah group [Muslim extremist group]. So Shamir's task was further complicated by this situation.

Having said all of that, I want to stress that, throughout this period, I remained loyal to Secretary Baker and President Bush. I was, after all, their Ambassador to Israel. I supported Bush in every way that I could. I often offered him tactical advice, as a professional Ambassador should do. This situation, where I had internal misgivings, was a very private thing for me. I couldn't go around sharing thoughts with others. I must say that, at times, inwardly and privately, I found Secretary Baker's style disturbing. It was tougher than I thought necessary. From his personal and private remarks to me I felt that his attitude toward certain Israeli leaders, as well as others, bordered on the contemptuous. I remember Secretary Baker repeatedly referring to King Hussein, when we were alone, as the "P. L. K." [Plucky Little King]. It was said in a tone of contempt.

Now, many negotiators, especially those going through a prolonged process of stress, will often lash out in private, so one should take my remarks as the listener or the reader wishes to do. However, this attitude of Secretary Baker's posed a professional dilemma for me. As I said, I was of the view, from the very beginning of my tenure as Ambassador to Israel, that a peace process could be put together. I had so recommended it to Secretary Baker and, by golly, here he was doing it! Baker had many balls in the air at the same time as he negotiated with the Israelis and the Palestinians.

In this context I mean the local Palestinians. Remember that our dialogue with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] had ceased and remained closed at this stage, given the May 30, 1990, attack against the Israeli coast near Tel Aviv and PLO conduct during the Gulf War. So Secretary Baker had a great deal on his mind.

At times, Secretary Baker's attitude really bothered me. The dilemma is: what should he have done? He was moving ahead. The negotiations in which he was involved were leading to a peace conference, one way or another, which I could readily applaud. If it succeeded, it would give the Israelis a remarkable breakthrough in demolishing the long-standing Arab taboo against negotiating with the Israelis. However, I was disturbed. Nevertheless, what should I have done? Should I have resigned, should I have quit, should I have withdrawn? I felt: "No." My strong, private reservations notwithstanding, I should put my shoulder to the wheel and do everything that I could. So that's the way I conducted myself.

Q: Could I interject something at this point? To me, one of the great problems Americans face in

dealing with Israel has always been a tendency to say to ourselves: "Gosh, we're not anti-Semitic. Therefore, we've got to give the Israelis the benefit of this or that doubt. I think that the Israelis realize this and have played it to a fare-thee-well. This was particularly the case with the Bush-Baker administration. They did not seem to be as disturbed about how they treated Israel as most other American administrations had been. We can talk about King Hussein as the "Puffy, Little King." We thought of the Israelis as the "brave Israelis." We often feel that we have to show that we certainly don't have a trace of anti-Semitism in our attitude and therefore have to be more forthcoming to them than, say, we would be to the French. Did you find this a problem?

BROWN: I would say, Stuart, that you are not alone in this opinion and in expressing it. There are many Americans who felt the same way and who expressed this in one form or another.

Going way back to the time when I spoke with Larry Eagleburger before he was actually nominated as Secretary of State and called on General Scowcroft before he was taken on at the National Security Council, Larry's remarks and my contacts with Scowcroft led me to realize that this was a new, or a new/old attitude, however you want to describe it. To put it mildly, this attitude might be summarized as: "No more Mr. Nice Guy." It ranged and was perceived by the successive Shamir cabinets as going much further than that. This was seen as coming from the White House and was not a creation of Secretary of State James Baker. From their various sources it didn't take the Shamir cabinets long to figure out that they had a major problem with the President of the United States and his attitude toward them.

All of that was to sharpen as time went on. I recalled previously how President Bush in my presence and in his office called me in and really pounded the air. He was furious at what he considered a betrayal of assurances he felt he had received from Shamir. Prime Minister Shamir had obviously put off President Bush with some such remark as: "The settlements need not be a problem." However this comment was worded I don't know. I wasn't present at that conversation. Bush took it to mean one thing. Obviously, Shamir intended it to mean something else. President Bush was really furious as time went on, and the new facts on the ground as Sharon and others loved to call them, kept sprouting up, our protestations notwithstanding.

By the time of the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1991, Shamir and company knew that they had a real problem. During the Gulf War itself the question of Soviet or Russian Jewish immigration and its implications had reached the point that the Israelis were asking for housing loan guarantees. What this meant was that they wanted to be able to go to the U.S. corporate bond market and float loans which would be, if you will, guaranteed by the United States Government. They had had enough support for this in a broad spectrum of Congress that they had reasonable hopes of getting it. Well, this wasn't happening.

In February, 1991, during the Gulf War, the then Israeli Ambassador to the United States was Shoval, whom I very much admire, vented some frustration about his inability to achieve movement on these resettlement loan guarantees. He was then and is now a good Ambassador, serving in Washington for the second time around. He may be nearing the end of his second term now. Anyhow, Shoval was a former member of the Israeli Parliament and a man of sophistication, education, and finesse. He had been successful in business and had considerable

diplomatic experience. At one time he had helped found a new political party with Moshe Dayan. This man really had background.

Remarks were attributed to Ambassador Shoval by Reuters news agency, to the effect that the Israelis were getting the run around on these guarantees. Well, on the evening of Friday, February 14, 1991, as I was closing up my office in Tel Aviv and getting ready for possible launches of SCUD missiles by the Iraqis, I received a phone call on the secure telephone from Dennis Ross in Washington. Dennis Ross said, "You will go to Prime Minister Shamir immediately and convey the following message: 'Were it not wartime, and U.S.-Israeli relations being what they are, we would have asked for Ambassador Shoval's recall. His comments are outrageous'" and so forth. I urged Dennis to hold off and let things cool down a little bit before I went in with such a strong statement in the middle of a war to a government that was being attacked by the Iraqis. Ross repeated: "Deliver the message." I said, knowing that Dennis was Jewish, "You are aware that it is Shabath [the Sabbath Day]. It's after sundown on Friday, and you are aware that there is a likelihood of SCUDs being fired at Israel. This is not the time to do it. Wait 24 hours, after Shabath." He said, "No, no, it has to be done now."

So I called Yusip Ben Aron and dictated that statement to him. It has subsequently been quoted in Secretary Baker's memoirs. This was a brutal revelation or insight into how strongly they felt in Washington. It was a "gotcha" [got you] mentality. They felt that Israeli Ambassador Shoval had stepped over the line. Sure, he may have deserved a tap on the wrist. I wasn't there at the time. I thought that it was a brutal response. So it was delivered, but it was not a casual thing.

I could talk for hours, giving the historical background and so forth. The main issues were: would the Israelis agree to a Middle Eastern conference based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338? This meant land for peace. Would the Israelis agree to an international conference? For good reason the Israelis had a well-founded dislike, having been pilloried, over and over again, particularly at the UN General Assembly and in various specialized agencies of the United Nations, where the Arab countries would gang up on them and use their clout with the Third World, and so forth. Of course, the Russians and other communist states would just pile on. The Israelis had a really strong feeling about getting into anything where they would end up in the dock, as it were. In that situation the rest of the world, including the U.S. as the presumptive convener of an international conference, in essence would put the Israelis under the spotlight, embarrassing and humiliating them and forcing them to submit to the alleged will of the international community.

So the question was: would the Israelis come to some kind of international conference and, if so, where would it be held? From the Israeli viewpoint they had always wanted the action to take place in and on their borders. That is, they wanted face to face negotiations on a bilateral, official basis with their neighbors. During all of those years, given the decisions made by the Arab League and the very strong anti-Semitic, anti-Israeli bias displayed by all of their neighbors, Israel had refused to agree with such negotiations. The Arab countries carried these biases into the peacemaking process. The Arab viewpoint would be: if we're going to have a conference, it should be an international meeting, held elsewhere than in the Middle East. Such a conference ought to be framed in such a way that the outcome is territory for peace. That is, Israel should vacate all of the lands, of any sort, that it has ever taken, if you want the fuller version of the

Arab demands.

The Israelis were not about to accept that. The question then was: would the Israelis allow Palestinian participation in such a meeting under constraints? That is to say, no PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization], because the U.S. itself was in a further bind on the PLO, because Arafat had behaved so badly during Desert Storm and was in the dog house with many Arab countries. Would the Israelis accept a proper Palestinian delegation which was not controlled by the PLO, which did not include Palestinians from East Jerusalem at this stage, and so forth? Well, examining these and other issues consumed hours and hours of time, with discussions, proposals, and counter-proposals being presented. Again, I reiterate, full marks should go to Secretary of State Baker for his patience, his tolerance, and his ability, as a deal maker, to set things up where he would lay out all of these Israeli objections and then work to demonstrate all that he had done and was going to do to try and meet them. He said that he would keep trying, but he would need more from the Israelis. He was a wily deal-maker.

Baker would meet with the Palestinians, criticize them for PLO conduct during the Gulf War, and tell them, flat-out, that the Palestinian Delegation to the forthcoming conference wasn't going to be controlled by the PLO. At the same time he would say in effect, "If you play along with me, if you'll go through the right motions and so forth, maybe we can get you more of what you want, if you know what I mean." You may remember my previous example, when the expression "self-determination" came up, he turned and said, rhetorically, "Why can't I use that?" The rest of the American team fell silent, and I finally spoke up and said that it would be political dynamite.

Meanwhile, Russian Jews continued to pour monthly into Israel by the tens of thousands, and the demands for feeding, housing, and employing these people grew. So the put down of Ambassador Shoval in February, 1991, notwithstanding, because the Israelis kept coming back to this issue, Baker, a former Secretary of the Treasury who had a certain knowledge of how things work and can work, began to intimate to the Israelis: "Well, you know, the way a loan guarantee works is that the United States Government guarantees it. However, these bonds are scored. That is, there's a charge pertaining to them, depending on risk assessment and so forth." Baker would say, "I have to tell you, Mr. Prime Minister, there are those who are recommending that the 'scoring' of these bonds should run at about 20 to 30 percent of their face value. There are people who would advocate that." In other words, if you want to borrow \$100, it could cost you \$20-30 in scoring fees. This, of course, would be a sky high figure. However, the clear implication was that if Baker had the wherewithal, he could throw his weight behind doing something about this. Baker noted that he was a former Secretary of the Treasury, and his best friend over the past 25-30 years was George Bush, who happened to be President of the United States. Then Baker would raise his voice and say to the Israelis: "Would you stop building settlements? Will you give me an ironclad guarantee that you will stop construction work on all settlements, including those in and around Jerusalem?" Of course, Prime Minister Shamir wasn't about to make such a commitment.

As that issue sharpened, so did the U.S. language and Secretary Baker's handling of this matter. That difference of view with Shamir's Government was to last through the whole peace-building process and afterwards.

Q: During the time that you were involved in this negotiation, were your people going out and checking on construction at these settlements?

BROWN: You can bet we were! In fact, the primary reporting responsibility here lay with the Consulate General in Jerusalem. The Consulate General staff was assiduously reporting all of these developments...

Q: The charge was made later that many of these settlements were put up but weren't fully occupied. Was this happening?

BROWN: Oh, there was a whole technique involved in settlement building. All sorts of things were happening. The standard technique, especially when the people behind all of these settlements realized that the U.S. was increasingly focused on them, would be for a small group of people to appear on a distant knob, some distance from an existing settlement. They would set up some tents and bring in a caravan, a couple of trailers, and so forth. After a while, instead of three or four couples living there, there would be 10 or 15 couples and perhaps a couple of mobile homes. Then a road would be built, connecting with a nearby highway or settlement. When the U.S. protest came in, and we were using satellite and ground observation to learn what was happening, the dimensions of this problem grew.

Remember, when I first went to Israel in 1979, there were no more than several thousand Jewish settlers living on the West Bank. However, by this time we were talking about 100,000 Jewish residents on the West Bank. It was now beginning to take on some overtones such as, "Well, maybe some Russian Jews would like to go out there and live." After all, there were all of the incentives. They had a practically free mortgage for the housing, commuter bedroom facilities, good swimming pools, schools, high tech employment on some of these sites themselves, and so forth.

So this was a big issue, and it got sharper and sharper as time went on. Indeed, this continued, even after the peace process began. I'll get back to that in a moment.

Another problem that reared its head was the establishment of the Missile Technology Control Regime. Already U.S. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney had had words in my presence with Arens as Israeli Defense Minister about the alleged leakage of U.S. technology through the Israeli industrial and military complex to other countries. There had been sharp words exchanged, with Arens himself taking part in them. Arens resoundingly rejected these comments by Dick Cheney. As I indicated in previous remarks, it's a terribly complicated issue, not just between the U.S. and Israel but the U.S. and countries X, Y, and Z, such as France or anybody else.

As a result of the Gulf War and the discovery of how far Saddam Hussein's missile technology had advanced, apart from the junky SCUD missiles that were being fired at Israel and U.S. forces, we realized how close he had come to developing a nuclear missile delivery system. This was coupled with the increasingly disturbing news on and about Iran and the flows of technology into Iran from North Korea and from Russian scientific personnel and establishments. The Bush administration was advocating something called the Missile Technology Control Regime. Under

this program lists were drawn up of countries that had missiles and missile programs which had not conformed to our version of a control system which said, "Thou shalt not build something which can go more than 400-500 kilometers," and so forth.

Well, since Israel hadn't signed on to this control system, Israel began to appear on these lists. This caused the Israelis great heart-burn at the prospect of yet another, open split with the United States. Secretary Baker could play with this issue. On the one hand, he could say that this was a Department of Defense problem, and, on the other hand, he could say that it wasn't. It was not merely the Department of Defense which was involved in this. It was the State Department Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM) which handled the licensing. At this time Dick Clark was the relevant PM Assistant Secretary. Along with others, PM was putting out the preparatory guidelines which constituted a warning to the Israelis: "Hey, you either come to terms on this issue, or else..."

So issues like these were in the background of the negotiations which were under way. In the event, as time went on, Secretary Baker succeeded in successfully completing these negotiations. It was a grinding process. He made eight visits to Israel.

A great deal of showmanship was going on at the same time. I'll give you an example. Very often these trips by Secretary Baker were arranged on very short notice. There would be a brief announcement, we would get ready, and Baker's delegation would arrive in Israel. I remember that one of the trips was scheduled for Hanukkah, a major Jewish festival commemorating the rededication of the Temple of Solomon by Judas Maccabeus in 165 B.C. However, Baker's schedule was such that they had to come then, and Prime Minister Shamir met them.

On one of these occasions we had a truly great Consul General in Jerusalem, Molly Williamson. If you haven't heard of her...

Q: Has she retired?

BROWN: I don't know, but when she does, you will want to interview her. Molly had had some experience in Arab countries. She had also served in the Embassy in Tel Aviv. As I was coming in as the new Ambassador to Israel, she was in the latter part of her tour of duty in Jerusalem. I knew her very well and favorably. She was our first woman Consul General in Jerusalem.

In these negotiations with the Palestinians and in handling herself with Secretary Baker, Molly did a bang up job. There was one occasion when what Baker needed was a visible sign of movement, to the extent that one of the Palestinians was needed to travel to Amman, Jordan, while Baker was making his visit there. This meeting could be presented as evidence that progress was being made. The point could be made that a Palestinian was involved in the negotiations, and he or she had come over all the way from Israel, crossing the Allenby Bridge, and was in Amman.

I received a phone call from Dennis Ross in Washington at midnight or 1:00 AM, local time in Tel Aviv. I was informed that Secretary Baker wanted Hannan Ashrawi to attend this meeting. Hannan was a Christian Arab who held a Ph.D. from a U.S. university. She was a very outspoken

lady and very critical of the negotiations. She was one of the nearly constant contacts of Secretary Baker when he visited Jerusalem. She was also one of the major speakers when those groups met.

Q: She was almost constantly on TV.

BROWN: She was on TV very frequently on this occasion and was to be even more so, as the peace process went on. Anyway, the word came from Washington: "Get Hannan Ashrawi across the Allenby Bridge and into Amman, immediately." As I said, by now it was the middle of the night, local time. Secretary Baker needed her there in Amman by the opening of business on the following day.

Well, as you know, the Israelis closed the Allenby Bridge each night, the Intifada was going on, and there were road blocks all over the place. The bridge was closed at sundown and would not normally be opened until 8:00 or 9:00 AM on the following morning. Dennis Ross knew this, and that is why he made the phone call. He knew that he needed me to arrange for Hannan Ashrawi to cross the bridge.

We got in touch with Molly Williamson, the Consul General in Jerusalem. I also got in touch with either Israeli Defense Minister Arens or some other, senior official in the Defense Ministry and asked him to open up the road blocks and so forth. Now, Hannan Ashrawi was not particularly keen about getting up in the middle of the night on the basis of a phone call from Molly Williamson, get dressed, get into Molly's car, go through a whole bunch of tough, military road blocks, to be delivered down at the Allenby Bridge and then run up to Amman. She might well have regarded this as an affront to her dignity. In the event, Molly Williamson had quite a task, convincing Hannan Ashrawi to agree to this. I was on pins and needles as to whether this trip would actually work out. So I did a great deal of almost continuous work on the telephone during the night, to make sure that if Hannan Ashrawi did get up and got into Molly Williamson's car, she would be able to cross the Allenby Bridge and travel up to Amman.

Sure enough, Molly Williamson and Hannan Ashrawi appeared at the Allenby Bridge in the wee hours of the morning. An Israeli Army Colonel said, "Bavakesha" [Please], and waved them across the Allenby Bridge. Hannan Ashrawi was driven up to Amman, and Secretary Baker's public appearance needs were met. That shows you the kinds of things that we could get into.

Q: I was wondering whether you could tell me how you saw your role at these meetings which Secretary Baker had. You were the U.S. Ambassador to Israel. Supposedly, Baker's staff was making arrangements for these trips. You had to run the Embassy and everything else.

BROWN: My role in connection with these meetings was to keep in touch with Yosip Ben Aron and Eli Rubenstein. Dennis Ross and I would hammer against their arguments. The exchanges would often get quite sharp. Prime Minister Shamir would sit there and, after a certain amount of acrimony and so forth, would say something like: "Well, let's move on," or something like that.

Secretary Baker himself would occasionally lash out, and sometimes he did this quite deliberately. He would get sick and tired of what he considered Yosip Ben Aron's and Eli

Rubenstein's dilatory tactics. Baker had his own, if you will, Texas deal maker's way of emphasizing a point. I found that this pattern of Baker's was repeated later on in the context of a couple of other, really tense occasions. At the time we had no direct communications with Ambassador Ed Djerejian in Damascus. However, when I put things together later on and made comparative notes, I found that this pattern was not unique.

If frustrated enough or to drive home a point, Baker would snap together, very loudly, this folder he had with him, which had metallic edges, and Baker would then stand up. We were all seated in a tiny circle. Baker would step past a coffee table and go over and look at a map or wall exhibit of some kind. In Prime Minister Shamir's office there were always displays of this kind. He would convey a studied anger for a moment or two and then say, "If that's the way you feel, then there's really no point in going any further." Raising his voice, he would say: "Now, I've tried and I've done everything that I could, Yossi and Eli. I've met this and that request, but you keep on harping away" and so forth. As I say, Baker would deliver himself of a bit of a diatribe against them.

There would be a period of silence, and Shamir would then say, "Well, let's go on" or move the discussion onto a different tack. On more than one occasion Secretary Baker would say to me, and I felt that this was entirely gratuitous, because I was taking notes, along with Dennis Ross and others: "No cables or telegrams reporting this discussion, Ambassador!" Of course, he didn't need to say that. The Israelis were taking down every syllable that Baker was saying, and the Israelis were very good note takers. Several times he would make a similar remark when I was present in discussions with the Palestinians. He would say, "I don't want any cable reporting this!" I felt that this was a gratuitous slap at my expense. There was no need for it, all the more so because we all knew that, as soon as the meeting was over, the Palestinians would run out of the building, get on their cell phones, and phone Yasser Arafat's people at PLO headquarters in Tunis. Of course, the Israelis would be tuning in, so that a record was being made of the discussions.

Q: Was he saying that for some particular purpose?

BROWN: He obviously wanted things to be compartmentalized. I suppose that he wanted to let it be known that what he said to me in private, in the Cadillac, would remain private. In the car, he said to me: "I don't want the blankety-blank AIPAC [American Israeli Public Affairs Committee] and all of those Jewish organizations on my back." In other words, he was afraid of a leak on the way the conversations were going. Of course, I wouldn't have dreamt of sending a cable on these discussions unless it were a first person message personally cleared by Baker on such things. To do otherwise would have been unthinkable. However, there we were.

Baker gradually put this negotiation together. There would be a great deal of acrimony and a great deal of sharpness, particularly on the loan guarantee and missile technology. There would be a lot of harsh words about the continued construction of Israeli settlements or settlement outposts in the occupied territories. He took an increasingly critical attitude toward Israeli operations against growing attacks against Israel by Hezbollah and ultra-radical Palestinians up on the Lebanese front. Baker repeated the old call for moderation and restraint and expressed increasing criticism about Israeli Defense Minister Arens' handling of Intifada incidents. Arens

was doing what he could, but Israelis were being killed, and curfews were in effect. Palestinian employment in Israel was cut way back because of the curfew and the closure of the border. These incidents on the border were by no means an Arens invention. The same practices were used before and later on by Yitzhak Rabin.

So there was a lot of acrimony in the air. However, ultimately, an agreement was put together. Then the Baker party requested that a couple of crack DCMs [Deputy Chiefs of Mission] be detailed to Madrid to help complete the preparations for and international conference in Madrid. These included my DCM at the time, Mark Parris, an outstanding DCM [later our Ambassador to Turkey] and former specialist on the Soviet Union. I'd recruited him for the post of DCM in Tel Aviv at the suggestion of Charley Hill, and it was an excellent choice. By now Mark had such a reputation that Margaret Tutwiler and company lifted him out of Tel Aviv to prepare the choreography for the Madrid Conference.

Well, the great moment arrived, and at a critical juncture just before the Madrid Conference, Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, who had been having his running battles within the Likud and with Prime Minister Shamir, was angered to find that Shamir had decided to lead the Israeli Delegation to the conference himself. In a snit, David Levy boycotted it, which was okay from Shamir's viewpoint. So Shamir led the Israeli Delegation.

I went out to take an El Al flight to Madrid. As I was just leaving my office, my secretary said there was an emergency call from the Director General of Hadassah Hospital. I took the call. He said, "Your Ambassador to Amman, Jordan, has just been very seriously injured in one of your Embassy automobiles on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway. Since there are no communications allowed by the Jordanians between Israel and Jordan, and we can't communicate with his wife or family, I need your authority to operate on the Ambassador immediately. Otherwise, he will die." So I said, "Go ahead."

With that, I ran downstairs with my mobile phone, raced out to Ben Gurion International Airport, and, from the side of the plane, called the Director General of Hadassah Hospital. He said that it was touch and go but the Ambassador would survive.

Q: Who was it?

BROWN: What had happened was that, by arrangement, he had come from Amman to the Allenby Bridge. My driver, Yosi met him in an armored Cadillac from Embassy Tel Aviv, took him from Allenby Bridge to the highway going up to Jerusalem which climbs very precipitously. As my driver was wending his way down, a recently-arrived Russian immigrant lady, on her first and last trip as an Israeli driver, veered out and hit the Embassy Cadillac, head on. She was killed instantly, and her husband lost his legs. The American Ambassador to Jordan, who was in the traditional Ambassadorial position in the right rear seat, had a waist seatbelt. The seat belt saved his life but almost killed him because in the collision the belt dug into his intestines. My driver and the female Security Officer riding with him were badly injured in the accident.

On arrival in Madrid, I was given a briefing by Margaret Tutwiler. She had our places laid out. We were literally seated on a carpet as she went through the scenario with her Southern twang.

She promptly and firmly told us exactly where we were going to sit as Ambassadors, what, when, how, and so forth. It was quite a show and, of course, she delighted in telling all of her interlocutors, not only American but especially Arab and all of the others, that the Royal Palace in Madrid [Palacio de Oriente] is: "The biggest palace in Europe!" She gave us the details as to how palace guards in their traditional uniforms would give their salutes to the arriving dignitaries and how the cameras of the world were all placed.

Well, the Madrid Conference was a great show, a great piece of choreography. Full marks to Margaret Tutwiler. President Bush came, with President Gorbachev, put in a brief appearance, and used an expression, "territorial compromise." This was fascinating to me because, like others, I suspected that what he perhaps meant to convey to his Arab audiences was, in essence: "We'll get you some land, but you're not going to get it all back." It would be a compromise. To Shamir's ears, nothing like that was good. He wasn't particularly interested in any more territorial compromise.

After months and months of negotiating, what we had in front of us was something beyond the wildest dreams of earlier, Israeli generations. That is, leading an Israeli Delegation, Prime Minister Shamir sat in a royal, palatial setting across the table not only from the Delegations of Egypt but also of Syria, led by Syrian Foreign Minister Al-Shara, whose vociferous anti-Israeli attitudes were well known. There was also a combined Jordanian-Palestinian Delegation. This was the subject of great controversy, acrimony, and negotiations, between Secretary Baker and the Palestinians, and the Palestinians and Jordanians and everybody else. The Palestinians wanted to be separate, but we wouldn't let them be separate. Once they were in place, they began acting as independently as they could, anyway. Hannan Ashrawi was now featured, along with Bibi Netanyahu, in the ongoing TV commentaries originating out of Madrid.

For almost the first time the Israelis were meeting formally with their neighbors, including the Egyptians, at an international conference. They already had a peace treaty with Egypt, although it was a cold one. Then there were the Jordanians/Palestinians. There were the Syrians and a Lebanese Delegation which was under the thumb of the Syrians but was seated separately from them, as if it were independent. There, on the side in swirling robes, was a representative of the Gulf Cooperation Council, an Emirate Arab. There was Ambassador Bandar, in his fine robes, a representative of the Royal Family [of Saudi Arabia]. He was the Saudi Ambassador to the United States.

There were also European Community and United Nations observers. Many of these arrangements had been initially strenuously resisted by the Israelis and certain others. Finally, it all worked out. As Jimmy Durante [American comedian of the period 1930-1960] used to say, "Everybody wanted to get into the act," once the act had been put together. President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union put in an appearance with President Bush. It was a sweet, yet sorrowful sight because Gorbachev was already on the way down. I note, by the way, that his wife, Raisa Gorbachev, died yesterday of leukemia.

The arguments presented were standard on all sides. There was no great breakthrough, in substantive terms. However, a key element here came into play, in the sense that a major part of the choreography was that there would be bilateral agreements reached after the end of this

conference, to be negotiated in Madrid. The Israelis argued vociferously that they should take place in and around Israel. The Arabs rejected this proposal, and a compromise was reached that bilateral agreements would be worked out in Madrid, at least with the Syrians, immediately after the close of the principal conference. Then, later on, multilateral negotiations would take place on such issues as water, regional and environmental, and economic questions. So there were many breakthroughs in terms of resolving long-standing taboos.

Israeli Prime Minister Shamir turned out reasonably well in comparison with El Shara, who was chief of the Syrian Delegation. Shamir appeared to be quite moderate, certainly for Israeli home consumption. The conference was a magnificent TV sight for the world, including Israel, to watch. There were the Arabs with the TV cameras panning around the conference table. There was Israeli Prime Minister Shamir holding forth, as well as Bibi Netanyahu speaking to a worldwide audience to the conference proceedings broadcast from Madrid TV.

Q: What was Netanyahu's position at the time?

BROWN: He was Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel and highly articulate spokesperson for the Israeli Delegation. He was very, very effective, as was Hannan Ashrawi in her own way, speaking for the Palestinian cause.

A particularly nasty development took place on the last day, a Friday. Prime Minister Shamir took his leave on grounds that, as Prime Minister, he had to be back home in time for the beginning of "Shabat" [Jewish Sabbath] that evening. He apologized for leaving the conference and expressed the hope that no one would take his departure amiss. Once he left the conference, El Shara, the chief of the Syrian Delegation, with whom he had crossed swords during the meeting, made a particularly nasty set of comments and held up a "Wanted" poster published during the British Mandate over Palestine identifying Shamir by his traditional, Polish name. It announced a price on Shamir's head and said that he was wanted as a terrorist. El Shara said that this labeled him forever after as a terrorist. El Shara said that it was intolerable that this man, Shamir, should be lecturing the conference, given all of the horrible things he had done to Arabs during the years. He said that it was well known that Syrian and Arab hospitality had been extended to the Jews over the centuries. He said that Syrians and Arabs had been the most beneficial administrators of the territories under their control. Well, for anyone who had even a rough idea of the plight of the Jewish community in Syria, this was a bit difficult to swallow.

So there we were. The Madrid Conference was a great accomplishment in which the Israelis, including Prime Minister Shamir himself, could bask for some time. However, this atmosphere did not last long. By September, 1991, just before the Madrid peace conference, President Bush, with Secretary of State Baker at his side, had called for a 120 day delay in reaching a decision over the U.S. loan guarantees to Israel. Bush said that the extension of this loan guarantee was very controversial among the Arabs, who had the mistaken impression that U.S. money would flow immediately to Israel and would be used to build new settlements in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. It was such a hot issue that Bush and Secretary Baker said, "Give peace a chance." They suggested a cooling off period, a delay of 120 days.

Well, AIPAC [American Israeli Public Affairs Committee] and most, if not all of the Jewish

organizations in the United States, denounced this linkage between the loan guarantee proposals and the settlement of Russian Jews in Israel. The arrangements for the Russian Jews were specifically designed to settle them in Israel proper, if you will, not the occupied territories. These Jewish organizations took affront. They rose up in protest and gathered their Congressional friends and supporters. President Bush responded, I believe, on September 12, 1991, at a press conference where he pounded the desk and spoke passionately of “powerful, political forces” arrayed against him. He clearly was referring to AIPAC. He characterized himself as “one lonely, little guy” against these forces, trying to resist them and do his job. He went so far as to employ language about how we had risked American lives in defending the Israelis from SCUD missiles.

The whole situation, taken together, was very, very disturbing to me. It was part of a trend. By now I was coming to the end of my tour as Ambassador to Israel. In conversations with me Secretary Baker had asked me what I was interested in doing next. I said that I was fully satisfied, careerwise. To me, being Ambassador in Tel Aviv was enough. I said that I would like to stay on till the end of 1991 and then would be ready to go home and retire. Baker sounded me out as to what might induce me to stay on in the Foreign Service. I mentioned an assignment as Ambassador to Beijing, given my China background. He said, “Well, that's already spoken for.” I may have mentioned the post of Ambassador to Russia. He said that Tom Pickering [then Ambassador to India] was going to get that. Anyway, Baker said, “How would you like to be Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs in the State Department?” He said that there was a large number of buttons on his phone, and I would have instant access to him. I said, “Thank you very much for the offer, and I'll think about it.” However, I had already made up my mind on the spot, “No way would I accept this position.” I did not want to work for Secretary Baker in the capacity of Assistant Secretary or, indeed, in any other capacity.

So I soldiered on as Ambassador in Tel Aviv through the end of 1991. The loan guarantee issue sharpened, the Intifada was significantly reduced as a controversy, but there were some horrible murders taking place of Israelis. One always has to emphasize that many, many more Palestinians lost their lives in the Intifada than did Israelis. The worst sufferers in this whole process were Palestinians.

I remember that in December, 1991, Israeli Defense Minister Arens called me in to discuss the Intifada. The situation had gotten so bad that he was considering the expulsion of some Palestinians, including some particularly notorious terrorists. Without even consulting Washington, I said flat out: “We are absolutely against that.” I made a telephone call to Washington as soon as this conversation with Arens was over. Lo and behold Larry Eagleburger, who was then Deputy Secretary of State, called Arens in the middle of the night to protest about reported Israeli plans to expel some of the Palestinians.

I would like to dwell here a minute on the position of Arens. He was a friend of mine. Professionally, I much admired him. There was a great deal of the American in him, by virtue of his upbringing in the United States. However, he was a 100 plus percent Israeli and he was hawkish. However, here was a man who I knew, throughout this whole process, was genuinely seeking solutions to the problems we were dealing with.

He never said this to me at the time, but he had privately decided, as I deduced from his body language and a particular initiative he was considering, to look for a way to arrange for an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Gaza, in his view, was not part of the holy patrimony of Israel, in ideological terms, as were Judea and Samaria, on the West Bank of the Jordan River. Gaza was an overpopulated, underresourced quagmire of no strategic value. From an Israeli viewpoint, he considered Gaza a bottomless pit and just a general pain in the neck.

Arens had taken an initiative under which he had summoned a number of Western chiefs of mission, myself included, and the Japanese Ambassador to have his experts set out a proposal under which, if they could get further, international backing, in fact, money, the Israelis would vastly expand a program which they had already started. Under this program Gazans in the refugee camps who wanted land for apartments could get it. This program would provide mortgages as a financial vehicle with which to construct new apartments in new areas and make it possible to get out of these horrible refugee slum ghettos. Existing accommodations, for the most part, were filthy, dangerous, and unhealthy.

There were already some Gazans who had opted for this new, financial arrangement. The Israelis could show us actual sites where such new apartments would be built. My European and Japanese colleagues remained absolutely silent when Arens raised this initiative with them. I've forgotten when this was. Perhaps it was in 1991. The French representative made a statement in which he said that he wanted to make it clear that his attendance at this meeting with Arens in no way endorsed anything that was said and that France's position remained the same on the territories occupied by Israel.

On this occasion, I recall asking technical questions. That is, what would be the precise nature of the financial vehicle that would be set up to make this program possible? I asked, "Are you talking about 'soft loans'?" Arens said, "Yes." I asked, with regard to the process of selection of the new occupants of these apartments, when would title pass to the applicant, and so forth. I promptly reported this initiative to the State Department in Washington. However, Washington appeared concerned about anything which could be remotely taken as retreating from the traditional U.S. position on the occupied territories. The Department did nothing about this proposal, and Arens' initiative went nowhere. However, it stuck in my mind as to how far Arens was willing to go to arrange for a decent, Palestinian solution, including the holding of municipal elections. There was a precedent for municipal elections, and Arens wanted to get them going again.

On this matter Arens ran into opposition from Prime Minister Shamir, who didn't want any elections with the Palestinians taking part in them. This was now becoming an archaic position, in any case.

So I finished my tour as Ambassador to Israel on a sweet and sad note - sweet in the sense that I had taken part in a successful initiative toward a peace process. This had been brilliantly orchestrated by Secretary of State Baker and his entourage. We achieved major breakthroughs. We got the Israelis what they wanted in so many important, symbolic terms. We eventually got rid of the much hated United Nations resolutions that "Zionism is equal to racism." We effectively broke the Arab League boycott of Israeli goods. Not that Israel was going to get

significant, trade benefits from its Arab neighbors. The Arab economies generally were so poor and weak that, even if they wanted to, which they didn't, there was very little there for the benefit of the Arabs. The Israelis already had a lockhold on the Palestinian economy. They had developed and then maintained that hammer lock for years.

The really key aspect of breaking the Arab boycott lay with Japan, the high tech sector of the international economy, and the great, multinational companies, which in the past had occasionally been caught, pandering to the Arab boycott of Israel. The Madrid Conference, and all that went with it, and the opening of multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations completed the smashing of the Arab trade boycott of Israel. The world was now open to the Israelis, and they went out and sold goods to their key markets.

I retired from the Foreign Service in January, 1992. I received very nice comments as I left the service. Helen and I left the Foreign Service with a great sense of sweetness and considerable elements of sorrow over certain elements of the Bush administration's style and, if you will, its attitudinal problems, which I have just recounted. And off I went into retirement.

I went on the speaking circuit, which took me around the United States. It was a fascinating education for me. I received an offer to join the board of directors of the wholly-owned subsidiary of Bank Leumi in New York, known as the Bank Leumi New York. I was approached by a senior, CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] officer in the summer of 1992 to become a member of a unique organization. As a typical, Foreign Service Officer, I had no particular love of the CIA. I had no desire whatever to join the CIA, but this particular body wasn't "The CIA." This organization was called the "Senior Review Panel," (SRP) which came directly under the Director of CIA, wearing his other hat as the Director of Central Intelligence. This small panel was composed of senior, prestigious people, including two retired Ambassadors, a retired general, and a senior economist with broad commercial and banking background. Our job was to critique the development and the drafts of National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) as an independent body, reporting to the Director of Central Intelligence. These NIEs were put together by the NIC, the National Intelligence Council, which is itself technically also not part of the CIA. We critiqued these National Intelligence Estimates, with our final comments going to the Director of Central Intelligence [DCI], who then convened the NFIB, the National Foreign Intelligence Board.

The NFIB was chaired by the DCI and included other top, intelligence agency people, who were accompanied by their "spear carriers." I never before, during, or afterwards learned of any organization in the entire United States Government comparable to the SRP. Let's face it. Bureaucracy abhors an independent review group, especially one which has the authority to report directly to the "Boss." This just runs against the whole history of bureaucracy. I was engaged in this job, on a part-time contract basis, from 1992 until the spring of 1993 when, to my great surprise, I was approached by the Clinton administration to go back to Israel for what was described as, perhaps, two or three months, but which lasted several months longer.

Q: Well, Bill, we'll pick this up next time when you received this surprise call in 1993 to go back to Tel Aviv. We'll finish that off and then we'll talk about your time on the Board of Directors of the American Institute on Taiwan.

BROWN: I might also mention a side excursion when I was special negotiator for Myanmar, formerly known as Burma.

Q: Today is September 4, 1999. Bill, would you like to say how you would like to frame things?

BROWN: Yes. However, I would like to hark back to one fascinating episode in Israel which took place in the spring of 1991. In Hebrew it was called "Operation Shlomo," which translates into "Solomon." This involved the movement of Ethiopian Jews from Ethiopia to Israel.

Q: These are the people known as the "Falasha?"

BROWN: Yes, but be careful when you use this term, because in Ethiopian I believe that "Falasha" has a pejorative sense to it, although in Israel they were commonly referred to as the "Falasha." In this regard, if I may, let's back off further. That is, Israel's relations with Ethiopia, on which I'm no expert. This takes you into discussing relations between Israel and Africa. The Israelis had been vigorous over the years in cultivating relationships with all sorts of African nations. Unfortunately, as we found out, so many of these African countries rapidly wound up as dictatorships.

Nevertheless, the Israelis kept their hands in African affairs, as we did. This involved a quest for diplomatic recognition, sympathy, and leverage in the Third World vis-a-vis the Arab countries. I would say that, strategically speaking, and from an Israeli viewpoint, this was part of Israel's overall struggle against Arab and Muslim encirclement. In parts of Africa there was a certain play there, because some of the African countries also had their problems with their Arab/Muslim neighbors, minority or majority, and so forth. In all of this I think that Ethiopia occupied a very special position.

I would say that the long-term Israeli goal from the time of independence was to cultivate good relations with whoever was in power in Ethiopia. For many years it was Emperor Haile Selassie. Then, when he passed from the scene and turmoil ensued, Colonel Mengistu ultimately took power. He rapidly became known as a "bloody butcher," as seen by the manner in which he quelled rebellion, revolt, dissidence, and so forth. He led a brutal, military regime.

I'm sure that the Israelis, like others, were unhappy about Mengistu's taking power, but they sought to maintain decent relations with him. Why? For the reasons I just mentioned, plus the fact that Ethiopia is on the Red Sea and in the Horn of Africa. Bear in mind that the Israelis had seized, first Suez in 1956 and the Sinai Desert in 1956 and again in 1967. In strategic terms Ethiopia is very important territory for them to ensure the onward flow of trade into the Israeli port of Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba. The Israelis also attached great value to their dominance of the Sinai and the waters around it. In Israeli strategic terms this concern extended down to the Horn of Africa. In this context, Ethiopia was a very important place. The fact that the majority of Ethiopians was non-Muslim and Christian had value to the Israelis.

Then there was the longstanding, emotional, religious, and spiritual tie with the Falasha people of Ethiopia. There were thousands of these people in Ethiopia who considered themselves Jewish by historical, religious tradition. As far as a typical, ultra-orthodox rabbi in Israel is concerned, the Falasha people are not Jews in the normal sense of the word. However, politically, they were an important factor to some Israelis.

Q: There was the link between the Queen of Sheba and Solomon.

BROWN: Yes, there was that story from the Old Testament. There is a strong, Ethiopian tradition that the Ark of the Covenant is really in Ethiopia, having been taken down there. Anyway, Ethiopia was an important Israeli position in strategic and many other terms.

That gives some background why, when I arrived in Israel as U.S. Ambassador, the Israelis were still trying to maintain a decent relationship with Ethiopia, notwithstanding our embargo and our very strong stance against Colonel Mengistu. With that background, in 1990, when I was Ambassador to Israel, the head of Mossad [Israeli foreign intelligence service] called me on the phone and arranged to meet with me. I met with him periodically. In the room with him was none other than the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, Ehud Barak, who now is Prime Minister of Israel.

After an exchange of pleasantries, what they put to me was, in essence, a proposal for an exemption from the embargo on the shipment of American arms to Ethiopia. This was a typical Israeli approach. They knew how strongly we felt. They outlined their own desire to maintain a relationship with Ethiopia. They wanted to avoid some sort of a collapse in Ethiopia, which might work to the detriment of both Israeli and U.S. interests, as they put it. As they continued, it became apparent that they had already shipped what they called a small quantity of old rifles to Ethiopia. This was often the Israeli way of doing business with you. On the one hand they requested an exemption from our embargo on the shipment of arms to Ethiopia. On the other hand halfway or three-quarters of the way through the conversation you would learn that the Israelis had already shaved their interpretation of the provisions of the U.S. embargo on the shipment of arms to Ethiopia mightily closely.

At the time I told them that I would report their request. However, I gave them an earful on the obvious. That is, we had a very strong policy against military sales to Mengistu, the butcher. I use that as an example of the kind of debate that went on within Israel at high levels on how to handle a problem like this.

Now, by 1991 Mengistu's position had deteriorated to the point that the well-known special operator, Uri Lubrani, was involved. Lubrani had been handling relations between Israel and Lebanon for years. He had once been an unofficial Ambassador to the Shah in Iran. He was a very sophisticated and highly educated and articulate negotiator.

Lubrani called me in to see him in his office at the Israeli Ministry of Defense. He outlined the situation and the fact that he was in touch and negotiating with Mengistu. He said that, at an appropriate point, he might require our assistance and wanted us to be brought up to speed on this matter. As it worked out, Mengistu wanted arms, of course. He also wanted money and he

wanted to survive. If he couldn't survive in Ethiopia, he wanted help in getting out of the country so that he could survive somewhere else.

So it was that Lubrani would fill me in on the latest aspects of the situation in Ethiopia. We would compare notes. On my side I had information from Houk, our Chargé d'Affaires in Addis Ababa, an outstanding officer whom I met briefly only recently. You might want to interview him. Lubrani and I would compare notes on Mengistu's position and so forth. Finally, Lubrani came to the point. Funds were deposited in a New York bank for transfer to Mengistu when, and only when, Israeli planes began to take off transporting Falasha people from Ethiopia to Israel. The precise date when this would be done remained a secret.

One day in the spring of 1993, I received an urgent phone call to go quickly to Ben Gurion International Airport. I saw all kinds of Israeli planes which had recently landed, including a Boeing 747 a lot of C-130s. I watched the last C-130 which came in that day. The rear ramp came down, and one could see a sea of humanity in the aircraft. The Israelis had taken all of the equipment out of the aircraft and covered the deck and sides with sheets of black, polyethylene plastic. The aircraft was jam packed with Ethiopian men, women, and children. The smell that came out of the aircraft after that long, long flight with no toilets was rather overpowering. However, it was a tremendously emotional occasion for all who were there.

The last man to leave the plane was a very elderly gentleman in a white, flowing garment and wearing a white cap. He was what the Falasha community called a "Kais," one of their religious leaders. He had a long, flowing beard and a rod or scepter of some kind. Thinking that I was an Israeli liberator, he embraced me, and we did a little dance on the deck of this rather pungent C-130 aircraft. We got off the aircraft, and I was all choked up. I was the only American present. This operation had been pulled off by Israeli security operatives. Shahak, who was to emerge as Deputy Chief of Staff, then Chief of Staff, and is now a cabinet minister under Prime Minister Barak, had flown secretly to Addis Ababa, set up a headquarters there, and pulled this operation off. In 24 hours some 14,000 people were airlifted out of Addis Ababa and flown to safety in Tel Aviv.

Q: And this was "Operation Solomon."

BROWN: Yes. There had been previous flights of Falasha people to Israel some years previously, in which George Bush, then the Director of Central Intelligence, had been involved. This was called "Operation Moses."

Q: His name escapes me now, but I interviewed someone who was intimately concerned with this kind of movement in the Sudan. That is, sneaking people out of the Sudan to Israel.

BROWN: And the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] was involved in assisting the Israelis in this effort. It was a very delicate business, given the attitude of the Sudanese Government at the time.

Operation Solomon was such an impressive job that I put in a phone call to my son Alex, who was then a career Air Force pilot flying B-52 bombers. I said, "Alex, you command a B-52 and

are an expert on large aircraft. Let me ask you a question. In an emergency, how many people could you put in a Boeing 747?" My son thought a while and said, "Well, in a real emergency, I could cram some 700 people in it." I said, "How about 1,030 people, or thereabouts?" He said, "What?" I said, "A Boeing 747 has just landed at Ben Gurion International Airport with over 1,000 Ethiopian Falasha people aboard. Put that in your pipe and smoke it." [Laughter] It was really a remarkable achievement. Many of the Falasha's were very thin and emaciated, but just imagine what this involved logistically and in terms of planning and so forth.

The next subject I'd like to cover involves shifting briefly to Prime Minister Shamir, before I leave him and the peace process.

Q: Alright. After we finish that, I would like you to return to African and South American policy while you were in Israel. We haven't touched on that. I would like your comments on these matters. Maybe there are other policy matters, elsewhere in the world during this time, which you would like to discuss.

BROWN: All right. Before going farther down the road, I would like to pause a little bit and discuss Prime Minister Shamir and the peace process. I've covered Secretary of State Baker's eight trips to Israel for a series of grinding negotiations between March, 1991, and concluding with the Madrid Peace Conference in October, 1991.

Later on, perhaps after he had left office as Prime Minister of Israel, Shamir is reported to have said that he never intended to yield an inch of Israeli territory at the Madrid Conference. He said that he went to Madrid holding the position of a piece of territory for peace. He said that he would never have gone much further than that, nor would he have had to, since he had the ideological support of Likud and so forth. Later on, he was particularly critical of Yitzhak Rabin, when he took over the reins of Prime Minister of Israel and entered into negotiations with Yasser Arafat, the leader of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization].

Shamir may have been correctly quoted along the lines that I have just cited. However, the fact is that Prime Minister Shamir had accepted an invitation to this conference, which was tendered to him specifically on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which amount to an exchange of territory for peace. Shamir was sophisticated. He knew by various means, through intelligence and political reporting channels and so forth, what we were saying to others, including the Palestinians, the Syrians, the Jordanians, the Egyptians, and the Lebanese. Shamir not only agreed to Israel's participation in the Madrid Conference but decided to attend it as the chief of the Israeli Delegation.

The Madrid Peace Conference was the center of world attention at the time and represented a momentous decision on the part of Shamir. I think that any reasonable observer of Israeli political life would realize that the Israelis were now on the path of land for peace. In other words, Shamir had accepted an invitation to attend the Madrid Peace Conference and all that went with it. He pocketed the tremendous gains of the Madrid Conference in terms of breaking the long standing taboo on official contact between Arabs and Israelis. However, the Madrid Conference was permeated with a land for peace atmosphere.

The Madrid Peace Conference was followed by the difficulties involved in the establishment of bilateral relations which went on, first in Madrid and then were shifted to Washington. There were multilateral negotiations, with the U.S. further putting its shoulder to the wheel and overcoming the long standing UN resolution that "Zionism equals racism." The Arab League boycott against Israel was broken. All of these achievements represented wonderful breakthroughs for Israel, but there was a price tag that went with this. The remarks attributed to Shamir and the tough language that many of his associates in the Likud notwithstanding, the fact is that Shamir put his country and his government on a path which would inevitably lead to just about where we are today. I think that that should be mentioned.

Q: Was that implicit, was that something which all of you understood at the time?

BROWN: I can't say that it was something that was understood by all Israelis, but it certainly was understood on the U.S. side. Among the more sophisticated Israelis, it didn't take much to put two and two together. The liberal side of the Israeli political scene was elated that we had maneuvered Shamir to this point. Since some of them are still active now, I won't go into any names. They included professional Israeli diplomats, who were tough, political liberals by background. They confided to me, after the Madrid conference was over, that only the U.S. could have done this. They had tremendous admiration and regard for Secretary of State James Baker.

Q: Do you also think that it took Prime Minister Shamir to take this step, as it took President Nixon to go to China?

BROWN: Nixon initiated the approach to China after receiving a signal from the Chinese. It was his idea and that of Secretary of State Kissinger. He wasn't dragged into making the opening to China. So this is not a similar situation. However, Nixon and Kissinger didn't go to China just on a whim. They went because they had a strategic overview which was very heavily driven by their perception of the strategic threat posed to the United States by the Soviet Union. This was the driving force behind all of this, both for the Chinese Communists and ourselves.

However, underneath the Middle East peace process there was a fundamental Israeli yearning for diplomatic recognition, for breaking through the long-established Arab taboos which I've mentioned. In one way or another the Israelis wanted to get their Arab neighbors to sit down with them, face to face, to negotiate with them, and to improve the Israeli strategic situation. Having essentially neutralized Egypt, through the Camp David Agreements, the Israelis undertook to deal with another powerful and increasingly dangerous neighbor, Syria. That is, Syria, with its newly acquired capabilities to engage in chemical warfare and to fire missiles, was not 600 kilometers away but was right next door to Israel. With all of its problems, and Syria had and has many problems, Syria was still in a position to inflict very heavy damage on Israel should, God forbid, a conflict break out between the two countries. So there was a combination of political, psychological, strategic, and economic considerations which influenced Israeli behavior. There were Israeli businessmen who thought that they could make money by trading with Syria.

Certainly, Israel's high tech industry was delighted with breaking through the Arab boycott and opening up new markets. The Peoples Republic of China opened up to the Israelis and recognized Tel Aviv diplomatically. Israel had long had a business presence in China. All of

these were very important considerations.

Q: My question really went to Israeli politics, as compared to the political background of Nixon's policies toward China. A Democratic President would have had a very hard time opening up to China without having the Republicans pile on him.

BROWN: I see your point. An Israeli Labour Party leader would have been roundly criticized for opening up to the Arab countries on a land for peace basis, but Israel has a different, political system. A Labour Party leader like Yitzhak Rabin or, indeed, Peres, with a majority of the votes he needed in the Knesset, could have rammed this change through in Israeli style, as did Prime Minister Menachem Begin with the Camp David agreement. Some in Begin's own party, including Yitzhak Shamir, voted against the Camp David agreements. Arens and Shamir did not vote to approve the Camp David agreements. One of them abstained, and the other one voted against these agreements. I've forgotten which did which here. I'll come back to that later.

There is that difference. However, any Israeli leader on a major initiative like this will want it to carry the country. He is ultimately answerable to the Knesset and may face a revolt in his own party against such an agreement. Prime Minister Shamir had his problems in this respect. So the situation in Israel is not the same as the system in the United States. Yet the fact remains that Menachem Begin led Israel to adopt the Camp David agreements, and Shamir, of all people, led Israel to the Madrid Conference. The Labour Party then started with the fruits of this effort and carried them further.

Now let's shift a bit here. It's 1992. I've retired from the Foreign Service, and Yitzhak Rabin has become Prime Minister of Israel. The Labour Party's election posters said, "Elect Yitzhak Rabin" rather than just "Vote Labour." He was pictured as "Mr. Strong Man." He was pictured as the guy who would make tough decisions, in the economy and politically, and would carry the peace process forward on a realistic basis. He ran, of course, as a Labour Party politician on the Labour ticket. However, the message said in effect, "Elect Rabin, and he'll put together a government," rather than, "Elect the Labour Party and we'll put together a government, and Rabin will probably be the Prime Minister." The Labour Party won this election, holding 44 seats, as opposed to Likud's 32 seats. With smaller, alliance partners, that allowed the Labour Party to maintain a firm grip for a while.

Yitzhak Rabin, was a Sabra, that is, Israeli born. His father had gone from his birthplace in Czarist Russia to Chicago and then he migrated to Israel. Young Yitzhak Rabin had an agricultural education. He was a Young Pioneer-type trained in the Palmach resistance movement. He was a battalion or brigade commander in the struggle during 1948 to take the Jerusalem Road and to keep it open. He was Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces during the 1967 War and was later Ambassador to the United States during the Nixon administration, after the 1973 collapse of Golda Meir's Government. Rabin served in the United States during the Nixon administration, so he had a wide range of very important American contacts, across the board, including Republicans. He had reportedly come out, and this was very unusual, in favor of Nixon's reelection in 1972. This, of course, earned him criticism.

Rabin was Prime Minister during the tumultuous period between 1974 and 1977. The American

bank account of Mrs. Rabin became a scandal. [Residents of Israel at this time were not supposed to have foreign bank accounts, but she kept her account from the time she was in the U.S. with Rabin, who was then Israeli Ambassador.] Over time, Rabin's Government weakened and, finally, the religious parties pulled the rug out from under him. He was surprisingly defeated by Menachem Begin in 1977.

Subsequently, Rabin re-emerged as Defense Minister in the later Peres-Shamir coalition governments. He handled the Intifada in a tough way. He was reported to have said, "Break their bones," a comment which he later denied. He was known as "Mr. Tough Guy." However, remember that at the same time he was using my secure telephone to negotiate with Dennis Ross on the composition of the Palestinian Delegation during the Shamir peace initiative, in 1989-1990.

After new elections in 1992 Rabin swept into power again and set up a government. Interestingly enough, he appointed a lot of his old Army buddies to important cabinet and other positions. Danny Yatom, Rabin's military secretary, in fact became chief of the Prime Minister's office. Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, nicknamed "Fuad" because he was born in Iraq and spoke Arabic, had become a general in the Israeli Army and had been in command of the West Bank or a portion thereof. He became Minister of Housing. Ephraim Sneh, also a former general, was another minister in the Rabin cabinet.

The Bush administration immediately reacted positively to Rabin's return to office as Prime Minister. It had been charged with making statements and using sign language very heavily favoring the election of Rabin and against Shamir. There was criticism of that. This interference was denied, but clearly the Bush administration was sick and tired of Prime Minister Shamir and welcomed the prospect of Rabin's election.

Shortly after resuming office as Prime Minister, Rabin traveled to the United States and met President Bush at Kennebunkport, Maine. During this visit he obtained the long sought loan guarantees. In fact, it was reported at the time that Secretary of State Baker said, "For goodness sake, take more," when Rabin asked for either \$2.0 or \$4.0 billion in loan guarantees. This was said to be an indication that we hadn't been prejudiced against either Israel or the Israelis but that we had a problem with the Shamir approach to settlements in the occupied territories.

In this context I wrote a letter to the President of the United States. I was now a private person. I don't think that I can find a copy of the letter now, but I typed it up at home and mailed it to President Bush. (End of tape)

In this letter I said that Rabin's positive pronouncements came at a high, political price. By that I was referring to his remarks showing flexibility on the Golan Heights, on some territory for the Palestinians, on limiting Israeli settlements and on the kinds of things that we had previously and so assiduously pursued with various Israeli Governments. All of these developments came at what would have been a high, domestic price in Israel for any Prime Minister, including Rabin.

So when I wrote to President Bush, I remember saying, more or less: "Rabin has taken a courageous stance. I think that the time has come to move the American Embassy from Tel Aviv

up to that site on which we have negotiated, on the Western side of Jerusalem. In my view we can do this at no cost to our traditional position on Jerusalem. By moving the Embassy to this site we can deal with the reality that the Government of Israel operates from Jerusalem, and that's the place to do business." I never expected a reply from President Bush and I certainly received none. As I said, that was written shortly after Rabin's election, let's say in the spring or early summer of 1992.

Now, I had just been approached by Ambassador Sam Lewis who, having become the Director of the U.S. Institute of Peace, felt that his pro bono position as Director of the Harry Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, under the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, might present a conflict of interest. He persuaded me to agree to succeed him as the Director of the Truman Institute. I did this in the spring of 1992, so I was in Israel at the time when Rabin was elected. That would have been the end of May or early June, 1992.

Later in the summer of 1992, I was invited by Martin Indyk, who was the Executive Director of the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, a think tank in Washington, DC, to make a policy trip to Israel. This was against the background that Rabin was now installed in office as Prime Minister of Israel and that an American election was coming up. Indyk gathered a prestigious panel of advisers for this institute, together with and a group of senior figures who would go to Israel, engage in a dialogue with Israelis, and come up with policy recommendations. The visiting group included Madeline Albright [later Secretary of State], Joe Sisco [former Under Secretary of State], and Mendelbaum of Johns Hopkins University. It was widely speculated that Mendelbaum would become a key member of the Clinton policy establishment, should Clinton be elected President.

We went over to Israel and met with Prime Minister Rabin, with Peres, and other Labour Party leaders. We also met with the Likud opposition leaders. We had a separate session with the new American Ambassador, William C. Harrop, whom I had notified that I was arriving with this group and who had succeeded me when I retired from the Foreign Service in January, 1992. Ambassador Harrop briefed us at a hotel in Jerusalem. I sat in the back row and kept my mouth shut, which I thought proper. I wanted an appropriate cooling off period before I took public positions. I didn't want to get in Ambassador Harrop's hair. I had notified him that I was coming with this group.

As Ambassador Harrop briefed us I was disturbed that the facial expressions and body language of several members of this group seemed unfavorable and even negative to him. Comments were made on this afterwards. I said, "For goodness sake, what Ambassador Harrop said was essentially correct. Give him a break! He's a brand new Ambassador and is just getting his feet on the ground."

Q: In the first place, had the members of this group been almost pre-conditioned to take this attitude?

BROWN: I don't know, Stuart. This was in August or September, 1992. I was upset that, somehow, a sophisticated group of this kind would include people who were reacting negatively. Little did I realize that Ambassador Harrop was to have an even deeper problem.

Q: Bill Harrop is a very experienced and senior Foreign Service Officer. However, his attitude is not warm or fuzzy or cuddly.

BROWN: Well, those are your words, Stuart. I am not really in a position to evaluate them. I hadn't known Bill Harrop before. He'd been Ambassador to either four or five African countries, including Zaire. He had also been Inspector General of the Foreign Service.

Q: In fact, he was Deputy Inspector General. He was President of the American Foreign Service Association. I have interviewed him in this Foreign Affairs Oral History Program.

BROWN: He is a highly professional, experienced gentleman. I thought that he would do a good job in Israel. So I told this group: "For goodness sake. Get off his back!"

Q: And I think that you made clear that this was not a group that was sort of sponsored by AIPAC. Or was it?

BROWN: They wanted to take a balanced look at the situation. The Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy was not an AIPAC group. However, Dennis Ross and Martin Indyk had been somehow associated with AIPAC, though not directly so. The Institute was funded by a husband and wife [the Weinbergs] who are pro-Israeli. However, to this day the Washington Institute manages to attract senior, Arab leaders, Ambassadors, cabinet ministers, and journalists to its meetings. There's no question that this group sponsored by the Washington Institute was pro-Israeli. However, I would say that the members of this group were moderate, experienced, and able to attract and keep an elite establishment in and around their ranks. So, to me, it was bothersome that Bill Harrop was inadvertently making a negative impression among some of the members of this group.

Okay. I continued in my retirement. As I said, I was working part time as a contractor for the Senior Review Panel for the Director of Central Intelligence. I also traveled around on the lecture circuit, was on the Board of Directors of the Bank Leumi of New York, and was adjusting to retirement very nicely and having a good time.

Q: I have a question on that. I understand that you have to treat anything dealing with the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and the Senior Review Panel with great caution. Did you get any overall impression about the CIA at that time?

BROWN: I'd better be careful in the sense that the gentleman who recruited me was a very senior CIA officer. Therefore, he had access to the Director of Central Intelligence and the top brass of the agency. He had a long background in this respect. He also had long served at top levels of the CIA, or had access to the top, through successive bosses. As I said, the Senior Review Panel reports to the Director of Central Intelligence. The CIA officer who recruited me to this panel had direct and unimpeded access to the Director. He was *primus inter pares*, [first among equals] if you will. On the Senior Review Panel we were all equal, but he was the regular, the salaried officer, so he could and did give us his views of inside stories. As in any large institution, there are always debates going on, and all of this was fascinating.

Remember that our job on the Senior Review Panel (SRP) was to critique that National Intelligence Estimates, which were approved by the National Intelligence Council (NIC). This council was also mostly regular CIA employees who were assigned to it. However, the NIC was not part of the CIA and its budget of the Council was not part of the regular, CIA budget. Its budget, like our budget, came out of funds available to the Director of Central Intelligence, wearing that second hat. We in the SRP were working in the CIA building as part-time contractors who had clearances and so forth. It was a fascinating experience.

Q: This was obviously a time of great change. The Soviet Union had just gone down the tubes.

BROWN: Yes. As I came on board, William Gates, was Acting Director of Central Intelligence. Shortly afterwards, he left the agency and was succeeded by a series of Directors. First of all, Billy Inman [from the National Security Agency] was not confirmed. Then came Wollsey, Deutch [from the Defense Intelligence Agency], and George Tenet.

Q: It wasn't a happy situation. I don't want to lead you down this path.

BROWN: Well, I was enjoying retirement. Two of my daughters had remained in Thailand, working on refugee affairs. One of them married a Thai architect and had a couple of lovely little daughters. We had been going over annually to Thailand, at least for Christmas and New Year's, sailing and having a wonderful, family reunion. I might add that I love to sail.

As I said, with the election of Rabin in Israel, things improved dramatically for a while, as far as the Bush administration was concerned. Then came a sort of hiatus. Rabin had made his moves. The negotiations in Washington with the Palestinians and Jordanians were semi-comic in the sense that those negotiations ended up in a corridor, because the Palestinians, although they were nominally part of the Jordanian delegation, immediately split off and did everything that they could to ensure that they were dealt with directly. So Eli Rubinstein, who was the head of the Israeli delegation, often had to meet with the Palestinians in the corridor. The Palestinians wouldn't meet in the room with the Jordanians. Those old tensions between Jordanians and Palestinians kept coming out. The negotiations with the Syrians were going on. As I was on the outside now, I began to get a feeling of stasis, that is, there was not much progress being made in these discussions.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Baker was asked to bear in mind the Jewish constituency and dealing properly with Israel. He was quoted in the press on this occasion as having said at some meeting, I think that it was with Jack Kemp [Secretary of Housing at the time] and perhaps at the White House, "Fuck the Jews. They don't vote for us anyway." This was a remark which caused quite a storm and which was promptly disavowed by Margaret Tutwiler [Baker's spokesperson], when asked for her thoughts on that particular subject. Anyway, this comment bounced around for quite a while. Whether Baker made this remark or didn't, it was reflected, shall we say, in the atmosphere of the time.

Then, lo and behold, Bill Clinton was elected President of the United States in the elections of 1992. Clinton relied very significantly, one read, on some of his friends who happened to Jewish.

With the inauguration of President Clinton came a new, foreign policy team. The Secretary of State was Warren Christopher. Sam Lewis, among many others, was named as the Director of Policy Planning in the State Department. Sam was a very old and dear friend of mine and my boss in Tel Aviv when he was Ambassador to Israel. If you will, he was my mentor. I was delighted for him, although I really wondered how he would function in this position, working under Warren Christopher.

Very early in the spring of 1993, as we were preparing a trip to Thailand and China, Sam Lewis called me and said, "Look, Bill Harrop is going to be replaced. The process of confirming an ambassador often takes months. Would you be willing to go back to Israel for a couple of months to fill in?" By now I was very much enjoying retirement and making some money here and there as a contractor. However, I told Sam: "Absolutely. Yes." I was thrilled at the prospect of contributing to Israeli-American relations, even for a short period of time under a new President.

So my wife Helen and I made a short trip to Thailand, to visit our daughters. Then we flew from Thailand to Kunming, China, where, as I speak Chinese, we were on our own. I didn't use a Chinese guide. We flew up to Chungking and took the famous boat trip down the Yangtze River, which Helen had always wanted to do. That was a wonderful trip because, floating down the Yangtze in 1993, we found that we were the only pale faces on the boat. The entire complement of passengers were from Taiwan, of all places. These were not highly sophisticated people from Taipei. These were more rough-hewn, wealthy, nouveau riche people from the hinterland of Taiwan.

Q: These people were also of Taiwanese origin, as opposed to people from the Mainland who had gone to Taiwan.

BROWN: Yes. They were Taiwanese. They were good, solid, men of the earth who had made money. They brought their local family gods with them! They had a little, canopied, thronelike apparatus with Chinese gods in it. They would take the family gods up on deck in the morning or at noon, as the spirit moved them, and pay obeisance to them. When we stopped in the Chinese river ports, they would go out shopping. It wasn't long before I was in conversation with their guide, who had a police, security background. He was in his 40s and was rather surprised to find out my background. We nattered away in Mandarin. He would relay our conversation in Taiwanese to the other passengers, because they didn't speak Mandarin too well. However, one could get their spicy remarks on the quality of the goods in the local markets and so forth.

All in all, that was a great trip. As soon as it was over and we returned to the U.S., arrangements were made for me to go to Israel. I was ushered in to meet Secretary of State Warren Christopher and had a one on one cordial meeting with him. I said, "Mr. Secretary, you probably don't remember me, but we spent a night together which, I'm sure, neither of us will ever forget." He looked at me in some surprise, and I reminded him that I had been DCM when he, as Deputy Secretary of State, had led the mission to Taipei following President Carter's break in relations with Taiwan and the riots which broke out. His motorcade was mobbed by a howling crowd. The windows of our cars were smashed and some sticks were jabbed into the cars.

It was fascinating because this incident had taken place in December, 1978. Here we were in

1993, some 15 years later. The question popped out of his mouth: “Do you think that Fred Chien was responsible for arranging this incident or was he just part of it?” Fred had been the Chinese Nationalist Deputy Foreign Minister who had been chosen to go out to the airport and meet Christopher. He took Christopher and his party into a VIP [Very Important Person] room and delivered a harangue on how badly the United States had conducted itself by this horrible deed of breaking relations with the Chinese Nationalists. This statement was obviously for domestic consumption in Taiwan. Then we got into the cars and were mobbed on our way out of the airport.

There were those who obviously had told Christopher that it was that “SOB, Fred Chien,” who they thought had been part and parcel of this spontaneous demonstration of anger against us. Obviously, this version of events had been so firmly implanted in Secretary Christopher's mind that that question just popped out fifteen years later. Incidentally, Fred Chien and his wife never recovered from the view held by many key Americans that he had been part of setting up this mob scene. He always stoutly denied this. His wife still gets tearful over that memory, by the way.

Anyway, Secretary Christopher wished me well, and off Helen and I went, back to Israel. On arrival in Israel, I was able to say in Hebrew, quoting from the Book of Genesis: “Pa Maim Ki Tov,” which means, if I may translate it a little freely, “And on the second day God said that it is good.” That means that when something nice happens twice it is good. Within hours I was in the office of Prime Minister Rabin because another, great Lebanese border crisis had broken, and the administration was in frantic negotiations, trying to restore things to normal. That night I went over to Prime Minister/Defense Minister Rabin's office in Tel Aviv and was back in business.

This was the beginning of a remarkable period. I knew Rabin from many meetings previously. We had what was to be perhaps the most favorably disposed, American administration in history, vis-a-vis Israel up to that time. President Clinton's advisers, including his foreign affairs team, were very well and favorably known to the Israelis. Yet, there had been some stagnation, and we were trying to move things along. Again, I must say that, in the midst of all the sweetness of coming back to Israel, there was a sadness due to the fact that Ambassador Harrop had been removed, as well as the manner in which it had been done. I never did get the full story of why this was done, and this was a very sad experience in my view.

Q: Obviously, I don't know the whole story, either. However, I very much got the impression that this was a new administration which was really very nervous on foreign policy issues, even though it included people who were experienced in the field of foreign affairs. However, the political leadership, and especially President Clinton, had never had much foreign experience.

I heard that Ambassador Harrop had made a remark in Israel to the effect: “You have to remember that America doesn't have unlimited pockets.”

BROWN: He's not the first American Ambassador to say that.

Q: No. But somehow this remark began to circulate. To me it sounded as if the Clinton administration caved in to the Israelis almost immediately. They didn't have much experience in

how to handle some criticism. Perhaps this was a problem which occurred somewhere in the White House, although I may be wrong in this respect. Does that ring any bells with you?

BROWN: Well, Bill Harrop was quoted as having made a remark during a briefing or some occasion in Israel to the effect that the Israeli handling of the Arab Israeli minority would be on the agenda. Whether he said it or not, he was attacked by The Jerusalem Post at the time for interfering in local, Israeli affairs.

There was another phenomenon, too, which Foreign Service Officers find in many administrations. A new administration often finds that it is uneasy about ambassadors inherited from a previous administration. The view circulates: "This Ambassador is a product of the old regime," notwithstanding the fact that he is a career officer doing a professional, career job. There may be a little cloud over his head as a result. That, certainly, can apply in such a key post as Israel, but not only in Israel, by any means. I saw this elsewhere.

Q: It also happened in Central America.

BROWN: This also feeds into the view that the Foreign Service has either favored the previous administration or has been "co-opted. Within a new administration, the view is often held that it's time to clean house, or, "let's get our own guy in there." Something like that. It's a combination of factors, and it's something that career, Foreign Service Officers have to be very much aware of. You find a nervousness that goes through the ranks when a new administration enters office. The word traditionally gets around, although it varies with different administrations. There was a tradition that when a new administration enters office, Ambassadors are expected to tender their resignations, allowing the new administration to decide whether or not to accept this resignation. In other cases Ambassadors are told: "No, hold fast, and we'll see how it turns out."

In any event, Ambassador Harrop was treated brusquely and, I thought, unfairly, by the incoming Clinton administration. I didn't know the full story, had nothing to do with it, and didn't want to get into it. He must have been bitter about the manner of his replacement. The whole thing had come as a surprise to me, and I really felt very sorry for him. So, there we are. However, back to the narrative.

A series of Lebanese border crises followed. There was a sort of spiral effect here. The Hezbollah [an extremist, Islamist terrorist organization] was now very active and much strengthened in terms of its grip on the population of southern Lebanon, particularly in the Shiite Muslim community. It was being supplied and supported in many ways by Iran, with the acquiescence of Syria. Flights were coming through Damascus into Beirut, with cargoes labeled as one thing but actually carrying arms and ammunition and God knows what else.

When asked about these flights, the Syrians, of course, pretended to know nothing about arms cargoes. President Assad of Syria had no love for the Iranians. I'm sure that he had no love for the supporters of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and what they stood for. Assad was a secular type of Muslim. He was particularly vulnerable as a member of the Alawite minority. The Alawites are considered by some of the Sunni Muslim majority in Syria as heretics. Not just different, but heretics. Yet, for his own purposes, President Assad has allowed these Iranian

shipments to Hezbollah to continue. His obvious message to Israel is: “Come to terms or else we'll make it harder for you in southern Lebanon.”

Prime Minister Rabin was a veteran of years and years of involvement in southern Lebanon, as Arens had been before him and as Rabin had before Arens. In all of this, by the way, I found Uri Lubrani working on various fronts. I spoke of him previously. He had a position in the Israeli Ministry of Defense. So as I saw Rabin in his capacity as Defense Minister, on the military side of things, I saw, as the occasion warranted, Lubrani on the delicate behind the scenes and probing side. Among many other things there was the case of Ron Arad. Ron Arad was the navigator on an Israeli aircraft that crashed in 1982. He was captured by Palestinians and was somehow conveyed into Hezbollah hands. Israeli efforts to negotiate his release through third parties, working through Hezbollah or the Iranians, were unsuccessful. As Lubrani informed me, the Iranians were a tough bunch of negotiators. They tended absolutely to deny that they were holding a given prisoner. Then one gets the very faint hint that it's really a silken carpet that we're talking about here and that there will be a very high price to obtain such a silken carpet. Well, I dealt with Lubrani on such delicate matters, as I had before on the Ethiopian front.

We entered a cycle of violence such that, by late 1992, it went off the edge of the table. Lubrani then gave me a taste of what was to come, unless there was a rapid “stand down” by Hezbollah. He informed me pretty clearly that in such circumstances the best Israeli technique was to make things very difficult for about a quarter of a million people in southern Lebanon, that is, for a very significant portion of the Shiite community. As a result, the Shiites would feel it necessary to move en masse toward Beirut, thus clogging the roads, choking the economic infrastructure, and making life miserable for everybody.

Indeed, that is what happened. The Israelis mounted an enormous bombardment by air and by artillery. They moved heavy artillery, including 175 millimeter guns and so forth, up onto the border and even across it into southern Lebanon. Night after night they answered the rockets of the Hezbollah that were falling into northern Israel in towns like Qiryat Shmona and Matula. The Israelis responded to these rockets by really pounding Hezbollah dominated villages and towns in southern Lebanon. A mass exodus ensued and, in this situation, Dennis Ross in Washington was on the phone to us. We were conducting all kinds of telephone negotiations. I was dealing with Prime Minister Rabin and Danny Yatom as his key military representative in all of this. The Israelis called their campaign “Operation Accountability.” In other words, the Hezbollah would be held to account for what the Israelis regarded as their various attacks on Israeli targets.

This was a very difficult situation which suddenly came to me because, in the middle of it all, I found that Dennis Ross had a distinct tendency to bypass the American Ambassadors in the area and negotiate directly by himself and over the telephone with the parties concerned. By rights, I should have been included in the picture and I was quite willing to do what I could.

I also encountered a certain tension between the Assistant Secretary of State and Dennis Ross in this regard. The Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, Ed Djerejian, was a key player in all of this. As such, he was in charge of American policy, made trips, and dealt with a wide variety of interlocutors, not all of them Israeli but also Arabs.

I received a call on the secure phone from a senior State Department officer. He said that the following information was for my ears only. He said that the Secretary of State had decided to replace Ed Djerejian as the Middle East negotiator. Ed would continue in office as the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, but the negotiating part of it would now be given to Dennis Ross. That's the way things were handled. Ed was informed that Dennis Ross was willing to stay on under the new administration, but only if he was made the Special Coordinator of Policy.

Q: When you say "negotiator," what do you mean by that? Who was negotiating with whom? Who were the parties involved?

BROWN: Israel, Syria, Jordan, the Palestinians, and Lebanon.

Q: They were all talking to each other?

BROWN: They were talking with each other. Remember, this was the follow up to the Madrid Conference on the Middle East. By this time you had what I called "general stasis." That is, there were acrimonious negotiations, and they were not really leading anywhere in dealing with the problem. The new administration was already getting restive, and the Secretary of State decided to appoint a new negotiator, Dennis Ross. When Ed Djerejian, as I understand it, was informed of this change, he extracted his price. That is, he would become the next American Ambassador to Israel. Having been Ambassador to Syria and having had a distinguished career, he would now become Ambassador to Israel.

All of this was in somewhat characteristic style. None of it was recorded in the cable traffic. It was all handled over the secure phone. Some crockery was broken in the process. Eventually, the announcements were made, and there we were. I think that we might break off here.

Q: Good.

Today is October 1, 1999, and we are continuing with the interview of Bill Brown.

BROWN: It is also the 50th anniversary of Mao Zedong standing up in Tiananmen Square and proclaiming: "China has stood up." [Laughter]

Q: For what it's worth. When you arrived in Israel on this temporary assignment as Ambassador, did you feel that you were putting things together or did you think that you were just taking over on a short term basis?

BROWN: Remember that I had left Israel only a year previously. I had visited Israel as a member of this mission from the Washington Institute on Near East Policy. I was Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Harry Truman Institute for Peace. I had kept a respectful distance from Israeli affairs because we had a new Ambassador, Bill Harrop. However, I was pretty much up on developments, as an outsider, of course, but one who had recently been part of the action. I had an advantage in that I had had plenty of interaction with the key Israeli figures, including

Prime Minister Rabin, Peres, and others.

In that regard I think that it might be worthwhile to pause a bit here and talk about the composition, if you will, of the Rabin Government.

Q: When did the Rabin Government come into office?

BROWN: It entered office in the spring of 1992.

Q: This was after you had left Israel?

BROWN: Yes, after I had left. The Labour Party had come in with something like 44 seats in the Knesset. The Likud Party had dropped to 32 seats. However, Labour had put together what was at the beginning a pretty solid coalition. Remember that the election campaign by Labour had been conducted as a “Rabin campaign,” with very heavy emphasis on Rabin, as opposed to the more usual approach. That is, by tradition people voted for a given party, which was headed by X, Y, or Z. In this case Labour was headed by Rabin. Once again Peres had been, if you will, bumped aside within the Labour Party structure. He had to yield to an approach whereby Rabin, a tough man and former Defense Minister, a man of decision, and so forth, was very heavily played up during the campaign.

However, the initial government coalition was fascinating. The Rabin Government had a distinct, Left Wing, peacenik ally, “Meretz,” as it was called. Meretz had a hard core of people associated with the “Peace Now” group. Their line was: “Let's do it, let's get it over with, and let's give the Palestinians a reasonable amount of territory.” Even among hard core Meretz leaders, the view was: “ There's going to be a Palestinian state. Let's negotiate on this reality.” It was a minority ally of Rabin, but it was there. This group was very liberal-minded in domestic, social terms and especially on pressing ahead on peace, particularly with the Palestinians.

Another, very important component of the Rabin Government was “Shas.” I've mentioned this group several times. Shas is the acronym for an ultra-orthodox party based on Moroccan immigrants in Israel. This party was led by a spiritual leader, Ovadia Yosef, former Chief Rabbi of the Sephardic Jewish community. Remember, in Israel there are two “Chief Rabbis.” There is, if you will, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi and the Sephardic Chief Rabbi.

Q: The Ashkenazi community is essentially composed of Jews of European origin.

BROWN: Yes. However, this is an intricate matter, and I don't want to go too much into detail, but Ovadia Yosef had a Moroccan base. He also had the benefit of having had Lithuanian, ultra-orthodox mentors as a younger man. There was some tension between them. On the one hand he was, if you will, a breakaway. On the other hand, he had had this mentor relationship with Lithuanian advisers. Therefore, not all of Shas could just be automatically pigeonholed under one rubric. Similarly, Shas' driving young leader was Ariele Deri. Deri was in his 30s. He paid total obedience, if you will, to the spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. However, Deri was the day to day leader of Shas and a young man of great acuity and political dexterity.

I want to dwell on this a moment because there is a tendency on the part of many observers of the Israeli scene to pigeonhole and stereotype Israeli political parties. It is reasonable to do this to some extent, as you have to put tags on people and groups as you analyze the political situation in Israel. However, there was some fluidity within Shas, which ran along the following lines. Its rank and file members were basically conservative. It was a young party made up of young people. It was a growing party, with an increasingly growing element in Jerusalem. It was competitive vis-a-vis other, ultra-orthodox parties. It had managed to survive in different, coalition governments. In other words, it had had a taste of power and authority. Deri had come up very rapidly, nominally as a civil servant. (End of tape)

The Shas had gained control of the Ministry of the Interior, which was a crucial target in this party's political objectives. Through the Ministry of the Interior flow the funds for the "Yeshiva," the religious schools, and other, cultural institutions that Shas was building and expanding. Here was their path into the Central Budget of Israel. This was the price which Shas extracted from various coalition governments and still does, even as we speak.

Now, the rank and file of Shas were conservative. The leaders were, at times willing to be part of the peace front. The rank and file were, I would say, pro-Likud, as far as a tough line vis-a-vis the Palestinians, especially, was concerned.

Arieh Deri himself was close to and could bring along Ovadia Yosef with him to the line that what was good for Israel was what counted. If Jewish lives could be saved by sacrificing some territory and coming to an equitable deal with the Palestinians, so be it. You have to be careful how you say this, but they were amenable and flexible in that sense. Yet they have to manage a rank and file membership which, on the peace issue, was quite conservative and might vote for Likud.

Now, Deri didn't speak English. My knowledge of Hebrew was broken, but improving. As fate would have it, we came together on a very special, American issue. This was an issue which had bothered us for years. That was: the "Black Hebrew" issue. I can't remember whether I've touched on this previously.

Q: I can't recall, but let's go over it again, just to be sure.

BROWN: Many years ago a young man named Carter, from Chicago or Detroit, had a vision which, in very broad terms, was that there were the 12 tribes of Israel, and then there was the "lost tribe" of Israel. According to the tradition, the lost tribe consisted of people with dark complexions. Carter had a vision that he was the leader of the descendants of this lost tribe. According to this vision, they were to be gathered together and go back to the Holy Land and form a pure religious sect. Gradually, he took the name of "Ben Ami" Carter, I think it was. He went to Israel, nominally as a tourist. This began a pattern of American Blacks supporting him, often going to Palestine as tourists or visitors and then disappearing.

Q: What was the time scale? When did he first arrive in Israel?

BROWN: This would have been in the early 1970s, I think. Already, when I was DCM in Israel,

1979-1982, this group of Americans was a problem. As more and more of them infiltrated into Israel and went down into the desert area of the Negev, they began seeking odd jobs. This was against Israeli law. You can't get a job in Israel unless you're a citizen or registered alien, with working privileges. By the way, in Israel, which has a kind of statist socialist approach, once you're a qualified worker, then you're entitled to health benefits, so you're a burden on the Israeli Treasury. You're also entitled to education benefits, and this also is a burden on the Israeli Treasury.

Moreover, the Israeli authorities were disturbed by the character, as they saw it, of Ben Ami Carter's sect. These people said that they were the true Jews. When I first got to Israel, this sect was highly disciplined and very authoritarian in its leadership. They subjected their women, in particular, to very firm control. The net result of it was that, in consular terms, members of this sect, and especially the women, had to hand over their passports to the leadership. If they had any U.S. Social Security, railroad retirement, or any other benefits from the U.S. Government, they had to hand over their checks to the leadership. They were supposed to live an ascetic life.

For the leaders the concept was that an apocalyptic event would occur, fire and water would envelop the earth, and they would have to prepare themselves to enter an opening in the earth, which would then close temporarily behind them while the rest of the world was purged. They would have to fast, as there was no food. They would have to prepare themselves and subject themselves to the leader's discipline. Then, once the fire and water had subsided, they could come out and enjoy the millennium to follow.

In American consular terms, there were very disturbing reports that these American women were being subjected to a form of polygamy. It was also alleged that these women were forced to give birth to their children without access to hospitals. They were vegetarians and were very, very lean. They were making their living on a very fragile basis, producing handicraft items, doing odd jobs, and so forth.

Q: And of course the Jonestown example must have been hanging over them.

BROWN: Jonestown, at that time in 1979, was hanging over us. There was the implication that if they were mishandled, something like the Jonestown event would occur.

Q: Then the poisoned Kool Aid would come out. [A reference to the fact that the leaders at Jonestown used Kool Aid, a drink, to cover the taste of the poison being administered to the people who lived at Jonestown]

BROWN: So it was a real consular problem and also grew to be a political problem. In those days Ambassador Sam Lewis and I ended up dealing with a man who had a great, academic and political background, Yosef Burg, Minister of the Interior, who could, as I may have remarked, speak fluently and joke in six different languages. He was a very nice man but he never gave an inch on the question of the "Black Hebrews."

What we were trying to do was to have their status regularized and get some sort of recognition and stability for them, rather than face a situation where they could be hounded, rounded up, and

deported from Israel.

Q: Why not?

BROWN: Among other things, I didn't particularly think that deporting these "Black Hebrews" from Israel would redound to the benefit of Israel in the Chicago, Detroit, or whatever other area they came from.

There were further ramifications. That is, African-Americans who had no connection with this group and might arrive at Ben Gurion International Airport would be subjected to extremely rigorous interrogation and body searches, out of fear that they might be "Black Hebrews" posing as visitors. There were several incidents involving upper middle class, African-Americans who were insulted and humiliated, leaving them furious with the treatment which they had received.

In any event, for several years we got nowhere with the Ministry of the Interior under Yosef Burg as Minister. He was a highly sophisticated gentleman of European origin who was well versed in dealing with Americans. Here I was, years later, as American ambassador to Israel, dealing with a Minister of the Interior who was 35 years old, or whatever his age was. He didn't speak a word of English and came from a Moroccan Jewish background. Lo and behold, I did a deal with him in the Dan Hotel on the beach near Tel Aviv. Under this deal I got at least \$1.0 million from the U.S. Congress (thanks to Congressman Charles Rangel of New York) for an arrangement whereby a trust fund was set up so that these "Black Hebrews," who had large, accumulated debts to the Municipality of Dimona, for example, and to hospital authorities over the years, could settle their accounts. They had accumulated these debts because they didn't have the money to pay what they owed for water supply, hospital services, city charges, and so forth. This would ease the political problems of the Israeli leaders in the Negev down there which asked the question: "What are we doing with all of these Blacks who are non-Jews and outsiders in our midst in a situation where there is considerable unemployment?"

The Ministry of the Interior, in turn, could create a category which would be the equivalent of a permanently resident alien, thereby granting them working status which would then trigger health and education benefits. So we stitched this arrangement all together.

Now, Deri was becoming the object of allegations of massive corruption, through the Ministry of the Interior. Indeed, after some time, he was indicted. He then fought that indictment by various means, both legal, of course, and also political. The rank and file members of Shas felt impelled, shall we say, to charge that Deri was the subject of a political smear in order to put down the Moroccan Sephardic community. This case has gone on and is with us, even now. During this last election campaign, Deri, who had been convicted of the charge, which he had appealed to a higher court, finally, and as part of another deal, had stepped down as a candidate for the Knesset. However, Shas now has more seats than ever in terms of its representation in the Knesset and is part of the new government of Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

I am going into this tangent in some detail to inform the reader or the listener of this interview that things can get very complicated in Israel, as they do elsewhere. As I have said, you have to be very careful about pigeon holing a given political party and personality as once and forever

this or that. I find that domestic politics and personalities can take you on strange pathways.

Remember, it was Peres' conviction at the end of 1989 or early 1990 that he had Shas in the position that he could bring down the very government of which he was Deputy Prime Minister and which was led by Prime Minister Shamir. He thought that he had a deal with Ovadia Yosef, and so did most observers. He and they were wrong. At the last moment, after ferocious negotiations, in which Ovadia Yosef was receiving Peres and Rabin on the one hand, and somebody else from Likud was on their heels, Shas stayed with Likud, the Labour Party was left completely outside the government, and Rabin was a very bitter man after having been ousted as Minister of Defense. He was extremely bitter about Peres for having constructed this disaster. In any case, Rabin had had a long rivalry with Peres.

All right, now it was 1992. Peres was pushed aside. The Labour Party won, and Rabin came in as Prime Minister, and Peres was back as Minister of Foreign Affairs. I would like to make a rough characterization of the Rabin Government election program, which was essentially as follows: "Look, we're going to have a reordering of the priorities around here. First of all, we're going to take better care of our domestic front, as far as employment and education are concerned." In other words, the secular program. Secondly, "We're going to have a reordering of the priorities as far as the peace process is concerned. We want peace. An equitable and a fair peace, and we are willing to make sacrifices for it, but we're not going to give the farm away."

The new Rabin government's attitude toward Syria was as follows. In effect, it said to President Assad of Syria: "If you want to do business with us, here is a new negotiator named Rabinowitz. He is our ambassador to the United States now. He speaks, reads, and writes Arabic and is an expert on the Syrian scene, among other things. We mean business." This meant "territory for peace." Regarding the Palestinian negotiators, the new government said, "We're not dealing with you as the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] but we're willing to go some distance here if you're really serious about negotiating with us. Of course, we are always ready for negotiations on the Lebanese front, in the knowledge that the Lebanese are in the pockets of the Syrians."

Q: How about Jordan?

BROWN: Regarding Jordan, the same thing. The new government was quite willing to do a deal with them. They made pronouncements that went along these lines. However, ongoing negotiations in Washington bogged down. Notwithstanding what I would call a very forward leaning position of the Israelis, Assad's negotiators remained obdurate. In short, they didn't reach a final agreement.

As far as the Palestinians were concerned, these were nominally local people. There was nobody from East Jerusalem, nobody who was a deportee, and nobody who was openly a supporter of the PLO, even though they were reporting, in one way or another, to Yasser Arafat. These Palestinians wanted to get rid of the Jordanians. They wanted to be treated as an independent group, the arrangement reached at the Madrid Conference notwithstanding.

So this negotiating process dragged on and on. There was growing frustration in Washington on this, as the new Clinton administration took hold. That is the background to this situation.

Now, in the meantime the Lebanese situation was constantly heating up. I described before what became of Operation Accountability. That situation was aggravated by Katusha rocket attacks on northern Israel, conducted by the Hezbollah, as well as attacks not only by the pro-Israeli South Lebanese Army, but also by the Israeli Army itself, in the "Security Zone" in Lebanon as it is called. The Israelis finally countered with a massive bombardment which forced some 250,000 Lebanese from South Lebanon to take to the roads and clog up the transportation system. In all of this we were involved in an intense form of negotiations, much of which was being handled on the telephone. At the same time I've mentioned that Ed Djerejian...

Q: These negotiations involved whom?

BROWN: This was Dennis Ross, with Secretary of State Christopher participating, but it was very largely Dennis Ross. Ed Djerejian had been bumped away from the negotiations, and Ross was appointed as Special Negotiator, while Djerejian remained Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs.

Meanwhile, I was in an even more delicate position because, if you will, on paper my reporting channel was to Ed Djerejian as Assistant Secretary, while the real action had shifted to Dennis Ross. In that capacity Ross was phoning Rabin and company, he was phoning Shara [Syrian Foreign Minister], he was phoning the Lebanese, and also getting Secretary Christopher on the line. These were open line and fast breaking conversations, conducted at all hours of the day and night.

I found myself in a position which became apparent to me as a trend. That is, Dennis Ross had a distinct tendency to jump over the heads of the local American ambassadors, deal directly with some of the other participants, and conclude things as he saw fit. In my position I really had to be on my toes to play catch up ball with him. I was in direct contact with Prime Minister Rabin, of course, and his military secretary who, in effect, was the chief of staff of his personal cabinet for everything, Major General Danny Yaton. Gen Yaton is a very unique personality and a can do man.[He later became head of Mossad.]

At the same time, I had to keep Ed Djerejian in the picture. There were times when I was frantically phoning Djerejian at, say, 3:00 AM, Washington time. When I couldn't get in touch with him, I called Dennis Ross. Then I filled in Djerejian later on. That was a delicate situation because, obviously, Djerejian had been bruised somewhat by this reshifting of responsibilities regarding the peace process. He was still Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, and a very good Assistant Secretary. As I reported to him, there were times when I had the impression that he was very sensitive to the fact that Dennis Ross was really going off on his own, without directly informing Ed and taking more and more control of the process. Djerejian naturally wanted me to continue reporting to him, which is only human.

It was a delicate business. It was to continue this way and to grow as a trend. That is, for whatever reason or combination of reasons, I found increasingly that Dennis Ross moved to jump over the head of his ambassadors and negotiate, or try to negotiate directly with some of the principal parties concerned. I'm sure that for Secretary of State Christopher this was okay. He

had to cover the world, and the Middle East was a very important part of it. Dennis Ross might get results, and so forth. Secretary Christopher himself was persuaded by Dennis Ross to engage in a form of shuttle diplomacy to get the negotiating process going again.

And now we come back to the old rivalry between Rabin and Peres, in Israel. Rabin remained a very tough guy, vis-a-vis the Palestinians. Now he was both Prime Minister and Defense Minister. He had a new program, and that program contained a distinct outreach element of approaching the Palestinians, resembling what had happened at the Madrid Conference. In effect, Rabin was saying to the Palestinians: "We're willing to deal with you if you get off your duff. However, Rabin felt a growing frustration that nothing was really coming out of this process.

Peres, in his new-old capacity as Foreign Minister, was wheeling and dealing with me, with Dennis Ross, and with Secretary Christopher when the Secretary came out to the Middle East. It was quite clear to us that Peres was always out pushing the envelope, as it were, trying to accelerate the process and to take new initiatives. In all of these meetings we never, ever met with Rabin and Peres at the same time. Never. That old rivalry and bitterness between the two of them was still too strong. When we reported an apparent willingness of the Government of Israel, as articulated by Foreign Minister Peres, to go far out, what you'd get from Rabin was a dismissive wave of the hand, a grunt, and negative facial and body language, as well as the necessary words to go with it, amounting to: "Oh, that's a lot of bunk." Well, Rabin didn't use the word bunk, but that is the impression he was conveying.

This contrast was fascinating. We knew, on a very private basis, that a couple of Israeli academics were meeting in Oslo, Norway, with some Palestinians, courtesy of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. I think that Stoltenberg was the Norwegian Foreign Minister at the time. Larson, and Larson's wife, were the key operators for the Norwegians in these talks. Knowledge of these contacts was closely restricted and representative of the new era. There was an open track in Washington with a Palestinian Delegation, but it didn't seem to be going anywhere and we were content to see academicians pursue a parallel track on the side to see what the possibilities were. However, we did not have much regard for these discussions. We concluded that these were talks between a bunch of academic types, but they weren't going to lead anywhere. We felt that the main action was going on in Washington.

Well, I won't go into this very fascinating and complicated bit of history at Oslo. It's in David Mayakovsky's book, Making Peace with the PLO. You'll also find it in the memoirs of Uri Savir, who was the new Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. You'll also find it in the memoirs of Singer, who was an Israeli defense lawyer and a long-time lawyer with a Washington law firm. He also worked with the Israeli Ministry of Defense. He had dealt with sensitive matters, including matters related to West Bank problems.

At the time this was not known to us, but the Palestinian representatives in Oslo said that they were speaking for Yasser Arafat. They stated that they had a mandate from Arafat and that they represented him. These were PLO people who represented the Tunis crowd. They demanded that the Israelis upgrade the talks in Oslo, Norway, from an informal to an official level. As I say, we didn't know this at the time.

Peres finally persuaded Rabin to allow these Oslo talks to be upgraded. As a result, Uri Savir went to Oslo, and Singer, the lawyer, also went to Oslo. As I say, we didn't know this. We tended, therefore, to write off these in Oslo. However, when I met with Peres, he was going farther and farther out in his statements to me about a deal involving an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and a portion of the West Bank. He also said that the U.S. Government ought to get with it and join in pressing for this line of action. He felt that we ought to push Prime Minister Rabin. Things got to the point where, at a meeting in the VIP [Very Important Person] Room at Ben Gurion International Airport, Peres went so far with me that I finally said, "Well, Shimon, this is fascinating to hear, but are you representing Prime Minister Rabin in this respect?" He said, "Yes!" I said to myself: "Wow!"

I think that this conversation occurred just as a delegation headed by Secretary Christopher was arriving in Israel. I was sitting down next to Dennis Ross. I told him: "I've got to tell you that something is happening here." Indeed, I went back to the Embassy in Tel Aviv and shocked my Political Section by gathering a couple of my officers together and saying: "I have the impression that something is about to happen. Even though Prime Minister Rabin is dismissive in his remarks about these Oslo talks, give me a draft of a very brief formula for an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and 'X.', meaning some portion of the West Bank" My officers said, "What?" I said, "I want something succinct on which we and the U.S. leadership can focus." I had that drafted and gave it to Dennis Ross. My own thinking had gone that far.

Now, bear in mind that I had reported that Prime Minister Rabin had been dismissive of such ideas, and particularly with reference to the role of Shimon Peres. There continued to be a stalemate in the Washington talks. This was summertime in 1993.

Q: While you were dealing with this initial period, how can you deal with a Prime Minister who dismisses the views of his Foreign Minister on something this important? You were not meeting together with them. At a certain point, in effect, you were asking: "Who's calling the shots for Israel?" What was your evaluation of this?

BROWN: My calculation in such a situation and at that time, and a good rule of thumb in general, is that, if there's ultimately one boss, it is the Prime Minister. Never forget this. You have to remember that, traditionally, from David Ben Gurion on, Israeli Prime Ministers, many of whom have been Foreign Ministers, arrogate unto themselves handling the U.S.-Israeli relationship first and foremost. That's the big game. The Prime Minister is in charge of the tough problem. In other words, what is he going to sacrifice, if anything, for a breakthrough with an Arab partner? So it had been with Golda Meir and so it was on down the years. Prime Minister Begin was a perfect example of this practice. His first Foreign Minister was Moshe Dayan. He got rid of him and replaced him with Yitzhak Shamir, who was, in those circumstances, if not a puppet, at least a "Yes man." Begin handled the problem of negotiations with the Arabs himself and the Camp David discussions in particular.

So there we were, and that was the trap. With that mentality and a pattern of Rabin being dismissive, if you will, of references to Shimon Peres and a more radical approach to negotiations with the Arabs, the fact was Rabin himself had a history, including a history of negotiations involving us, of his own practice of outreach. He was a very cautious, skeptical

man. However, the lesson to learn from this is that even a very cautious, tough, skeptical guy can, in some cases, switch his position. And that's what happened.

In the summer of 1993 there was a short visit to Israel by the new Norwegian Foreign Minister, Holts. This lasted about two days, or something like that. I received an unusual phone call from the Norwegian ambassador to Israel, or maybe it was from the Norwegian ambassador-designate or chargé d'affaires. Anyway, he asked me if I could see the Norwegian Foreign Minister. Well, it's rather unusual for the Foreign Minister of a European country to ask to see the American ambassador in Israel. However, of course, I was delighted to meet with him.

I had a very cordial meeting with the Norwegian Foreign Minister at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. He was probing on U.S. attitudes and looking for the latest update on the Washington talks on the Middle East. In the process he let me know that his wife had just published a book. She was a sociologist and had written a book about the plight or situation of the Palestinians, particularly on the West Bank, I think. Throughout that conversation I was saying to myself: "This man is really involved in this matter. This isn't just a casual discussion, for the record. This guy is really involved in the Palestinian problem." Little did I realize how far involved he was in this matter!

To make a long story short, a time came when I was suddenly called in by Prime Minister Rabin. Remember, this was in the middle of the process. We had had all of this shuttle diplomacy by Secretary Christopher and Dennis Ross. Things apparently were still stalemated, as far as formal negotiations were concerned. Anyhow, Rabin called me in and said, "Look, Bill, I don't want you to report this," and I said, "Yes, sir." I didn't report this conversation because I took him at his word, and this was the way he wanted to handle it.

Rabin continued: "You should know that there's been a breakthrough, and Peres is flying to California to meet with Secretary Christopher, and maybe Dennis Ross, if he is there." He then summarized the deal. I realized that it was going to be a hell of a shock if the American leadership...

Q: Well, you realize that if you reported it, this meant that, Washington being what it is...

BROWN: So I held my tongue because Shimon Peres was already in the air, en route to California, and I had promised not to report it.

There was a host of players involved in this, but another key player in all of this was the President of the State of Israel, Ezer Weizman. Weizman, a former, fiery hawk, had gone through an evolution since the Camp David agreements were signed, and now he was a dove. He was a tough dove, but a real dove. Weizman wanted action, and he wanted to be the center of the action, even though the President of the State of Israel is normally a figurehead who is supposed to stay above politics. Weizman couldn't resist involving himself in such matters. He would love to fly to Damascus and do a deal with President Assad, an old aviator like himself. Or he wanted the U.S. suddenly to invite him. I went through a whole process where Weizman's own Director General was pushing me to arrange for an immediate visit of President Weizman to Washington. He told me that Weizman felt that he had to see the U.S. President, but he must be invited, and

then big things could happen here.

Things had gotten to the point where Weizman's Director General said to me: "We really have to have this invitation, and now!" I said, "Have you cleared this with the Prime Minister?" He replied: "Oh, yes, that's taken care of." I went to the Prime Minister and met with him on a one on one basis. I said that I had been told that Weizman wanted to visit the United States. I asked Rabin: "Is this what you want?" Rabin said to me: "There's a time and place for such a visit, and now is not the time or place." Now that's the kind of thing that you can really appreciate. [Laughter] Imagine managing this. Finally, Prime Minister Rabin said to me: "I'll take care of this," which is what he should have said, because I was in a very delicate position.

Anyway, a sudden announcement was made that talks were going on in Oslo between the Israelis and Palestinians. Washington went into a temporary state of shock and then, predictably, tried to recover in a way that tried to suggest to the American people and the world that we were aware of this all the time. In fact, we weren't. The shock, if you will, was the result of years of concluding, and rightly so, that such things couldn't be done without us. Over and over again competent people, like myself and certainly people even more competent than I, have stated, when all was said and done, that it takes the U.S. as an honest broker to put something over the top, because feelings and passions all run so deep.

However, it was done. In its attempts at recovery, Washington then instructed me to invite Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to come to Washington to participate in a ceremony at which Peres, a Palestinian counterpart, and Christopher would participate in a signing ceremony. My outstanding DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] at the time, Jim Larocco, who, I think, is now still ambassador to Kuwait, said to me as I arrived at the Embassy: "We just received this. It's a NIACT [requiring action, even at night], Urgent cable. Do you want me to call Peres' office?" I said, "No, I don't want you to do that. I want you to phone the Director General of the Prime Minister's office and say that we've received this cable. Ask him if we should deliver the invitation to Foreign Minister Peres. Handle it that way."

Q: I assume that your idea was not to go directly to Prime Minister Rabin but to give the Israeli Government a little wiggle time so that you weren't looking across the table at Rabin when you broke the news to him.

BROWN: I knew in my bones that this proposal for a visit to the U.S. by Peres wasn't going to fly. Clinton was already President of the United States. This was big stuff! With Clinton newly installed as President, a ceremony where a couple of Foreign Ministers sign a peace document or go through a signing ceremony was not going to work out. This was presidential stuff. I knew it in my bones. I also knew that Prime Minister Rabin, and particularly his entourage, wouldn't accept the idea of Foreign Minister Peres running off to steal the glory. Invitation or no invitation. So I figured that the way to handle this was to feed it into the Prime Minister's office and they would do whatever was necessary.

Q: Where did you think that the impetus for this ceremony was coming from? Was it just that the Department of State was thinking small?

BROWN: No, this was a case of instantaneous thinking. We had learned that there had been a breakthrough. Secretary Christopher had received the word from Foreign Minister Peres. Therefore, in the eyes of the State Department, it followed that Secretary Christopher should meet with Peres and the Palestinians. You get into Washington politics here. Come on! So that's the way I handled it.

So DCM Larocco called the Director General of Prime Minister Rabin's office and said that Ambassador Brown had asked him to tell the Director General to inform him that we had this invitation for Peres. He asked him: "Shall we deliver it?" The instant answer was: "No! Hold it! Just wait!" [Laughter]

Some hours later, I received another phone call from Dennis Ross in the State Department. He asked: "Have you delivered that invitation?" I said, "Not yet." He said, "Well, forget that one. We want you to go in and invite Prime Minister Rabin." So I sought an immediate, one on one appointment with the Prime Minister. He received me in his office in the Ministry of Defense in Tel Aviv. He served me the ritual cup of Turkish coffee. With a cigarette in his hand, he said, "What's up?" I said, "Mr. Prime Minister, President Clinton instructs me to extend to you a cordial invitation to join him and Yasser Arafat in Washington for a ceremony commemorating this great breakthrough which you have achieved. President Clinton would be very happy to have you come to Washington for this purpose." Rabin took a drag on his cigarette, looked at me, and said, "You know, Bill, there's no business like show business!" [Laughter] So I said, "Yes, sir!"

Q: This was one of the great moments in diplomatic history.

BROWN: And so the Rabin visit to the U.S. was arranged. Rabin very kindly invited me to travel on his plane to the U.S., which was a very nice gesture.

I'll tell you about that flight to the U.S., because it exposed me to a unique window on the Israeli Prime Minister's VIP [Very Important Person] flight. The aircraft was a Boeing 707 configured for VIP travel, Israeli fashion. In the center of the aircraft was a small compartment with two tables, something like a Silver Diner Cafe.

Q: It was like a booth.

BROWN: Yes, a booth. It was one compartment, but it had two booths in it, separated by the aisle. Every other seat on the plane was, if you will, economy class, but in sections. The plane was jammed full with supporters of the Prime Minister and all kinds of very interesting people. In the Prime Minister's compartment sat Rabin and his wife, Leah. They faced a fairly narrow table, which might have been 2.5 feet wide. For a tall person like myself, you'd be touching knees with the person opposite you. Opposite Rabin and his wife was Motta Gur, who was Deputy Defense Minister and the liberator of Jerusalem, and his wife. He was suffering from cancer. He was an old stalwart and friend of Rabin.

At the other table, next to the window, that is, the position farthest away from Rabin sat Shulamit Aloni, who was the representative of a peace party, a highly dedicated lady who had criticized all Israeli Governments, including that of Rabin, for being too timid and for not recognizing a

Palestinian state. She was a lawyer. On the aisle, next to Shulamit Aloni, was Shimon Peres, the Foreign Minister. I was seated opposite Peres. Throughout the flight his knees and mine were touching. To my left, at the window, again, the farthest from Rabin, was Yosi Beilin, Deputy Foreign Minister. Again, he was a dove, at one time labeled publicly by Rabin as Peres' poodle for his allegedly crazy ideas about giving too much to the enemy in negotiations. Yosi had been a critical figure in the whole Oslo process. (End of tape)

He had played a critical role in bringing the Oslo process to an official level.

We flew first to Amsterdam, and then to Washington, DC. During the whole trip Prime Minister Rabin sat there with a glass of whiskey or a cup of coffee and a cigarette, chatting with Leah Rabin and Motta Gur. Yosi Beilin sat next to me, reading a novel throughout the whole trip. During the trip Shimon Peres sat writing the speech he was going to deliver on a tablet of long, legal sized paper. He is a very serious man who was obviously struggling to produce the best, philosophical, comprehensive, political statement that he possibly could as Foreign Minister. Prime Minister Rabin's statement had obviously been prepared and was in his pocket.

It was fascinating. This was a long trip. There was a little bit of banter back and forth, but essentially there was no communication between Rabin and Peres, who were just across the aisle from each other. No communication whatsoever. At one time I wrote out, in Chinese characters, a piece of an essay written about in the Eighth century and gave it to Rabin, who turned it around several different ways and said, "What's this?" I said that it referred to great leadership and that I thought that it applied to him.

Well, after we arrived in the U.S., there was a great ceremony on the White House lawn. I want to add this. There was great euphoria, particularly among the American peace-oriented supporters. These included all kinds of kids in special T-shirts representing different faiths which were for peace. Now they were finally in the limelight. You may remember the photo of the handshake which portrayed Yasser Arafat reaching over, past President Clinton, to Prime Minister Rabin. This had all been arranged in advance. It showed an obviously less than enthusiastic Israeli Prime Minister, literally shaking Arafat's hand.

However, what I particularly want to convey here is that when I walked back to the State Department from that ceremony on the White House lawn, I did some real thinking. When I arrived at the State Department, I sat down in the office assigned to me, picked up a pen, and wrote out yet another message, this time to the Secretary of State. I don't have a copy of it now, but it ran along these lines: "I've just come from the great ceremony which you and the President attended. I would say that Prime Minister Rabin has once again demonstrated great, political courage. This is a risky endeavor to which he has now publicly subscribed. I think that, as part of our effort to bolster him and encourage him to move forward, the time has come to move the American Embassy in Israel to the Western part of Jerusalem, where we have a site which has already been negotiated for a diplomatic facility. I gave that handwritten letter to Ed Djerejian, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, to pass up the chain of command.

Well, it was the subject of an animated, spirited, stand-up conversation between Dennis Ross, myself, and Martin Indyk. I think that Ambassador Sam Lewis and some others were standing

by. During this conversation I was obviously in a distinct minority. Dennis called this proposal “idiotic, absolute foolishness” at that juncture, using the standard argument that we should save that possible, American move for the very end of the peace process, as a way of putting it over the top.

For my part, I argued that the time was right, and there will always be 111 reasons why we should not move the American Embassy to Jerusalem. I said that the time was right for several reasons. I had in mind the political grounds, for the reasons I just set forth. I had in mind the security grounds, meaning physical security. I had in mind efficiency, manpower, and a whole complex of other reasons as well. Needless to say, that effort went nowhere.

It is interesting that, meanwhile, the United States Congress has moved to a similar position and that certain Presidential candidates, including President Clinton himself, have adopted this position, but that's politics.

Well, there is one other subject that I would like to cover. From the beginning of his new tenure as Prime Minister, Rabin set forth a new set of priorities which provided that, as far as settlements in the occupied territories were concerned, there should be no, new settlements. As far as his efforts to straddle the issue are concerned, there were such strong feelings and differences of opinion on this subject that he had the existing settlements re-categorized into security and non-security divisions. The thrust of this new categorization was that, henceforth, no more public monies would go into non-security establishments. That is, those which were far out, obviously political statements, as opposed to those which, it could be argued, were essential to the security of Jerusalem, the roads leading up to and down from Jerusalem, and the overall security of the country.

That statement immediately triggered the usual uproar in those settlements which were categorized as non-security establishments, as well as efforts to include other settlements in the security category. This meant money, not only for existing facilities, but subsidies for mortgages, and continued growth in terms of infrastructure, roads, and buildings.

The Palestinians, of course, denounced all of this, and it has a certain relevance today, as we speak. Here we are with the Barak Government in 1999. I read in the news the other day that a Palestinian negotiator had said, “This continued expansion of Israeli settlements will kill the whole arrangement.” In reply, Barak's spokesman said, “We're not talking about new settlements. We're talking about the natural growth and expansion of existing settlements, which are vital to our security.” It was a familiar line.

That takes us way back to the early foundation of Israel and its development. It started with Galilee within Israel proper and within the Green Line. It was a standard, Zionist practice, from the very beginning, to put settlements up on high ground, in strategic passes and so forth, as a marker showing that: “This is ours. We're not leaving here. If push comes to shove, we have the high ground and we will dominate the area around it.”

Q: It was very clear in the 1948 battle for Jerusalem.

BROWN: Later on, when a weak Rabin Government permitted a settlers' group to establish themselves on the West Bank of the Jordan River, that was the nucleus from which emerged the situation when I came back to Israel as ambassador. At this time there were 110,000 or 120,000 people living in these settlements on the West Bank and, to a lesser degree, in the Gaza Strip.

This also fits into an Israeli mentality of negotiations. These are tough enemies that they were dealing with. The Israelis felt that one of the best ways to handle this is simply to continue to develop your strength and let your enemies see it. You create "facts on the ground," as the expression has it. If you're a negotiator, whether you say it or not, the implicit message is: "You'd better negotiate while there's something left to negotiate. If you don't negotiate in good faith, there's going to be more and more of this." This practice has caused great agony among Palestinians and Palestinian negotiators. That pattern of negotiations is still very much there.

A second element that I would point out is that, within this new prioritization announced by Rabin, the development of what the U.S. would call settlements in and around Jerusalem continued apace. Indeed, this situation got to the point where I went to the new Minister of Housing, "Fuad," or Benyamin Eleazar, who was born in Iraq who had a military career. He was one of those former military associates of Rabin, in whom Rabin placed trust. Now he was Minister of Housing. He laid the situation right out. In fact, he gave me a map which, when transmitted to Washington, caused a great commotion. It was his updated map of the plan of "Greater Jerusalem," or, if you will, "Municipal Jerusalem." It was the expanded Jerusalem developed with ongoing funds, bulldozing, and so forth. When I talked to him about this, he said, "I'm not trying to put anything over on you. This has always been our plan. It is part of the Labour Party platform. We are merely implementing it. We never said anything about stopping the construction of normal housing developments here in Jerusalem, which has been and will remain unified." He didn't say this, but this is what had been done by previous, Israeli Governments. This is something which is vexing to the Palestinians, to put it mildly. But there it is. And it's there now as we speak, on October 1, 1999.

Bear in mind that when you pigeonhole political parties and party positions, right up to now it has been a Labour Party position that, whatever is done in terms of the staged withdrawal from the West Bank of the Jordan River area and the final settlement with the Palestinians, the Israelis continue to implement their agenda, which includes strengthening Jewish housing settlements in and immediately around Jerusalem. Even the definition of Jerusalem has an increasingly Greater Jerusalem character.

For example, the settlement of Ma'ale Adomin now has more than 20,000 people living there. It is a five or 10 minutes drive from the center of Jerusalem. It started on a barren ridge where some Bedouin goatherds lived. Over time it has grown to be a tremendous community. No Israeli leader that I know of has any idea of a pullback from Ma'ale Adomin or similar settlements in the residential block around there.

All of the Jews now living on the West Bank vote. I don't know what the Jewish population of the West Bank is, but I would say that it is probably now about 130,000 people. These people have full voting rights. So when you get into an election, a referendum, or a fight in the Knesset on assets, one has to remember that the people living in West Bank settlements are a very

important, political group.

Ed Djerejian, the new Ambassador-designate to Israel, and I had long agreed that we would spend Christmas in our respective households, he in Washington and I in Israel. I said that I would leave Israel shortly after January 1, 1994, which I did, and then returned to retired status in the U.S. At this time I joined the board of the Israel Discount Bank of New York, which is registered in New York. It is a very conservative and successful bank and a subsidiary of the Israel Discount Bank of Tel Aviv. I did more public speaking and went back for a while to my duties in the small Senior Review Panel at CIA, reporting to the Director of Central Intelligence. I was there through 1997.

Meanwhile, I again became the pro bono Chairman of the Board of the Truman Institute for Peace in Jerusalem. However, in June, 1996 I was asked to go out with Stanley Roth as a Special Envoy on the Burma question. Maybe we can touch on that later.

Q: Yes. Okay, we'll stop here and pick up the Burma question the next time we meet. I also wanted to ask when Jordan abandoned the West Bank.

BROWN: Jordan lost the West Bank in the War of 1967.

Q: I mean the official relationship between Jordan and the West Bank.

BROWN: In 1988 King Hussein, somewhat to the surprise of others, said in effect, "All right, we're now disengaging from the West Bank," although he remained the protector of Islamic rights in Jerusalem.

Q: Jordan isn't mentioned much in the current context. I take it that...

BROWN: Before I close this section, let me mention the Jordanian aspect here. When Rabin reached agreement with the Palestinians, there was also a dramatic breakthrough with the Jordanians, and this was no accident. The Israelis and the Jordanians watch each other very, very carefully. Prime Minister Rabin called me in one day, when I was scheduled to fly to Antalya, Turkey, and do a 10-day cruise on a sailboat. Rabin asked to see me alone, so I knew that it was important. I took Jim Larocco, my DCM, with me and told him to wait outside the Ministry of Defense.

I went to Rabin's office, and he said, "I want to tell you that I've met with King Hussein and have worked out a deal. Here is the outline of the deal." He showed me a document outlining its provisions and summarized the negotiations. He said, "If you want, you can go next door, sit in Danny Yatom's office, and read this document. However, I'm not going to give you a piece of paper. I ask you to handle this on a very confidential basis, because I promised the King that I would handle it this way." So I moved with Danny Yatom to his cubbyhole office next to Rabin's office in the Defense Ministry, and I absorbed the outline of the agreement as rapidly as I could. The outline was a convoluted document which had been submitted and made a part of the record by the King's brother and at the time his nominal successor, Crown Prince Hassan. [Hassan was later passed over in favor of Abdullah who became King]

Anyhow, I memorized the document as best I could. Then I met my DCM and headed for the plane which was to take me to Turkey. I said, "I'm just going to describe this. Take notes as well as you can and report this to Washington. A deal has been made between Israel and Jordan. Here is how it was done." Rabin had used the Deputy Director [later Director] of the MOSSAD, [Israeli foreign intelligence organization], Efraim Levy, as his key adviser. Not a Foreign Ministry officer. This was a typical Rabin maneuver.

PHILIPPE DU CHATEAU
Chief, American Cultural Center, USIS
Tel Aviv (1988-1992)

Mr. du Chateau was born in Illinois and raised in Illinois and Indiana. He was educated at the Universities of Indiana, Cornell and Harvard, and Middlebury College. From 1973 to 1977 he worked with the US Information Service in the Soviet Union, joining its Foreign Service in 1979. Mr. du Chateau served several tours at USIA's Headquarters in Washington, DC. His foreign assignments include Sofia, Moscow, Tel Aviv and Helsinki. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

Q: You were there from when to when?

DU CHATEAU: We were there for four years, from the summer of 1988 to the 1992 summer transfer cycle. You know, everything about Jerusalem is unique, not by the rules, so of course I had a very unusual job.

I was assigned to the Tel Aviv embassy, not the consulate in Jerusalem, which had, probably still has, a special status, and I was accredited to the government of Israel.

My job was to run the American Cultural Center in Jerusalem, which was a branch of USIS Tel Aviv. The embassy had this center in Jerusalem because of the importance of the city. Whatever we officially thought, it's the capital of Israel.

Because I was accredited to the GOI, the government of Israel, I could take visitors into the various government offices and into the prime minister's office, what have you. We were also delivering the Wireless File and other material all over the Israeli side of Jerusalem. The university was part of my domain also. So when someone like Dr. Reich came to Israel, my staff would make all the arrangement for Jerusalem, all the appointments, and I would accompany.

But my boss the Public Affairs Officer was forty miles away in Tel Aviv. Occasionally he would come up, maybe twice a year, and I went down for weekly staff meetings in the embassy and then go shopping in the embassy commissary, and that was about it. So from a work point of view the ACC was completely independent, certainly in the sense of day-to-day work. As I recall, we had an arrangement where we could get our cables and mail at the consulate. Its main

building was really just around the corner, a 5-minute walk away, and I would go over to get cables.

I had an absolutely terrific staff - I was so fortunate. All were Israeli Jews, none of them were American citizens. I guess all except Sami, our courier, were dual citizens. One was a Canadian citizen, she was the head of the team. Others were from Australia or South Africa, Britain. At that time we could not employ local Americans in the embassy for whatever reason, though I think that's changed. Anyhow, they ran the political gamut and religious gamut from the Australian guy who was a conscientious objector, which is extremely difficult to be in Israel as everybody, certainly every male, serves in the military if they don't have a religious exemption, all the way through several of the staff who were ultra-Orthodox. One of the ultra-Orthodox, Sara, she ran the place, she was the manager of the office, really good at computers, and just an amazing lady, and she had at least nine children.

There was a similar center down in the embassy building as part of USIS Tel Aviv. That was closed a few years ago because of budget cuts, but the ACC Jerusalem still exists, I looked it up on the Internet the other day. Like Tel Aviv, we ran a research and lending library, we had visiting speakers, we had a nice place for presentations inside the library. The staff members were in constant contact with people in the ministries, who would call to ask research questions.

We supported the consulate, which was just around the corner, with things like the Wireless File and copies of daily news videotapes that we took down on our recording system, but they were entirely separate. I couldn't work for the consulate, though they did do maintenance for the ACC.

Often our visitors would have an East Jerusalem program and the Jerusalem PAO, David Good, who was there our first year, or Gil Sherman, would handle their side of the city. Gil, he and his wife, we were close. We worked together for three years. They both were FSOs, he for USIA and she was the head of the Consular Section. They had two girls who looked after Guzel from time to time. From Jerusalem, after we left, they went to Cairo, and Donna had an aneurism and suddenly died. That was horrible enough, but then Gil died about a year later. I think it was from grief, although he was a diabetic and that was probably the official cause. They were wonderful people. I have a picture, a photo I took of Gil on our wall at home from a wonderful day when we walked down the Kidron Valley together.

So it was a wonderful job. I really walked into something great, but then, anybody who's been to Jerusalem knows it's just an absolutely magic city. To top it all, we lived close by the office in the neighborhood of Talbieh, and had a beautiful, an easy walk, a five minute walk, to where I worked at the ACC or over to the consulate.

We lived in a house originally built in the 30s by an Arab family who left in 1948. The original house had two stories, and then at some point a third story was tacked on top, which is where we lived. It was a three-story walkup, and you could see Mount Zion from our entrance door. We never turned on the air conditioning, it was dry and clear and comfortable even on the hottest days. Of course, when the rains came in November, then that was different, but during the summer, for six months, it was just dry, clear. Hang your laundry on the balcony outside, it'll dry in five minutes.

For me, thousands of years of history were right there, within sight, and we could be walking where it all happened. Just think about the timing. The city walls themselves date from around 1500, which was late in history, built by Suleiman. You could walk around the top of the wall except the area bordering the Haram-esh-Sharif on the east and south.

I was just tossed into the most wonderful place for me and my family. It was magic.

Q: How did the Intifada manifest when you were there?

DU CHATEAU: The uprising, the *Intifada*, was some 6 months old by the time we got there. The consulate staff who had been living in exposed places like south near Bethlehem, they were moved into western Jerusalem. Others like David Good, the PAO, and his family continued to live in East Jerusalem where things were active from time to time.

We were always aware of so-called strike days, times not to go here, not to go there. Consulate security was very good about keeping everybody informed of what was going on, but we were aware of it anyway. We were part of the Consulate's security responsibility and on their radio net.

There was considerable tension reflected in the Israeli press and it was very difficult for me to handle. I was struck by the hatred and anti-Arab racism in the English language press when I got there, and I assume the Hebrew press was the same. So the *intifada* was constantly with us.

We had to be careful when we were traveling and know what was going on around us.

At that time, of course, everything, all the land, down to the Dead Sea was all Israeli territory, so we could drive down to the Dead Sea and we would do it all the time. We'd just get on the road and drive down to the Dead Sea, just to do it, for the fun of it, but, you know, when you came back up, you had to think about what roads you were going to use to go through East Jerusalem.

If you went through Arab neighborhoods in eastern Jerusalem, you had to think about it, where you were, what was happening. One time we were over visiting Gil Sherman at his home, which was then right on the border between East Jerusalem and the West Bank. We were coming back at night and my whole family was in the car. We were coming around a bend in the Bethany area east of the Mount of Olives and in the headlights we saw a bunch of rocks across the road and people around with bandanas over their faces. We had diplomatic plates, but that doesn't exactly protect you or it just confuses the situation if the other guy doesn't realize what dip plates are. If we had blue West Bank plates things might have been clearer.

Anyhow, so what to do? Well, in our case it was important not to do anything fast. Our mind-set had to be that we were on their side, as it were. So I rolled down the driver's window and said who we are and tried not to be worried and that's what we did and they let us through. They could have easily rocked out the windshield. That's what happened to a lot of so-called Israeli settlers who lived on the West Bank.

When coming back from our weekly meetings in the Tel Aviv embassy, I never hesitated to drive up the old road through the Modi'in area north of the main road and come into Jerusalem from the north. It was a beautiful drive. It's amazing to think that I was driving around villages that the Maccabees came from. Of course I wouldn't do that drive on a strike day, but I never had any trouble.

For the most part, nothing was happening in West Jerusalem where we worked and shopped. I recall one bomb that went off in a covered market area in Jerusalem called Mahane Yehuda, but that was an exception. So that was constantly around us and we had to know where we were, what the situation was, and think about neighborhoods. But that didn't slow us down. We walked all over the Old City. It was just an incredible time to be there.

Q: What about the religious Orthodox areas and that influence and thinking?

DU CHATEAU: Well, part of my staff, as I said, was Haredi, ultra-Orthodox. In fact, one of my successes was getting one of the ultra-Orthodox rabbis on an international visitor tour to the United States. That was extremely difficult to do, for dietary reasons if nothing else, and he was politically very conservative, but we were able to do it. It could only happen because some on my staff were Haredi. I think it was very worthwhile.

I knew a lot about what was going on in Jerusalem, about who, what, where. And then, of course, within the ultra-Orthodox community there are different ways of belief, different groups among the ultra-Orthodox. Through reading and talking with my colleagues, I got to know pretty well who was what and what they thought was important.

Q: Was there a lot, using an American term, block busting of radical Orthodox Jewish people grabbing hunks of neighborhoods and trying to extend their ...?

DU CHATEAU: I'm not sure how that applies to the ultra-Orthodox. They lived in very definite neighborhoods in West Jerusalem, and any expansion was incremental, maybe from house to house, and those neighborhoods are very dense with lots of kids in every family. I know what you're asking, but the expansion of the ultra-orthodox wasn't that much of an issue then as it has become more recently. It's not the ultra-Orthodox that grabbed hunks of land, not necessarily, much of such activity came from people quite secular moving into Palestinian neighborhoods, and I have the sense that many were non-observant Jews.

I want to emphasize that I really loved living in Israel, but we were there in difficult times. I have a great deal of trouble with Israelis who were born in New York City of parents who were born in the U.S., let's say, and who move to Israel to live. Of course they get immediate Israeli citizenship, because they made *aliyah* to Israel. Then they go out and they establish settlements in the West Bank, because it's "their land" and they kick out Palestinians, or make life extraordinarily difficult for Palestinians who'd lived there for generations. I have a lot of difficulty seeing that as right and just.

But not everyone in Israel is like that. It's also true that many Israelis have a problem with settlers. The Peace Now movement was quite active when I was there. There was a group called

Women in Black who every Friday afternoon in Jerusalem before *shabbat*, they would meet in a silent protest against the occupation just up the street from the ACC.

Jerusalem starts to shut down on Friday around noon, all work stops around 2 or 3, but people are rushing to get things ready for *Shabbat*. And then of course everything starts again on Sunday morning, the start of the work week.

But people are out on early Friday afternoon, because they're buying to get ready for the evening. The Women in Black would be out, just up the hill towards prime minister's residence from my office and from where we lived, they'd be out there demonstrating, just silently carrying signs like "Get Rid of the Settlements." It was interesting to watch them and to watch the reaction of Israelis driving past. They were not always very nice, in fact frequently not.

So there's a tension in Israeli society. We had contacts with the whole range of West Jerusalem society, with the academics, the ministers, and the religious. We had contacts, through my staff, with the ultra-Orthodox. We had unofficial contact with the settlers. The sister of one of my staff was living in a West Bank settlement and would come to town every so often and swing past the ACC.

It is very bothersome to see Israelis in civilian clothes walking through Jerusalem with AK-47s, or whatever their have, over their shoulder or for people who are clearly settlers with weapons at their waist. It's very disturbing. I never got used to that. Anyone using the ACC had to check their weapons with our Israeli guard downstairs before coming in.

But, again, many Israelis cannot be lumped in here. It's a fifty-fifty kind of thing, or it was when I was there, the Israelis were quite divided about these things. Of course by now the settlements have expanded, so the situation is worse from my point of view.

Q: Being a former Soviet hand, what about the Soviet Jews? I know Russian society is not very susceptible to other groups and there's a lot of anti-Semitism there.

DU CHATEAU: Still is.

Q: And coming out of the Soviet Union, these are not the most tolerant groups.

DU CHATEAU: No, they're not. Natan Sharansky, for instance, who we worried about while I was in Moscow, he was talked about at every press brief, so finally he got out and of course became and still is, as far as I know, quite conservative, quite far out there on the Israeli right. What's one to make of that? Suppressed in one system, apparently supporting suppression in another.

I'd say, as a terrible generalization, that these new Israelis from Russia did tend to vote far to the right in Israeli political terms, and I think some of the most rightist politicians now in Israeli politics came out of the old country. I'm thinking of Avigdor Lieberman and his followers. Maybe it's a reaction against the anti-Semitism they grew up with. But you know, the U.S. has bred its Israeli radicals, too. Meir Kahane was quite the issue when we lived in Israel.

So anyhow the Russians started coming out while I was there. That would have been after 1991 when the Soviet Union fell apart. They were coming out, trickling out, before, but after 1991, after things fell apart and freer travel and emigration became possible, a lot of Russians came to Israel.

Here's a story – maybe I told it before. Anyhow, when I was getting rid of my car towards the end of my tour, I went down to the equivalent of the Department of Motor Vehicles there to finalize the sale of the car. I started in Hebrew, but then I did it all in Russian as the lady behind the desk, her Russian was better than her Hebrew, and so was mine. I think it is kind of fun to think about, this American diplomat and this new Israeli doing business in Russian.

And, again, I mentioned Kahane earlier, and Americans who move into settlements on the West Bank. When you think about it, the Soviet Jews who come to Israel, they are not that much different from some American Jews who come to live in Israel and end on the far right of things.

Q: I was a consular officer and I've been up against ethnic groups, starting with Germans who came back to Germany after the currency reform of '48, they'd left during the Depression, gone to the United States, got through World War Two, then they came back and they're pretty obnoxious and threw their weight around. I've dealt with other groups, Greek Americans, Yugoslav Americans and all.

The American Jews, I would think they would be pretty much wanting everything and more demanding than not. How did you find them?

DU CHATEAU: Well, again, because of my job, I didn't deal with these people that much. American services would be through the embassy in Tel Aviv or maybe the Jerusalem consulate. The consulate's consular section was on the other side of the Green Line, in East Jerusalem.

So I didn't deal with that every day. We did work with Americans coming in to the American Cultural Center, because we had American books and newspapers and VHS videotapes, and God bless them, that was fine. Occasionally somebody could get very demanding, but I don't know whether I'd want to say that this was any different than it could be anyplace else.

Q: How about sort of the really Orthodox Jews, the ones from New York that followed one of these rabbis who...

DU CHATEAU: Well, folks like Kahane, we didn't have anything to do with them. I'd read about them in the press, but on the job, my job, I wouldn't have anything to do with them. I didn't have to worry about them.

Mind you, my staff didn't want anything to do with them, either. They had no use for these people. My staff came to Israel to make a life, not to change the world into their image.

Q: You were running a cultural center, is that it? Okay, what did that mean?

DU CHATEAU: What did that mean? We were the best place, the best source, for information about the U.S. in our part of Israel, in Jerusalem, where the Israeli government was. We were a very good lending library, we'd do research for people in the Israeli government, and we distributed USG material. For example, and this has all gone away now, but back then we were still getting the Wireless File, that daily compilation of official material and press clippings that USIA sent out, and we distributed it by hand, by courier, to the prime minister's office, what have you.

Anybody who was coming to Israel for any kind of USG program, speakers, what have you, they would always come to Jerusalem and we would take them in to the foreign ministry or up to the university, wherever it was appropriate. I remember it well, I was with a visitor talking with the American Desk officer in the foreign ministry when my wife called, I guess it would have been through our 2-way radio with the ACC as we had no cell phones then, and asked where I had parked our car. That's when I found out that my car had been stolen from right in front of our house. But that is another story, interesting in its way about Israeli society then, and maybe we'll get to it. Anyhow, so we'd take visitors around, and we would be a part of any cultural or political program that the embassy in Tel Aviv was doing.

The bluegrass musician Alison Kraus is extremely well known now, but that wasn't always the case. I guess it would have been about 1988 or 1989 when she was on a tour with her group, Union Station, for the U.S. Information Agency. Hard to believe now that we could book someone like that. Anyhow, so the group was in Jordan playing in Amman and had to come to us. The easiest way to do this was by car. Our courier Sami and I down to the river Jordan with a big van, literally down to the river, to meet them. This really resonates when you think of the importance of the river Jordan in American gospel and country music. Because we had vehicle with diplomatic license plates and the right connections, we could down to the river beyond the military checkpoints, right to the border. So we brought Alison Kraus and her group across the river Jordan. That kind of sounds romantic, doesn't it.

And then I remember taking them through security checks. Israelis went through all their stuff as they would for anyone coming across the river from Jordan. The group's bass player, he had a real acoustic bass in this big case and he had to open it up. What do you know, there were all these dirty clothes packed around the bass. He was a little embarrassed.

Alison Kraus had a following in Jerusalem, to my surprise. We arranged a radio interview for her, and I remember the interviewer asking her why she quit classical violin and came to bluegrass because that's where Alison started, in classical, and she said, "because you can make mistakes." Later I took her and her group into the Old City. She especially wanted to see the Holy Sepulcher and Golgotha - o many songs she'd sung about these places and now she got to see them.

And all our visitors, any of these people, they always wanted to go around the Old City to see things and so I became a really good tour guide. I loved to do it because I was really interested in the history of the city. Golnar and I, and our daughters, we were always in the Old City, we felt very comfortable there, and we got to know where to go.

Then there would be the press part. When I first got to the ACC, I was disappointed that my job did not bring me in contact with the American or Israeli press, because I really enjoyed that part of my job in Moscow. But the IO, the Information Officer, down in Tel Aviv, that was his job and he wanted to make sure that he was the source of information. I guess that made sense.

Anyhow, the ACC did have an important press function. I don't know if I mentioned this, but maybe because of the *Intifada*, we had a constant stream of visits by secretaries of state or other important USG people, and we would arrange press conferences for them, whatever was needed. The consulate could not do it, and Tel Aviv was too far away. Often they were staying in town, usually at the King David Hotel, and we would run the press center for them there. Usually the SecState would be traveling with American press, so we would make sure they got the Wireless File and anything else needed. Occasionally I would take some of the American press into the Old City on a quick tour. And of course, we did transcripts of press conferences, but, I was so happy, I did not have to do the typing. My wonderful staff did them - I just proofed the transcript. It was such a relief after all those hours doing it in Moscow. They were really good at it, too.

Q: Did you feel that you were being monitored by Jewish opinion?

DU CHATEAU: Well, first of all, kind of apropos of that, everything had, still has, religious connotations in Israel, everything is seen through a religious prism, everything. It is a religious country, a country formed because of a religion. Everybody wants to know where you stand on any topic, but to do that, the first thing they want to know is, are you Jewish or not?

So rather than have that discussion or have anybody worry about it, I made sure everybody on my staff or otherwise knew where I came from on things, same as I did at FSI. I came out of a Christian background, I wasn't Jewish. I also made sure that they knew, ahead of time and didn't have to find out afterwards, that my wife is Muslim. She's about as religious as I am. She doesn't eat pork and that's about the extent of it, though she grew up in a religious household. Her parents were practicing Muslims.

But I just didn't want anybody to be embarrassed by assuming I was Jewish and basically agreed with the Israeli attitude toward Palestinians and Muslims, which tends to be rather harsh. So when I got there, I made sure my staff knew, and I have absolutely no doubt that this information went out around town immediately, who this guy was.

Q: Okay, let's talk a bit about that. How did you feel about the Palestinian cause?

DU CHATEAU: Well, you know, I've never been able to understand the Israelis, because the country was founded by people who were horribly persecuted in Europe, or people who came from Iran, South Africa, or other Middle Eastern countries, they didn't have life any easier there. Some of my staff came from this world.

I understand self defense, I have no problem with that and I've pretty well read into the history of Israel and certainly Jewish history in the 20th Century. But I have difficulty understanding the lack of empathy and the willingness to suppress other people. And the racism and discrimination

by people who were subject to it themselves. I understand security and I've been in Israel when it's under attack, but I'm bothered by that attitude. I don't understand it.

Palestinians haven't helped themselves a bit. They have lousy leaders. Arafat was terrible. They missed every opportunity to solve problems. Israel is not going away, you know. Hamas was not an issue when I was there, but it is now and that just makes things worse.

We adopted our younger daughter when she was 9 days old. She was born in Bikur Cholim hospital in West Jerusalem. We started the adoption process pretty soon after we got to Jerusalem, but it took about a year before everything became final. We adopted her through the Israeli adoption agency, whose office turned out to be a block or so up the street from where my office was. It couldn't be easier, in that sense. My daughter's birth mother was Palestinian, Muslim, and her birth father was Israeli, Jewish. That's all we know about her past.

But the point is another story about Israeli society, at least as it was then. Many Israeli Jews we met wanted to adopt children, but they could only adopt Jewish children, which in practice meant adopting from another country like Brazil as so few Jewish Israeli children were available for these people. Often they had to wait for years, and we heard some bitterness about the situation. I had to get a physical with an Israeli doctor before we adopted, and I remember his talking about this as he wanted to adopt. Anyhow, we got to the head of the line because our daughter's birth mother was not Jewish. I felt very uncomfortable with this, but we did not create the situation.

I think I may have mentioned that my wife worked in the consulate, in the West Jerusalem building, as the CLO, the community liaison officer. So we had to get a caregiver for our newborn Leyla. Like in Bulgaria, and in its way in Moscow, we found another wonderful, wonderful person, Huda Arnita, who has an Israeli passport, but who is Palestinian. We didn't talk politics, but we did hear when her brothers had a hard time of it, they would get hassled all the time. When we were working, Huda would take our little daughter to her home in the Old City. She lived just a block from the Holy Sepulcher. Our little girl would be surrounded by these wonderful Palestinian ladies all day. Her feet would never touch the ground.

On a daily basis, it's kind of like a lot of things in the United States, race relations in the U.S., in Washington DC, you read about things, but when are you looking at it right in front of you, you don't know the whole story of what's really going on.

Q: How about Americans coming to the cultural center and all? Did you have you sort of, you might say radical Americans?

DU CHATEAU: I don't recall that, no. I don't recall anything like that.

Q: How about the hand of the embassy?

DU CHATEAU: Well, we got along very well with the embassy, but it was downhill 40 miles away. They knew where we were, but they left us alone. A very light hand, I guess you'd say.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

DU CHATEAU: Ambassador Thomas Pickering was there when I first came, but he left after a year, maybe earlier. When ambassadors came up to Jerusalem for visits, I would be taking them around, I might be the embassy officer to accompany them, if there was no reporting to be done. Somebody has to be with them as the bag carrier, what have you, and that would be my role.

If they were coming up the hill to address a straight political issue, an embassy political officer would accompany them, they'd go directly into the foreign ministry and out, down the hill. But sometimes they were doing something else and I'd be around, perhaps they were up for dinner or something like that.

The rest of the embassy, if they needed help from us, they'd get it, or else they'd work directly with the consulate, if it was a consulate issue, a West Bank or Gaza Strip issue. I'd go down the hill for staff meetings once a week, if that.

Q: Did you get into the West Bank much?

DU CHATEAU: All over it.

Q: What did you observe there, sort of Israeli rule there?

DU CHATEAU: You'd be aware of the checkpoints, the observation posts. They were there in Jerusalem, all over the place in East Jerusalem. I remember them just below the Old City, in what is called the City of David, looking out over the Kidron Valley and Silwan. It was just the way life was.

We would drive through East Jerusalem and down the hill to the Dead Sea just to get out of town. You could go the southern route through Arab east Jerusalem, or you could drive up to the northern part of the city and drop down on the new road that lead directly to some settlements. From there you could drive up and down the Jordan River valley, north toward the Galilee, or you could drive along the Dead Sea down to Masada, and down to Eilat on the Red Sea. That was no problem, we always felt that it was safe, at least during daylight.

Driving on the West Bank itself, in the hills above the Jordan River valley and the Dead Sea, that was an issue. Bethlehem was fine, it is really not much of a walk from south Jerusalem, but below Bethlehem toward Hebron was not. Going on the roads up to Nablus or south to Hebron and further, the consulate did not like us going there. Because of the *intifada*, it really was not safe, even during daylight. The consulate liked to use armored cars when they moved around the West Bank.

I have driven all the way down the West Bank from Jerusalem through Hebron and down to Be'er Sheva with our unarmored Center station wagon. That may not have been a smart thing to do, but our courier Sami and I did it on a trip down to the university in Be'er Sheva. Otherwise we would have either gone down the Dead Sea route or more likely down toward the Mediterranean, which was longer, but safer. I only did that trip down through Hebron once.

My wife was on a so-called “small grants” committee in the consulate and, as such, she would visit projects of the West Bank on non-strike days. It would all be official and cleared in advance, and she’d go with a consulate driver in a consulate car. And she would bring me along. We got to meet some wonderful people that way. Other times, Phil Wilcox, the Jerusalem Consul General, would arrange trips for the consulate staff to places like Hebron, so I visited the tombs there.

You’re always aware of where you are and that you were not in friendly territory. So we never traveled on the West Bank after dark.

We lived and worked on the west side of Jerusalem, a different world from across the Green Line. When there were strike days, we were not supposed to go into East Jerusalem. It was supposed to be off limits to anyone from the embassy, which meant me, and there were enough other things to do that we didn’t do it, generally speaking. Although I do recall one time, there was a wonderful place where we got bread and something that’s called Armenian pizza in East Jerusalem, it was basically a hole-in-the-wall shop with a big oven and not much else, and we were in there on a day when maybe we shouldn’t be there, my whole family was with me, and here’s the consulate security officer coming in. I said, “You’re not supposed to be here.” She was getting bread, too. We laughed about it, that’s all.

So it wasn’t a problem. You just had to be well aware of where you were and what was happening around you. Jerusalem is divided into four quarters. The Jewish Quarter, that wasn’t an issue. The Armenian Quarter, there’s actually just the one road into the quarter. You can go into churches there, but there’s not much else, one pottery shop owned by the Sandroni brothers, that pizza place. The Christian Quarter, I was in there all the time. And the other areas, we wandered there all the time.

Q: Speaking of friendly and unfriendly things that you did, did you ever get mixed up with the priests looking after the various Christian shrines, the Ethiopians were fighting, the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Copts...

DU CHATEAU: No, I didn’t get mixed up in it although I was well aware of it. The Ethiopians were on top of the Holy Sepulcher, literally on the roof, and you’d go up there and see their village, a real African village on top of this old building that was built by the Crusaders. I’ve said that I’m not religious. I don’t count myself as Christian, but I do count myself as being well aware of what’s going on, as best I can. I’m one of those people that read books on religion, books by Karen Armstrong, for instance, or Elaine Pagels.

Anyhow, I’m not sure if I mentioned this, but my parents were very religious. They were Christian Scientists, very devout. Partially because of that, and more because of a lack of interest, I never had any dealings with priests of any kind, Catholic or Orthodox, in my life before I came to Jerusalem. I sure did in Jerusalem. There was one priest, Father Godfrey, who was kind of like “the priest to the consulate” in the sense that he just liked us, perhaps because we, like he, were American. He lived in a building that was just up the street from us at the ACC. He would come to all the consulate receptions - he’d be invited, I guess because he was just a very nice guy.

I remember one time, this would have been in the fall we got there, the consulate had a really neat Halloween party for the consulate kids, American and local staff, in the Consulate Residence building, this century old structure with thick stone walls. Father Godfrey was there dressed in his monastic robes, sitting quietly in the curve of a stairway, quiet, mostly in the dark, but he was holding a scary pumpkin. In his way, he was making fun of himself. He loved children. He loved little gadgets that did things. His rooms, which we visited, were full of them. Just a wonderful person, Father Godfrey, who unfortunately has since passed away here in Washington. He's buried in the Franciscan Monastery in northeast Washington.

Father Jerome Murphy O'Connor, a Dominican, fortunately very much with us still, was another important influence on me. He is an historian. Father Jerry. He lives and teaches at the École Biblique on Nablus Road a bit north of Damascus Gate. He's written much on the history of the Holy Land, including a terrific guidebook to the Holy Land, which I strongly recommend. So he really liked what the UN was trying to do in the Middle East, keep the peace, and the UN was all around us, of course, in Jerusalem. Also he had a great appreciation for the consulate and the cultural center, and certainly for the NGOs working to help people on the West Bank.

I doubt that he still is doing it, but at least to when we left Jerusalem, about once a month he would take us on guided tours to important historic places all over Jerusalem and all over Israel, although not much on the West Bank. You had to be able to get to the place in about a two hour drive or less. He did this roughly once a month on Saturdays. These were incredibly interesting trips, and again, they have had a big influence on my thinking. We would take lunch and make a day of it. I would backpack my little daughter on these walks. But if you were a regular Israeli, or from the Tel Aviv embassy, well, they weren't invited.

I came to very much appreciate these people. They made living there so much richer. So I knew the Jewish side of things and I had my Catholic friends, too. I guess I didn't have much to do with Protestants, though my older daughter went to the Anglican School in Jerusalem and we knew the teachers there. The Anglican School is quite the institution. It may have moved, but at the time it was housed in buildings the British built as a hospital, in the 1930s, I think, but maybe earlier. The classrooms were made of Jerusalem stone, quite beautiful but cold in the winter.

No, I'm wrong. We did get to know a Lutheran pastor at the Redeemer Lutheran Church in the Old City, Pastor Bergman. His son was in my older daughter's class in the Anglican School. So he baptized Leyla, my younger daughter that we adopted in 1989. I think it is quite wonderful, her baptism there. My aunt was able to come from the U.S., and the Shermans, Gil and Donna, were her godparents, Leyla's godparents.

The church is maybe 100 yards from the Holy Sepulcher, but it is a new building. The Germans built it in the 1890s, and the Kaiser came for the dedication ceremony. Funny, like I said, I'm not religious, but it has an emotional impact that Leyla was baptized in Jerusalem and is, at least formally, a Lutheran like her grandmother. She's the only one in my family who was baptized. We had to have her become officially Christian in order to complete the adoption. Everything is religion in Jerusalem, like I said.

And there's now one other neat connection, the kind I like. For the last 5 or 6 years, Golnar has

been a pre-school teacher at the Redeemer Lutheran Church in McLean. It's all fate, or something.

Q: It's a fascinating history. At one point I went into the Historian's Office and read all the consular letters and reports talking about the elders of the American Colony who would absorb the younger wives of members into their coterie. It was dirty old men rule for quite a while.

Talk a bit about the intifada, what happened while you were there?

DU CHATEAU: Oh, but first the American Colony. You know the American consul in Jerusalem back then hated that group, so consider the source. This was when, the 1920s maybe? Anyhow, watch out for what you read. It may have been all about religion, for all I know, as the so-call Colony was established by some religious, I guess you could call them radicals. They established a hospital that, I believe, is still in use inside the Old City. But more important, they moved to a building to the north of the Old City that is now just east of the Green Line and is a wonderful hotel, and it's still owned by the descendants of the Spafford family that established the Colony, I think. We'd go there for Saturday or Sunday brunch often. They also had the only swimming pool in Jerusalem that we felt like going to. The kids loved it.

Well, anyhow, the *intifada*. The *intifada* kept on going, it was just a constant thing to be aware of. Its main effect on us was travel on the West Bank or in the Old City. It was mainly then passive resistance to Israel rule in East Jerusalem and especially on the West Bank. Settler cars would be stoned, sometimes Israelis would be hurt, and Israelis would fire back. And Palestinians would be killed. It was a constant background, this violence.

But I think more vivid in my memory, certainly, is the first Gulf War. It is not related to the *intifada* in any way, but certainly was something that got our attention at the time.

Q: Okay, how did that impact on you all?

DU CHATEAU: Oh, immediately and completely. We know how it all came out, now, so that's fine and dandy, but nobody knew what was going to happen at the time. There was a long run up to the Gulf War, you may recall. December 1990 was particularly interesting, with lots of threats around and lots of speculation, but we continued to operate normally in the ACC. I recall setting up a program for my FSI professor, Dr. Reich, during November or December, and of course all we talked about was what Saddam and Israel would do.

During that period, of course, we had, inside the embassy and consulate, our own long buildup. First of all there was a drawdown of staff, people could leave voluntarily if they wanted to. I didn't want to leave and my wife didn't want to leave. We felt safe in Jerusalem and anyhow we had no place to go in the U.S.

In Jerusalem, what was happening was a lot of the religious folk, mostly the ultra-Orthodox living in northern Jerusalem it seemed, they suddenly realized that they were Americans. They came out of the woodwork, these Americans, and registered with the consulate. There was a lot of Xeroxing going on, too much for the consulate, so we just took on a lot of it to try to help.

There was just such a volume of people coming in.

These were Americans who came to live in Israel, usually ultra-Orthodox, but not necessarily, though I do recall lots of black coats and black hats. I think that they were convinced that we would have an airplane to take them out when things got bad.

During this whole period, the Israelis were getting ready too, and their big issue was gas attack. There was a very big fear of gas attacks. Saddam had threatened it and the Israelis took him at his word. So eventually we were issued gas masks. My little daughter, who was maybe 18 months old at that time, she had a plastic cage-like thing, because she was too young, too small, for a mask. The three older people in the family, we all had masks. The Israeli government issued them, but I think we got them through the consulate. Eventually we had to give them back, which was too bad as they were an interesting souvenir. Guzel had to take hers to school every day, of course, and she decorated the gas mask box quite nicely.

The masks were an issue, because a significant part of the population in Israel is Arab and they are Israeli citizens. They did not get gas masks. So that was constantly discussed and added to the tension. I think they eventually got them, but I don't know, I no longer recall. Of course no one on the West Bank got them and I seem to recall some problems inside the Old City.

We had them, we had to go through instruction on how to use them. We also had to make a so-called sealed room in the apartment, a place that we were supposed to go to when under attack. So we got the plastic sheeting and tape and sealed up a room just so we could say to those that worried about this stuff that we had done it. I strongly remember thinking that this was a farce, that there was no way to protect ourselves from gas. It would get everywhere. But we did it.

So December and January 1991 there's this constant rise in tension. Then the war started on January 17, and we watched it on Israeli television. The first missiles went over the next day, heading for Tel Aviv, and at that point, we were told that everybody except for very essential personnel were supposed to get out.

It wasn't that simple. There were no planes, or no space on places down at the Tel Aviv airport, so people from the Tel Aviv embassy came up through Jerusalem and went by bus down to be evacuated by a U.S. government plane from the southern desert area, an airport down there, a military airport down there. A lot of embassy people left.

Q: I'm told that one of the things on Israeli TV was all of these Orthodox, with the dreadlocks and the hats and all, getting the hell out.

DU CHATEAU: Well, they tried to get out on El Al. It must have been horrible for the people running the airport in Tel Aviv, Ben Gurion Airport. Yeah, but I wouldn't want to say it was just the ultra-Orthodox. A lot of people got out. Certainly all the tourists had long since left.

It's interesting. Around this of course is the problem of dual nationalism and loyalty. I felt that constantly in the air. Americans who were living in Israel who were part of the Israeli military, they didn't leave. People who were in the country for just purely religious reasons probably had

a little bit less attachment to Israel as a political body, to the government, which the extreme ultra-Orthodox didn't recognize, anyhow. Their motivations were different.

Phil (Philip) Wilcox, he was the Jerusalem consul general at the time and my wife, who was the consulate CLO, community liaison officer, worked very closely with him. We were instructed to pack up our bags and meet down at the West Jerusalem building consulate that evening. We were going to go get on that bus that was taking people from Tel Aviv down to that field in the Negev. We were not essential.

So I shut down the center. I talked to all my staff and explained the situation, that I had orders, told them to just go home and I'll be back whenever, we just closed the place down. I was extremely conflicted about doing this. I was very comfortable living where I was, even with missiles coming over. One always takes chances in life, you do it every day driving down the road, and being in Jerusalem, which was not a target, I wasn't all that worried. I did not feel threatened any more than any Israeli did, than my staff did. I just didn't buy it at all. I couldn't see Saddam attacking Jerusalem. My wife was a little bit more concerned, but I think it's because of the children.

So we went down to the consulate with our luggage, and we sat around waiting. We sat around there and we were very unhappy, because we didn't want to leave at all. I felt very guilty about leaving my staff, I didn't think that was right. We had no place to go in the US, either. This was looking like a disaster coming.

And then after an hour or two Phil came down and said, "Well, you know, I've got permission that anybody who wants to stay here can." I guess it was Ambassador Brown that made the decision, I don't know, but I'm sure that Phil Wilcox was lobbying for us. And so we were very happy. I couldn't thank Phil enough for letting us stay. They brought around a van and we went home. I remember Simon, a consulate driver, I think he was originally from Australia, anyhow he told us how happy he was that we were staying.

Cindy, Phil Wilcox's wife had to leave. One of the communicators in the consulate had a young son, maybe in his early teens, and someone had to be with him on the flight, so Cindy did it, took him to the US. Apparently the trip was just horrible: it took forever to get down there to the airfield in the Negev, there were air raid warnings while they were driving down there that evening, and she couldn't get back for months, as I recall.

This is horrible to say, but in a strange way it turned out to be a good time - you know it was a wonderfully calm and quiet time up in Jerusalem. Everybody had left. All the tourists were gone. The East Jerusalem consulate offices had to be closed down and we were just working with minimal staff. Of course and it was scary for people down in Tel Aviv because the missiles were going towards it. We would hear the sonic boom as they came over.

I let my staff know I was back in town, that I wasn't going anywhere, which made me feel very, very good. We were in touch with each other, but there was no work we could do. I had things to do in the center and I could record the news on videotape for the consulate. We had a satellite disk on the roof to take down television and a good recording system.

It was a time when we could walk everywhere in the city, it was so quiet. One time, towards the end of the war, we went down to Masada with one of my daughter's friends. Her parents were Mennonites who were living in Jerusalem and in charge of an NGO on the West Bank.

And it was eerie, because there was of course very little traffic on the road. But as we were driving south down towards Masada, along the Dead Sea, we were down, right next to the water and there are cliffs over to our right, to the west, and we looked over and we saw an Israeli jet flying very low, very slow, below the horizon, ducking behind buttes, and it was just eerie to see, it was fascinating.

So we went through a lot of air raid alarms, they came most evenings. When the sirens went off, you were supposed to go to your sealed room that I mentioned. The sealed room, we put plastic up on the windows, we sealed it down with brown tape and then we put wet towels around the door. We were supposed to stay in there until there was an all clear and we were supposed to put our gas masks on as well.

After a while we got pretty used to this. We used to go into the sealed room, which was actually little Leyla's bedroom with her crib and all, and we older folk played Hearts and we didn't put on the gas masks and my little daughter would go to sleep in her crib. The three of us had a running game of Hearts and so that's what we did.

And we had our communications radio, we were part of the consulate security net and so they'd call us up for a radio check and we'd say, "Yeah, we're here" and then they would report on what was happening as they learned it. And then "All clear" and then we'd go out and go on watching TV.

The Israelis had a code in Hebrew, which everybody knew, I mean, it wasn't trying to be a secret, of "an airstrike's imminent" and then "go to your sealed rooms" and then "all clear." So you see I've got this tee shirt on today that I got during the war, it's an Israeli tee shirt. And to describe it for the tape, what this tee shirt is, it's got three squares on it and the first one shows a snake, the first square on top, and underneath it in Hebrew is written "venomous snake" and it was what they'd say on the radio to announce that there's an attack coming, that missiles have been launched. And then the second box here in the middle has, it's pretty appropriate as it looks like my family, it has a bunch of people with gas masks, including a little one, a little child in a gas-proof cage, here and it's labeled in Hebrew "patriots." And the third one shows an open sky and that's "all clear." Those were the three parts of Israeli air raid announcements over the regular AM and FM radio during an attack.

Q: Patriots were an anti-missile missile.

DU CHATEAU: They came in to the Tel Aviv embassy, these American anti-missile people, all in uniform. They practically took over the embassy, but then so many regular embassy people had left. They ran the mailroom. The American military was all over the place.

Anyhow, after a time you got used to this stuff, this new way of living, and life went on. So I

went down for meetings in the embassy, or to send mail or something like that and I'd go past these fields of these ground-to-air missiles deployed along the Jerusalem to Tel Aviv main highway. As far as I know, they didn't work, but they were there, a lot of military, American military. It made everybody feel good and I guess that's important.

I recall one time very strongly. In the run-up and at the beginning of the war, our main worry was that the Israelis would go it alone and retaliate against Iraq for its missile strikes. Everybody knows the outcome to the war now, but that sure wasn't clear after the missiles started to fly. The Israeli way is to not allow any other country to inflict damage on Israel. We knew about this, it was a constant discussion, what would happen, what would the Israelis do. As I recall, my staff thought they would bomb, and then things would get seriously out of hand. Remember, we all had our gas masks and SCUD missiles were coming in.

And so Secretary of State Eagleburger, I guess he was deputy secretary then, he came to town. Harry Sindel, an Israeli colleague from the center who was in charge of audio-visual stuff, and I were outside the prime minister's office, staking it out, to see if there would be any statement following Eagleburger's meeting. We had to be there because that was our job, but I recall also that we were a little worried because the day was getting late and the missiles could come.

It was a very, very worrisome few hours, to find out what the Israelis would do. Shamir was the prime minister at the time and he was under a lot of pressure to strike, but ultimately he did not.

Later that day of course Eagleburger gave a press conference, it would have been at the King David Hotel, I think, which we recorded, and then we sent the transcript back to the U.S. It was quite a relief that the Israelis decided not to do anything for the time being. I think that was about the time our Patriot missiles came in. It would have been real interesting had the Israelis attacked – who knows what would have happened, I can't imagine.

As it happened, I think the missiles only did some physical damage in Israel. I don't recall that anyone died from being hit, but I could be wrong. But they were dangerous. I think there was a bad hit on Saudi Arabia where lots of people died.

Q: I've interviewed various people about this period. Our effort was to keep the Saudis mobilized and keep the Israelis out of the war.

And the gas mask thing, an awful lot of hanky panky went on. The military and CIA were distributing gas masks to their people, but not to the rest of the embassy and they were trying to do it surreptitiously, which of course didn't work.

DU CHATEAU: I don't recall that. We didn't have any problem with it in Jerusalem.

Q: There were big problems around...

DU CHATEAU: We stayed there and the Anglican school continued to function and my daughter, my older daughter, I'd take her over to the school, drive her over, but the only way she could go to school was with her gas mask. So she'd go with her gas mask in a box, which she

decorated, she'd put in on table outside the classroom and then everything went on. It became a new kind of normal life.

I think I said that my beard was quite full before the war, kinda bushy. In order to wear a gas mask, I had to cut my beard way back and so I did. It still wouldn't have worked as gas would have leaked in, but it made everyone feel good. I wonder what the ultra-Orthodox men did? It must have been a problem.

We continued in Jerusalem another year after that, went back to normal operations, as before.

I want to emphasize, I was so glad I was able to stay there with my staff. I felt really bad when it looked like I was going to be forced out and they, my staff, would stay. I didn't like that at all. I couldn't thank Phil Wilcox enough for giving us the possibility to stay.

Q: What about relations with Jordan and Jordanians while you were there?

DU CHATEAU: Well, formally there was a cold peace, so it was fairly easy to drop down to Jericho, to the Jordan River, and cross to Jordan. Israelis of course couldn't go in that direction, or at least didn't do it. I can't recall if there were formal problems or if it was just uncomfortable to travel to Jordan for an Israeli. We could travel over there, no problem. We went all the time, went down to Allenby Bridge and brought visitors over.

I was only able to arrange a trip over to Jordan once. Golnar and I wanted to travel around in Jordan. We couldn't go to Damascus directly from Israel with our Israeli visas in our passports, but we could go to Jordan directly from Israel - that was no problem, Israeli visas in our passports were not an issue.

We had a trip arranged, we were going to go down to Petra and look at the ruins, travel in the desert, maybe get down to Aqaba. This was in the spring before we adopted our daughter, in 1989, so it would be in the first year we were there and doggone it, they, the Jordanians, had some kind of insurrection in southern Jordan and we couldn't go down there. So we never got to Petra, at least not yet.

But that trip we went to places up in the north of Jordan and out to the desert to the east. We were there during Ramadan, and the hotel we stayed at in Amman had an enormous tent in its courtyard for the evening feast, *iftar*.

Again, we could travel over land to Egypt, no problem at all. No problem using our diplomatic passports with Israeli visas. We drove down to Mount Sinai - just an incredible trip. I fondly recall staying at a beautiful hotel just across the border in Egypt, a place where some terrorists came ashore and shot things up a few years later.

Q: Did you go to Christmas and Easter services there?

DU CHATEAU: I did, in Jerusalem, you mean. We made a point to visit churches on holy days, just to observe. Once, it must have been around Easter, we were outside the Holy Sepulcher and

watched the lighting the Holy Fire. That was an experience. We were able to get a place above the courtyard in front of the entrance to the Holy Sepulcher, so we had no trouble being down in the packed crowd in front of the church entrance. Just being here and watching everything that went on was very interesting. A tremendous number of people were out there, thousands maybe crammed in there in the courtyard. It's not uncommon for people to get crushed in the crowd.

Christmas Day we would go down to Bethlehem. It was a kind of tradition with us. Of course the night before, Bethlehem would be packed with people for the midnight service - you could see it on television - but on Christmas day it would be quiet, deserted.

One time I remember driving down, it was raining some, and there was a beautiful rainbow over the area where, traditionally, the Shepherd's Fields were located. It all came together, that special area, beautiful rainbow, a double rainbow actually, it seemed very, very magical. One does not have to be religious to appreciate the symbolism, the event.

I think it was a week or so before our last Christmas there, we went on a tour of the Bethlehem area with Father Jerry, I think I mentioned him earlier. He ended the trip with a prayer in the church there near Shepherd's Fields. I'm not religious, but it's something to remember. Obviously I haven't forgotten.

But going to the church there in Bethlehem on Christmas day, it's quiet, you just look around and think. It was beautiful.

RICHARD T. MCCORMACK
Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs
Washington, DC (1989-1991)

Ambassador McCormack was born in Bradford, Pennsylvania and educated at Georgetown University and University of Fribourg. He was the United States Ambassador to the Organization of American States from 1985-1989 and the United States Undersecretary of State for Economic and Agricultural Affairs from 1989-1991. The Ambassador was interviewed in 2002 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: What was the situation in Saudi Arabia vis-a-vis our interests at that point?

McCORMACK: It was of course, a very complicated situation. In the 1967 War, Israel expanded its borders.

Q: This was known as the Six-Day War?

McCORMACK: Yes, Israel expanded its borders considerably. There were some in Israel who wanted to have that expansion permanent, which was widely resented in the Arab world. So when an opportunity arose to strike back at Israel with the help of the Russians, a war was organized in 1973 to attack Israel. This attack was an astonishing thing to the Israelis, and for

some few days it appeared successful. But for the tactical mistakes of the Syrian army after their original breakthrough near the Golan Heights, they could have driven on through to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. But instead the Syrian tank armies just circled around under the Golan Heights for two days. By then we were able to provide Israel with enough new weapons to deal with the military crisis they were facing. The Russians not only provided the Arabs with advice, they also provided them with anti-aircraft missiles and all sorts of other things.

Q: Very effective.

McCORMACK: In any case, you had the 1967 Six-Day War, which was a great success for the Israelis. Then you had the 1973 War, which was a disaster. Eventually the Israelis won, but they suffered terrible losses. The Arabs basically felt that the Americans had helped the Israelis in their hour of need, and they threatened us with an oil embargo unless some kind of settlement between Israel and the Palestinians occurred. They confiscated the holdings of the American oil companies in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. We wound up with an enormous problem. So I went to the Treasury to work on this complex of issues.

In those early days, there were three different theories about what to do about soaring oil prices and OPEC. You had one group of strategists from the outside. Ed Luttwak, for example, wanted to go in with military force to seize Arab oil. He and his friends wrote many articles urging this policy. That was one option. The second option was to do nothing about the increase in the price of oil, which was putting increasing strain on many economies in the world, and simply let one or two major countries go bust. As one man said ironically, "Use the corpse of Italy to flog OPEC into being more reasonable on oil prices." That too was rejected.

The third option was to take the oil dollars and recycle them to other countries using our banks, to prevent the Arabs from directly using the money themselves to extract political leverage. In the meantime, the plan was to encourage as much oil production as possible in as many different places as possible so as to create a supply and demand situation that would no longer allow OPEC to have the clout on prices that it did. It was the third plan that was eventually launched and implemented.

In the Treasury Department, there was a young Assistant Secretary close to Secretary Simon, who was my direct superior. For various reasons, he and I did not enjoy a warm personal relationship. So I returned to the White House and worked at the trade office on a major commodity policy initiative.

The broader situation at Treasury did not improve, however, and press leaks documented an ugly series of personal and policy disputes, spiced by the occasional candid camera incident that lasted until a White House ultimatum stopped the leaks.

Q: Are there any other issues or events you want to record?

McCORMACK: Yes, the Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG) working on the Israeli economy was a challenging part of my job as Under Secretary. Fortunately, I had the services of Dr. Herbert Stein to advise and support me in this effort. He was a truly remarkable man. Not

only was Stein an advisor, but he was also a friend, whose friendship lasted until he passed away years later. This special joint group was originally set up to help stabilize the Israeli economy after the large inflation in Israel in the early 1980s, which nearly destroyed the banking system. Herb Stein was then the coordinator of that process under Shultz. When I became Under Secretary, I asked Stein to continue to work with me.

In the 1980s, the U.S. eventually wound up giving a billion dollars to Israel to try to get their finances back in shape after the train had jumped the rails. The JEDG tried to encourage sound economic policies while creating a better and more favorable economy and a climate for business and investment. As you know, Israel was founded by a group of idealistic socialists. So there were all kinds of egalitarian processes built into the Israeli economy beginning with the kibbutz movement and the powerful labor union organizations. But it constipated business and investment.

During this period, Jacob Frankel who was chief economist of the IMF, came to see me and said that he was being considered as the Head of the Bank of Israel. I appealed to him to do it. Frankel was one of the ablest economists I had worked with. There were elections coming up. Prime Minister Shamir naturally wanted to be re-elected. None of us, however, wanted a repeat of Menachem Begin's boom and bust.

When I left government in 1991, I went to the Woodrow Wilson Center and spent the next year writing papers on economic reforms for the Israeli economy. I delivered my reports to audiences in Israel and emphasized also how important defeating inflation and promoting a successful peace process was to future investment and prosperity in Israel. These presentations received a great deal of local media attention.

When Frankel left many years later from the Bank of Israel, there was almost no inflation in the country, and the business climate had dramatically improved.

CHARLOTTE ROE
Labor Attaché
Tel Aviv, Israel (1989-1991)

Ms. Roe was born and raised in New York State and educated at the University of Colorado, the Sorbonne and Ohio State University. During and after her university training she was involved in political and labor activities. In 1983 she joined the Foreign Service. In the course of her career with the State Department, Ms. Roe served in La Paz, Santiago, Tel Aviv, Budapest and Bogotá, primarily in the political and labor fields. In Washington, she served on the US Mission to the OAS and in the International Organizations and Environmental and Scientific Affairs Bureaus. Ms. Roe was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Turning to Israel now, you were there from when to when?

ROE: I was in Israel from August 1989 to July 1990, when I took another hard-to-fill assignment in Colombia. I arrived in Tel Aviv after a month of area studies at FSI.

Q: Your job was what?

ROE: I was labor attaché.

Q: Who was the Ambassador at that time?

ROE: William Brown was Ambassador and Mark Parris was deputy Chief of Mission. Mike Metrinko, the consul general, had been one of the hostages in Tehran during the Iranian revolution.

Q: Now, how would you put the status of American-Israeli relations when you arrived?

ROE: Israeli-U.S. relations have been intertwined since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The U.S. is Israel's largest trading partner. We carry out joint military planning exercises. We have cooperative institutions in many scientific and technical areas. The political and cultural ties are so close we sometimes seem like members of the same family. Tel Aviv is one of the "special relationship" posts like Mexico City and London where you have a galaxy of eyes watching everything you do, and the policy is mostly determined out of Washington.

Q: While you were there, what were our interests in the labor movement?

ROE: Histadrut (the Israeli labor federation) has been a major player in the country's economy and political landscape since the earliest days of nation-building. It's a trade union and social movement, but also the largest employer after the government. Histadrut has operated the largest industrial conglomerates, the second largest bank, the transportation and building trades and insurance enterprises. Several of these firms including Koor were in fiscal crisis. Histadrut ran the biggest national health care and day care services. It coordinated the agricultural cooperatives – the iconic kibbutzim and moshavim – which were also facing tough times. Its regional institutes cultivate strong connections with developing countries especially in Africa and Latin America. In 1989 the federation represented nearly 60 percent of the adult population. Its 1.6 million members included 247,000 Israeli Arabs and Druze. Some 15 percent of the Histadrut are non-Jews. Housewives belong as well as students.

Q: You didn't have to have a job to join it.

ROE: It's like a big tent. The day workers who come from Gaza and the West Bank pay discounted Histadrut dues and are entitled to representation on the job, but since they're not legal residents, they couldn't be members. The federation mirrors Israeli society and consciousness. Shortly after I arrived, I monitored the Histadrut national elections in November 1989. Israeli political parties contested the elections to Histadrut's leadership conference as well as to the 72 local labor councils. These contests were closely watched as a bellwether for the parliamentary elections of 1990. I recruited Aubrey Hooks, the top econ officer, to join me in covering the balloting. He's a Hebrew speaker, and the process fascinated him.

Q: Whither Aubrey Hooks?

ROE: The Hooks were my sponsors in Tel Aviv. Aubrey went on to be consul general and DCM in Warsaw and is currently Ambassador in Azerbaijan.

Q: What was your impression of this labor federation? You have something that's a huge organization, delving into all sorts of social activities. How effective is it and how bureaucratic has it become and does it deliver?

ROE: When Labor Zionists led by David Ben-Gurion developed a centralized economic infrastructure to support the new state of Israel, they made Histadrut into a quasi-state institution. Over time the organization had become ossified and deeply indebted. Histadrut General Secretary Israel Kessar was a Labor Party leader and a member of the Knesset (Israeli Parliament). Going to call on him was almost like calling on the president of the country. Kessar was an Israeli Yemenite, the first non-Ashkenazi to be elected to this key position. He and many of his officers didn't speak English. I hadn't received Hebrew training, except for a few classes I took at the end of my tour in Santiago. At formal meetings we spoke through an interpreter, who often put his own spin on the conversation. My position was not language-designated, and I strongly recommended that this be changed. Later it was.

Q: Was there a reason for this? Was Histadrut a stronghold of the Zionist movement?

ROE: Historically, yes. The old guard of Histadrut was the successor generation to the Mapai, the Zionist father of the modern Labor party. You had interlocking directorates between Mapai and Histadrut, although this started to break down in the 1970s and 80s. Labor was losing its hegemony as the dominant political party with successive waves of Sephardic immigrants. Unlike the Ashkenazim, the Sephardim were not from northern and eastern Europe and Russia. Many are descended from Jews who were exiled from Spain in the 1400s and settled in Turkey, southeastern Europe, North Africa and other Middle Eastern countries.

Q: Such as Yemen and Morocco—

ROE: Yes. Originally, Ashkenazi meant a person who spoke Yiddish, a dialect of German, and Sephardim meant someone who spoke Ladino, the ancient Judeo-Spanish dialect. Many of the older generation still converse in Ladino. It's a beautiful language that helped my husband and I connect with many Israelis of this heritage.

Histadrut was like an overgrown, paternalistic company. Like Israel itself, it was troubled, defensive, fractious, composed of hundreds of little kiosks run by resourceful technicians, intellectuals and political survivors who are internationalists at heart. One of the more interesting parts of Histadrut is its African institute that has trained local activists and supports local movements for democratic change throughout the continent. Histadrut was crying out for reform. In June 1989, the federation approved a reform blueprint written by Professor Avraham Friedman that called for privatizing many of the Histadrut-owned enterprises and building a more horizontal, democratic trade union structure. Not surprisingly, implementation of the plan

was stalled.

Another thorny issue was the relationship of Histadrut to West Bank and Gaza workers. Before my assignment, the Department raised the idea of a dialogue with Palestinian unions, an issue that previous labor attachés apparently saw as the kiss of death. My trade union experience gave me confidence in encouraging the initiative within Histadrut, but naturally there was resistance. Israel Kessar took the stance that “we can’t meet with them because the law says no dealings with the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization).” He took it for granted that any Palestinian union leader would be part of the political structure and not independent. Now, West Bank and Gaza workers in Israel were charged a 1 percent agency fee in exchange for getting union contract and grievance representation. In practice they received little protection. Unofficially, Histadrut officers acknowledged that this was a compelling reason for dialogue.

In March 1990 Tony Freeman, State’s Special Assistant for Labor Affairs, visited Israel to initiate the first high-level Department contact with Palestinian unions. We coordinated the trip with the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem. Our encounters with leaders of the West Bank Palestinian Trade Union Federation (WBPFTU) were memorable. In Nablus, we observed a hotly contested local union election in a shoe factory and later met with WBPFTU leader Shahir Saad, whose organization was founded in 1920. Saad, who defined himself as a moderate, appreciated the chance to open a new door. We asked why he affiliated with the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) instead of the WFTUF (the communist-oriented World Federation of Trade Unions). He said it was the only way to go, because the ICFTU stands for democratic trade unionism and peaceful social change. Saad’s action’s supported this stance.

At the time, Saad was restricted by a travel ban. After the visit, I wrote Histadrut asking for their help in lifting the ban. In August 1990, Histadrut set up a legal aid office for workers from the occupied territories. Within the next year, the Israeli ban on contacts with the PLO was lifted, and Histadrut began a dialogue with the WBPFTU. I counted these small steps as an important gain in Israel.

An aside -- Tony Freeman later served as Director of ILO’s Washington office from 1994-2004. In that capacity, and after his retirement, I worked closely with him on many issues including labor standards in trade legislation and worker rights in Cuba. He never lost his zeal in fighting for working people and defending their freedom to contract and speak truth to power. Tony passed recently -- a shock and sorrow to everyone who knew him and his joie de vivre. He was a mentor, a friend, a hero to me.

Q: Did you have the feeling that our labor policy and labor attachés had been a little too much in the pocket of the Israelis, and so this opening up to these others, they say well, you can do it but imply that we’d rather you didn’t. I’m just wondering whether or not you got that feeling.

ROE: It’s clear I was skating into unknown territory. Histadrut’s leaders assume you are on their side. When you raise new ideas, such as the need for dialogue with the West Bank & Gaza trade unionists, you need to be very insistent that you’re speaking for the U.S. government. Whether in an informal lunch meeting with Israel Kessar and his colleagues or an official state visit, every

word is carefully weighed and registered.

The Middle Eastern area studies program at FSI helped me do some soul-searching. I identified strongly with the Jewish experience. In 1974, a year after the Yom Kippur war, when I first visited Israel, it was a different country. Back then I had wondered if the U.S. policy of even-handedness was fair, and if we shouldn't do more to support Israel. Then in 1989 I read Tom Friedman's book *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. The book and my Israel experience were eye-openers. Twenty-three years of occupation had transformed the country. Both Israelis and Palestinians seemed to be living on a knife's edge. The U.S. wants to be an honest broker in the conflict, but we lose that standing when we don't engage consistently. It's difficult to discuss the issues fairly when AIPAC is such a powerful influence on the Congress and the news media.

Q: This is the American Israeli Political Action Committee—

ROE: AIPAC is very vocal, well organized, single-minded and nationalistic. Many believe this lobby does not speak for the mainstream of American Jewry. Its saber-rattling hurts those in Israel and the U.S. trying to work for peaceful solutions. I worked with many U.S.-based Jewish organizations in Israel who are quite critical of AIPAC's role. The situation with Histadrut is different. They're dedicated marketeers. The Israeli labor attaché in Washington offered Hector a job as an auto mechanic before he got there. The only hitch is that the government wouldn't give him a work permit – even though the U.S. grants work permits to family members of Israeli diplomats hassle-free under our reciprocity agreement. That was a telling glimpse into the country's bureaucratic labyrinth. Instead, Hector worked for the Colombian ambassador, Edmundo Esquinazi. Esquinazi was a self-made millionaire, a Turkish-born Sephardic Jew who found Israeli culture and business dealings to be challenging in extremis. He was generous with his staff, and couldn't do enough for Hector.

Q: In a way, you've got two masters. You've got the State Department. You also have to a certain extent the American labor movement.

ROE: The Department sets the policy, but labor has historically had a strong and respected voice in this area and human rights in general.

Q: The American labor movement particularly at the top and certainly at intellectual levels has a very strong Jewish participation. This goes back from the very beginning of labor history. Did you find that the Jewish element within the labor movement had a thrust that was different than AIPAC or was it a creature of AIPAC?

ROE: The AFL-CIO is no pawn of AIPAC, and I've always felt that Jewish intellectual input in labor – in any organization – is a real strength. Under AFL-CIO presidents Meany and Kirkland and now Sweeney, American labor has been very engaged on the Israel issue. This stems from labor's World War II era efforts to help resettle and rescue refugees, especially those threatened by the Holocaust. My experience gave me the sense that the occupation was eroding Israel's identity. Not many in the AFL-CIO leadership shared that view, but then again, American labor is not monolithic.

Shortly before my assignment started, the CWA (the Communication Workers International union) planned to hold a meeting in Jerusalem. CWA requested my participation. Our consul general in Jerusalem said if I attended it would imply U.S. support for moving the Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (a long-standing Israeli goal). I quickly learned how sensitive these issues can be. AFL-CIO doesn't heed those nuances.

Q: Did they have a meeting in Jerusalem?

ROE: They went ahead, but I couldn't go, and since no one attended from the consulate, it went unreported.

Q: What about the contacts in Gaza and the West Bank. Is this more or a less the realm of our consulate general in Jerusalem? Was this strictly off limits for you?

ROE: It wasn't my usual area, but I visited the West Bank and Gaza on several occasions. The Arabic-speaking human rights officer, John Chamberlain, covered Gaza from Tel Aviv. I coordinated my activities and reporting with respect to West Bank unions with the consulate. Relations with the consul general (CG) were testy at first, because I started out by pressing for answers concerning the CWA initiative. But I understood their concerns, and soon developed a closer relationship with the CG.

Q: Who was that?

ROE: Phil Wilcox -- a very knowledgeable, straight-talking diplomat. He's now working with the Foundation for Middle East Peace.

Q: Did you get a feel for how Arabs were treated in West Bank and Gaza?

ROE: Yes. The intifada (the Palestinian uprising against the occupation) began in the late 1980s, adding fuel to an already grim, conflictive situation. In 1990 over 100,000 Arab workers from the occupied territories worked in Israel. Their labor rights were barely protected and their movements frequently restricted for security reasons. Arab labor contributed to Israel's prosperity. Palestinians watched the growth of Israeli settlements that lock in the occupation, making them exiles from their own land. More are turning to the politics of vengeance.

Israeli Arabs have their own political parties in the Knesset and their own caucus within the Labor Party. They comprise nearly twenty percent of the population and make up over fifteen percent of Histadrut membership. The U.S. Information Service (USIS) had a traveling library that regularly visited Arab villages in Israel. They would invite me to talk on safety net programs in the U.S., how the social security system works, the status of Arab-Americans in the U.S., and other socio-economic issues. Back then, most Israeli Arabs had a cordial regard for the U.S. and some understanding of our role in the Middle East. They identified with the Palestinian cause, but felt rooted in Israel. They faced a lot of discrimination, and their towns had scant resources. Arab-speaking and Jewish children could not attend school together.

Richard Israelovitch, the senior social scientist at Beersheba University, invited me to visit the

campus. Richard directed the Israeli bird watching society and also headed the Hubert Humphrey Institute at the university. His associate, Ismael Abu Saad, was the only Bedouin in Israel to earn a post-doctoral degree. Ismael's wife Kathy was a leader in the human rights association fighting for the rights of Bedouins. Hector and I went to Abu Saad's brother's wedding during our last weekend in Israel and observed something I'll never forget. When we arrived at the wedding which was in a small town near Beersheba, we saw a lot of camels in a tiny plot. Their owners, who were relatives of the Saads, had a parcel of land to the south of Tel Aviv. The husband was doing business outside of Tel Aviv, and his wife was manning their shop in the market near where they lived. Without warning, the Israeli "green police" came along and forced them to take all their animals and return to their relatives' place in Beersheba. The authorities claimed the family had no rights to the land, even though they owned clear title. The Israelis not only forcefully moved them, but also make them pay exorbitantly for the transportation of the camels and other livestock. Near the wedding site we also saw some olive trees, and learned that those too were condemned to be destroyed by the state. The Israelis regularly uproot the olive trees that are not grown expressly with their permission. These cases go through the courts, but very slowly.

Q: Of course it takes a decade to get a decision.

ROE: About as long as it takes an olive tree to grow in the desert. Then the authorities make the farmers pay for the uprooting equipment on top of the indignity and economic damage they've experienced. The Israelis are proud of making the desert bloom, but in carrying out these policies they destroy a precious natural resource on which people depend. The irony is that Bedouins played key roles in several Israeli victories against the Arab states. These policies seem guaranteed to turn them into enemies.

Q: Well, I wondered, you had two things going for somebody who was in Israel, an American. One you have this natural affinity towards Israeli, plucky little state, very modern, with the terrible experience of the Holocaust as a backdrop. Politically it's dynamite if you try to oppose it, but the other, but on the other hand you've got this problem of the Israelis being beastly to the Arabs. I mean one can't help but think of South Africa in the time of apartheid. The other one is that Israel seems to be able to lead the United States along by a leash practically when because of the political clout within the American political system.

ROE: What I witnessed was a state of mutual fear, stoked by the Palestinians' blind support for violent solutions and Israeli's exercise of lordly might. The government of Israel effectively plays our system and knows our weaknesses, but we're responsible for our mistakes. Our Congressional leaders seem to assume that unless we stand pat, everything will fall apart. But Israel has grown beyond its infancy. Some of the most astute commentators I found were in military intelligence – men like Efraim Halevy, who headed the Mossad from 1998-2003. They saw the deadly consequences of continuing the status quo with the occupied territories. Americans feel ambivalent about Israel – loving its can-do spirit and heroic accomplishments but uncomfortable with its present. Israelis seem even more divided about their role. They've been heatedly debating the issue for years, without fear of censorship. Take the question of the billion dollar blank check the U.S. writes to Israel each year. Many Israelis feel this aid is corrupting their country from within, creating dependencies, postponing hard decisions about internal

reforms. Yet it continues because U.S. policymakers can't bring themselves to question the process.

I saw Israelis struggling with the implications of being an occupying country. An Israeli think tank called the West Bank Data Project did excellent research on policies that could change the equation with the Palestinians. They criticized Israel's post-statehood practice of changing place names to eradicate any history of Palestinian settlement. Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair wrote that after the Six-Day War that Israel "enthusiastically chose to become a colonial society, ignoring international treaties, expropriating land, transferring settlers from Israel to the occupied territories, engaging in theft and finding justification for all these activities." Excessively strong words, maybe -- but most Israelis found that living through the ethnic conflict created a constant tension, like a fault line forming under the simplest of everyday interactions.

Israel's technocratic and business leaders also understood their country couldn't sustain growth in a climate of Balkan-style ethnic conflict. After two decades on the margins, the peace movement was gaining mainstream potency. Some of those participating were industrial leaders and military leaders, including prominent women army officers who simply could not justify Israel's foreign policy. This was no bedraggled minority. Not long after I left Yitzhak Rabin became Prime Minister, raising hopes for reform.

Q: Did you find that you were working more in conjunction with the human rights officer at the Embassy than maybe at some other place?

ROE: I would have liked to see closer cooperation between the human rights and labor functions. I had more support from the economic section and USIS, which were less fragmented and closed off than the political section. The political counselor, John Becker and the deputy polcon, Ted Feifer, were savvy, thoughtful officers, both very different in style but great colleagues. The problem was structural. We were like a microcosm of Israel's splintered bureaucracy. We worked in a section of Tel Aviv that used to be the red light district. It was a little slum of a chancery, and when I asked if it had always been this way, many would say, "Oh, we hardly notice, because we came from Embassy Moscow, which is the real pits." Each part of the political section was locked off in a separate office. These were the last years of the WANG operating system. To send a classified cable, you had to lock your office, go into the main political section and enter a cold storage room that looked like a NASA (National Air and Space Administration) command center. To shut it down took about twenty-five operations at night. This setup and the frenetic climate of Tel Aviv impacted the work environment. One Israeli contact told me that living there was like being on an electric shock bed.

Q: Were you there long enough to feel the results of President George H.W. Bush's attempt to curb the settlements movement and loan guarantees?

ROE: The U.S. was clearly putting pressure on the Israelis. It was a stark contrast from what we have seen under George W. Bush, who in effect gave a green light to settlements. The Administration exerted its financial leverage to deter the settlements. I think Israelis got the message. George H.W. Bush, the father, took the view that Israelis were sabotaging themselves with the settlement activity and losing their international credibility. Israelis pushed back hard;

still, they understood our need to play an independent role. But the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin shattered the peace effort and traumatized the Israeli reform movement. The revelation that his killer was a right-wing Israeli fanatic shocked the national psyche. That wound has yet to heal.

Q: What about Russian immigrant? Was that that affecting the labor movement?

ROE: Immigration affected everyone. Israelis were making heroic efforts to absorb the rising stream of immigrants. Soviet immigration reached record numbers – 184,000 in 1990, up from 13,000 the previous year. The government and Histadrut were preparing for another wave of immigrants from Ethiopia. They were processing newcomers in huge absorption centers, providing Hebrew literacy, cultural orientation and training for the job market. The incorporation of what would be a million more immigrants by the mid-1990s was a huge challenge. Unemployment was increasing. It had reached a twenty year high of 9.6 percent in 1990. But somehow the Israeli economy managed to absorb that great immigrant wave. It's a high tech economy, and the Israeli safety net and brainpower resources make the system resilient. The immigrants generated new demands and new jobs. Still, Ethiopians face discrimination in the workplace. Those of Jewish descent were called Falashas (outsiders) in Ethiopia. Many who came to Israel still felt like outsiders.

Q: How did you view the action of the religious parties, the orthodox and ultra-orthodox? Were they much of a factor?

ROE: They're part of a deep divide in Israeli political life. Because of this polarization, no party can get a majority. Labor Zionism made the State of Israel into a kind of civil religion. The new religious party – like Shas -- looks down on secularism. They want to enthrone their view of traditional Judaism within the state and implicitly press a relentless territorial agenda. The ultranationalist religious have weight beyond their numbers, and some of the fringe groups are really fanatic. These zealots connect the settlement of the West Bank – the Biblical Judea and Samaria – to the advent of the Messiah. Their pursuit of a theocracy parallels the goals of the Islamic jihadists. In one neighborhood, shortly after I arrived, a kiosk owner sold newspapers that offended one religious party. Party supporters burned down his store and killed him. This ultranationalist movement gave rise to a terrorist underground that carried out several attacks on West Bank Arab mayors in the 1980's. They planned to destroy the Dome of the Rock mosque in Jerusalem. This fervor led to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, opening the way to the collapse of the peace process and the second *intifada* in 2000.

Q: Do they play much of a role within the labor movement?

ROE: Their presence made the Labor party leadership of Histadrut walk on eggshells with respect to certain social issues. Their numbers were growing, but still low. During the November 1989 elections, the Labor list won 55 percent. Kessar drew on a few of the more moderate religious parties for his winning coalition. Likud won only 27 percent, just short of the 30 percent it would take to get a seat on the executive board.

Q: Well, having this huge bureaucracy did you miss the traditional labor leader, the guy or gal

who was going out there organizing as you had been doing?

ROE: Israel is not a place where union advocates do much traditional organizing. Histadrut is embedded in local communities, because of the multiple services it offers and its history. It's not perceived as a separate, underdog movement like its counterpart in the U.S. For me, the best times were visiting the small towns and the touring that Hector and I did in our spare moments. I'll never forget the way the Sephardim –immigrants from Morocco and Yemen – opened their homes to strangers on Passover and the joy with which they rekindled their traditions. Or the beauty of Safed, the Sea of Galilee and the archeological treasures in out of the way places. I think Hector had the best of our stay there – every few days he would accompany Ambassador Esquinazi to Jerusalem, and he saw more of the countryside through his job.

Q: Were there other major events while you were there?

ROE: I recall one spring day that rocked Tel Aviv and the American communities. At dawn on May 30, PLO terrorists launched a mini-tanker with half a dozen speedboats from Libya in an effort to attack Tel Aviv's town hall and beachfront hotels. Five of them attempted to board the beach at Herzliya, the suburban township where we lived.

Q: What happened to the raid?

ROE: A Navy gun boat patrolling off Tel Aviv spotted the first boat and made the raiders surrender. Then the Air Force, Navy and police went on high alert. The IDF killed several raiders and rounded up the rest employing attack helicopters and spotter planes. The Israelis had apparently had some advance warning, much earlier, but without specifics. The terrorist also had problems with several of their boats breaking down. As the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) was counter-attacking, the RSO whisked off U.S. Ambassador Brown to safety. However, the Embassy took no steps to warn American citizens away from the beach or protect them. This generated angry responses from several diplomats' families, including the economic counselor. Israelis were also shocked. Few had imagined the beaches would be a front line in the *intifada*.

This took place as I was being reassigned to Colombia. In April I bid on the labor counselor vacancy in Mexico, a senior position. Ambassador Brown wrote a cable supporting my bid. U.S. Ambassador to Mexico John Negroponte backed me. I was about to be paneled, but the Director General nixed the assignment because it was a two grade hike. Then our DCM called from Bogotá. The deputy political counselor had become a hard to fill position, because families had been evacuated in 1989 due to terrorist threats. Even though families were returning, officers were reluctant to sign on because they knew the security situation could change again. Colombia was gearing up for a constituent assembly which could have a big impact on the country's future and U.S. policy interests. Monitoring the assembly would be my main focus. So I took that assignment.

HENRY L. CLARKE
Economic Counselor

Tel Aviv (1989-1992)

Ambassador Clarke was born in Georgia in 1941. He attended Dartmouth College and enlisted in the US Army. He later entered Harvard University and then entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Germany, Nigeria, Romania, the USSR, and Israel. He was later appointed Ambassador to Uzbekistan. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: *You went to Israel in '89?*

CLARKE: Right.

Q: *What were you doing and how did that come about?*

CLARKE: I was not aware that there was a vacancy in Israel, nor was it a place I hoped to go. I was actually phoned by Mark Parris, who was a relatively new DCM there, whom I had worked with elsewhere, and said they needed an economic counselor and if I wanted it, the job was mine. He later strengthened that invitation by saying that they hoped I would serve as acting DCM when that was needed, because they visualized me as the third ranking person for the Embassy in Tel Aviv. I had wanted to be DCM again and had not found such a berth. The call was well timed, and I agreed to it. I went there, half expecting that since I'd been economic counselor to the Soviet Union, that probably in a country the size of Israel, this would not be an excessively difficult job. That was a misjudgment. Israel certainly didn't have anything like the scale or the kinds of problems that we had in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless it turned out to be a very interesting and challenging assignment.

Q: *You were there from 1989 to when?*

CLARKE: '89 to '92. I arrived thinking that the economic relationship was basically fairly stable. But I arrived just at the time when the United States imposed ceilings on Jewish immigration admissions to the United States. Suddenly thousands of Jews who had hoped to go to the United States decided they couldn't and began emigrating to Israel. That opened a whole dialogue as to what the United States would do to help Israel absorb the Jews that it had always wanted to absorb, now coming from the Soviet Union.

Q: *Who was the ambassador of this '89 to '92 period?*

CLARKE: Bill Brown was the ambassador most of that time. I got to know him pretty well because I was acting DCM frequently. The econ job was a little different from the one in Moscow. In Moscow it had been largely a reporting function. Separate sections that I did not supervise were doing science or agriculture or whatever. In Tel Aviv, I was responsible for the agricultural operation which consisted of a local employee doing reporting and also for the science relationship. One of my officers was engaged full time in the science relationship. I also supervised an officer and local employees who worked on aid to the Gaza Strip.

Q: *Let's talk first about the economic job. You see the disproportionate amount of our aid by*

far goes to Israel, which strikes me as being an industrial state. It certainly probably needs the money far less than for example, Botswana or some place like that. Can you say how you saw the economy of Israel in this '89 to '92 period?

CLARKE: Israel had a difficult time partly because it needed reform. It was stuck with a socialist economy which was not working very well. In fact, practically no progress was made on privatization during that period. They were getting ready to begin to start for the whole three years I was there. I knew some people working very seriously on it, and it was just going against the political grain for Israel to do this. They were just having a terrible time.

They were running inflation of over 10 percent much of the time and that was irritating people a lot. The constantly depreciating shekel made it hard for them to be competitive. They were exporting but inflation was making it difficult.

Q: Why weren't they making the necessary adjustments? Was it because of theory? Were we supporting a socialist theory?

CLARKE: No. It's because changes in the local setup depended upon political action, political decisions and support in the Knesset. The majorities were never really that secure. If a state-owned company was proposed for privatization, no matter what price they wanted to sell it at, there would be an instant 49 or 51 percent of the Knesset that would say that price was too low. If they put the price too high, they couldn't sell it. So it was just politics. I believe that U.S. financial support tended to cause the shekel to be overvalued, which tended to make exports difficult. I don't know if recent history has proved me right or wrong on that, but I felt that our assistance was a mixed blessing. They tended to rely on it to balance their budget as well as to balance the foreign trade account. It was a huge share of our worldwide economic assistance. As you may know, those big figures consist of a more-than-50-percent share of military assistance and that is a figure that reflects purchases by Israel in the United States so that was not really inflationary in Israel. That was an in-kind subsidy of their military budget, and I don't think it had much economic effect one way or the other.

Q: The economic effect was that we were underwriting their military budget.

CLARKE: It enabled them to have a larger military than they otherwise would have had. Yes, it saved them money from their budget. The economic assistance was a cash transfer, something we don't do in practically any other place.

Q: We talk about politics in Israel, but this was pure politics in the United States, too.

CLARKE: Right, but you get into these commitments through a policy process, however flawed. Not through a really arbitrary decision. You get into them through things like the Camp David process, in which commitments were made to both Israel and Egypt to make it easier for them to agree. We got into it through the economic crisis that occurred in Israel in the 1980s, that I think began the process of convincing Israelis that socialism really was never going to work, e.g., when all of their biggest banks had to be nationalized because they

went bust. We then promised more money to help bail them out.

Once you began supplying the money, AIPAC – the American-Israel Political Action Committee – made it its goal in life, during at least the first part of my tour there. Its goal was to increase the flow of funds to Israel by whatever channels and means it could find, generally through getting Congress to write things into legislation. They were very effective at doing that, and they were even more effective in rounding up domestic support if there was any challenge to the existing flow. So they were very, very effective in keeping whatever was in place continuing, even if the original rationale for it was fading. They would keep it in place, and they tended to put in their annual report, “We got four billion dollars for Israel.” So if you wanted to know where all the American inflows into Israel were occurring, it was easier to find them in the publications of AIPAC than it was any where in Israel, where nobody was keeping track.

Q: I interviewed Sam Hart who had your job sometime before, and he mentioned that they would go through an analysis of what would be good for Israel. The Israelis would say that’s very nice, but it means nothing because the whole economic action was essentially a political decision that was happening between AIPAC and Congress and the Israelis who wanted money. I mean it’s really a pretty disgusting situation.

CLARKE: Yes. We prepared, with the approval of the ambassador, a very carefully worded report, suggesting what some of the economic disadvantages for Israel were of continued dependence on American economic assistance. There wasn’t a word in there about the military situation, which was driven by a different logic. Military assistance was support for their budget if you want to look at it that way, but it had a different logic. I did not feel that military assistance should have been reduced at that time. We couldn’t go into a peace process looking like we were too cheap to fund the side that was depending on us. So I was not then in favor of reducing military assistance. It was a subsidy for American business. Almost all the money had to be spent in the United States. There were very few exceptions. But on the economic side, our report pointed out some of the disadvantages and how, through a gradual process, maybe Israel could be weaned from this.

My recollection is we classified this analysis very highly. Reports of the existence of this report and the general gist of it – not the analysis but just what it supposedly concluded – made the American press long before most people in the Department had even gotten their copy to read. The ambassador and I met with some people, with AIPAC about this time, including Tom Dine, and they really gave us a hard time about it. But it was a respectful sort of relationship as I remember it. Maybe it could have been more respectful. The ambassador didn’t want to confirm or deny that we had sent this report, but he defended our right to make those kinds of recommendations if we felt they were appropriate.

Q: What was the common opinion in the embassy about where the leaks would occurred when something like this got out?

CLARKE: The highly classified leaks were in Washington. Both the Embassy and Washington accepted that if there was anything really sensitive, it better not be in writing.

The practice was that some of the embassy's most important instructions were received only over the classified telephone to the ambassador, not ever confirmed in writing. Our reporting, however, was meant to inform a whole lot of people in Washington. It couldn't be limited to a five or even 20 minute conversation on a STU 3 (secure phone line) and certainly not by pumping it all through the poor ambassador. So we had to keep reporting, and I would like to think that we tried very hard to be objective; I know the front office looked at my stuff very, very closely. We would discuss the bottom line on something, e.g., the final little comment section or recommendation section, until we were blue in the face. But I believe we served Washington as well as we possibly could under those circumstances.

That didn't mean we would write a cable quoting the prime minister if the prime minister told us something super-sensitive. That would have to go through the ambassador over the phone. But we reported our analysis of the country on a given issue. We just had to run the risk that somebody would leak it.

Q: As economic counselor, who were you dealing with mainly on the Israeli side?

CLARKE: I dealt with the economic department as I think it was called, the equivalent of the economic bureau of the Foreign Ministry. I dealt with the finance ministry, which was my most important counterpart, the central bank, and a whole host of economic agencies that I had some access to. The most difficult of those relationships was with the Housing Ministry headed by Ariel Sharon, who was reinforcing the settlements in the occupied territories through his ministry. I believe Sharon was acting on behalf of the Shamir government. Sharon was personally committed to building settlements. I was seen as unfriendly to that process. Nobody ever said a word to me personally about it – but they understood that I represented the interest of the United States in discouraging settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. They knew I was looking for data to reinforce my observations, and that was data that they considered secret and I was not going to get. So this is one area of my relationship with Israel that was difficult.

Q: Would you have officers go out to the housing areas and count and that sort of thing?

CLARKE: Sure. The consulate in Jerusalem, being responsible for the West Bank, did it in spades. We in the Embassy were worried about Gaza, and we would sometimes try to track that in Gaza. We had other interests in Gaza as well, so that wasn't necessarily always at the top of our list. We would try to track that, with whatever mechanism we could use. There were statistical reports coming out that we tried to examine. We tried to find how they were prepared and whether we could trust them. On the whole they were not precise, and they were not helpful. But they did actually reinforce the general impression that yes, official resources in Israel were going into settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, where to a reasonably neutral observer, no one would want to go and live without a subsidy. You didn't have to get into any secrets to talk to Israelis and learn how much more it cost to move into a house in one of these settlements and how much more it cost to move into a similar house 10 feet inside of what was called the green line.

Q: Were you involved in the decision of the Bush administration to hold up on loan

guarantees for housing? Was this a major issue then?

CLARKE: I was involved with the very first request for housing loan guarantees in 1989 to assist Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel. When I first arrived, the Shamir government was actually a grand coalition, led by the Likud party, and the labor party was also in the coalition at that time. Shimon Peres, then Finance Minister, asked the Ambassador and me for four hundred million in housing loan guarantees. The initial response from the Department, which I believe was probably cleared or maybe even dictated by somebody on the seventh floor, was that we didn't think housing loan guarantees were a good way to assist Israel, "A". And "B", if we did go into something like that, we would have to be sure that any funds that we were providing were not enabling Israel to provide more funds to support settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

When I saw that instruction, I suddenly realized that we had gotten ourselves into a really major political issue with Israel. Certainly the Likud, leading the government at that time, was counting on support from the settlers and was ideologically committed. I think there was even some hope that with all of these Russians coming in, there would actually be more people who wanted to live in the West Bank and Gaza than before. But being something of an economist, I knew that the freeing up of resources concept, the idea that our money is fungible, made the analysis extremely difficult to do. In fact, I had a huge job, and I spent a lot of energy over the next three years trying to sort that out.

Q: How was it playing out when you were there?

CLARKE: What you would have to show is not that there was some support going to the West Bank and Gaza, because that was already underway. But you had to show whether there was an increase in Israeli assistance to the settlements in occupied territories as a result of our support for settlement of the immigrants in other parts of Israel.

We also got into the business of Export-Import Bank financing for houses which was another thing that came under my supervision. We had to make sure the whole house didn't go to the West Bank or Gaza so we really had to go count houses. I couldn't find any other way to do that. They played it straight on that. As far as I know, none of that stuff ever went. They planned communities – some of them very badly planned, very unwisely planned – out in the Negev, where immigrants were supposed to go. Those houses were out there but nobody wanted to go there because there weren't any jobs. So what exactly they had in mind I don't know. Surely many of those houses were wasted. But those were commercially-financed houses, prefab houses built in the United States and set up by Israeli construction firms in the Negev and other parts of Israel.

Q: Did you feel that this was a time when we were being tougher with Israel than we have at other times?

CLARKE: I read Middle Eastern history to some extent when I was in college, but I don't claim to be in a position to calibrate and compare different periods. We were very committed. This was all a period in which James Baker and his close advisors were really the

architects of our relationship with Israel and with the Palestinians. I think he really felt that this business of settlements was a make-or-break issue for the peace process. If the United States were seen to be supporting the expansion of these settlements with our capital, whether we claimed we were against it or not – if in fact our money was fungible and was turning up there, we were never going to have a peace process.

Part of the problem was rhetoric and ideology. In fact there was no great desire on the part of the immigrants or most others in Israel to move into these settlements. There were few Zionists or religious activists not already there who wanted to do it. It wouldn't have been hard for the government of Israel to cap what it was doing and allow the immigrants to settle in places where they wanted to settle. So I spent a lot of time trying to track this issue down, and Shamir and Sharon kept trying to “build facts on the ground” in the occupied territories.

There was some increase in settlement construction. Whether it had been planned before the wave of immigration really got underway or not, I'm not able to say. That would be getting into intentions and into plans that we were not privy to. But we then tried to get the Shamir government to negotiate with the Palestinians, and that was an extremely difficult process. I was not a central player in any of the peace process negotiations themselves. In fact I was often left running the embassy while the ambassador and DCM were busy supporting the frequent Baker visits in Jerusalem. But I was able to stay in pretty close touch with what the country team was able to learn about it. I do feel that some of Baker's success was the result of evenhandedness. Any mediator has to be extremely concerned about that. I also think he accepted what I would call the Kissinger maxim – it may predate Kissinger for all I know – that there isn't going to be a peace process unless Israel believes that its security is guaranteed. That's such a fundamental idea that it meant there were certain things that we should continue to reassure the Israelis on, on which they had been reassured many times dating from 20 years before.

Q: This is back to your point about supporting the military expenditures?

CLARKE: Yes. It's related to it.

Q: Were we concerned at this time about the Israeli military establishment selling advanced items to China and other places?

CLARKE: If there were any ulcers on that, they were mainly in the defense attaché office where they did have to vet proposals for selling military technology. Dual-use technology might have come more under State or Commerce supervision. That was not really a big issue for me in Israel. Every once in a while something would come up. Don't misunderstand me, this was a complex relationship. So many 747s took off every day from Israel to the United States and the same number were coming from the other direction so we had a very, very rich relationship there. If there was a possibility to misdirect technology, I'm sure somewhere along the line it's bound to have happened. But those main concerns were military technology, and the defense people were mainly concerned with that.

Q: Nuclear, did that fall under your responsibility?

CLARKE: No.

Q: I want to ask you about the Gulf War. I'd rather have a little more time to play with.

CLARKE: Oh, okay.

Q: So we'll pick up there. We've talked about most items dealing with your time in Israel, '89 to '92, not the Gulf War. Was there anything else that was going on then?

CLARKE: I got down into the Gaza Strip fairly frequently because unlike most economic sections, I also supervised the AID program for Gaza. I had a Foreign Service officer – a State Department Foreign Service officer – who was spending most of his time doing that. That's worth considering.

I think after I left, that function was replaced by a direct AID role. But I did go down there, not only because of the AID relationship but also because we were interested in the economy of Gaza. That was a very different thing from the economy of Israel. You had to view them as two separate pieces.

Q: Next time we'll pick up the Gulf War and the economy and what you observed in Gaza.

It's the seventh of January, 2000. Henry, let's talk about the Gulf War first. Could you explain how the Gulf War was viewed from Israel. Explain what the Gulf War was and then talk about it.

CLARKE: I believe the Gulf War really began in 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. The U.S. government became very alarmed, not only at the conquest of what had been an independent state for a number of years, but also the threat to Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf States and which seemed implicit in the ease with which Iraq took over Kuwait. What to do about it and all those questions of high policy were not being resolved in Tel Aviv where I was, but rather in Washington. But clearly there was a massive build-up of American troops in Saudi Arabia. The relationship with Israel in one sense became somewhat easier because suddenly they saw us as really doing something to stop aggression in the Middle East, and something against one of the radical states.

Saddam Hussein had been making threats against Israel throughout this period, right up to the invasion of Kuwait and perhaps even after. In any case, the threat that he would use chemical weapons was a matter of particular concern in Israel. Israel undertook to manufacture gas masks and other necessities for every citizen in the country, including foreigners such as ourselves who were in embassies there. We too in the U.S. Embassy began preparing ourselves for what appeared to be another likely phase of the war. The betting was that if pressed, Saddam Hussein would attack Israel as well as Saudi Arabia with scuds and that they might include chemical weapons but that given the huge buildup of American air

power, this probably would be a short-lived exercise. The scud launchers would be found and destroyed as soon as they were used.

The question for us in the Embassy was largely whether to draw down the staff at the Embassy, to evacuate dependents, or what if anything, to minimize the Embassy community's exposure to possible Iraqi scud attacks including a possible chemical attack. I was not acting DCM during that period, and wasn't involved first hand in a lot of the debate back and forth. But based on town meetings held by the front office, we were all under the impression that when the war got underway, there would be a draw-down of the Embassy, and at least a voluntary, if not a mandatory, evacuation of dependents.

When the attack did come, I was very much involved because I was the senior duty officer in the Embassy at the time the scuds first came in. The very next day we began gathering up the people who were to be drawn down according to our plan, as well as dependents from both the Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Consulate in Jerusalem, and hauled them down to Eilat. In the meantime Washington changed its posture and decided there wouldn't be a draw-down. The people could take leave. I should add that prior to the first strike, dependents had been given the option of voluntary departure. I would say a majority, but not necessarily a huge majority, had left. The remaining dependents who chose not to leave and those officers and staff who were designated for the draw-down were the people taken down to Eilat, as it was believed to be out of range of the scuds. The plane came in to take them, but they didn't go unless they were willing to go on annual leave. A handful, including my two secretaries, decided to go on annual leave.

That was an amazing reversal and, considering the long planning that had gone into this draw-down, evidence that Washington was simply unable to make a decision and carry it out. The Embassy staff felt this was the result of some political decision in Washington not to be shown to be weak toward the Israelis. It is hard to believe, however, that they had not been consulted. The Israelis, many of whom had relatives in the United States, were crowding every flight out of Tel Aviv to the U.S. Apparently Americans were supposed to stay in Israel to be a good example for them.

Q: How about American citizens, the religious community and Orthodox Jews and all? What did they do?

CLARKE: When we allowed the voluntary departure of dependents, we had arranged for several extra flights to the United States by non-scheduled carriers. We made seats available for others who wanted to go as well. A number of them were provided seating on Pan Am. These were additional flights, not regularly scheduled flights. The regular scheduled flights were packed. My family did in fact take advantage of the voluntary departure, but it was a close call. It seemed by all the advice we were getting that, first of all, the scuds were not very accurate, and secondly that the invincible U.S. Air Force would put them out of action in very short order.

The inaccuracy of the scuds proved to be true. The impacts were scattered all over the Tel Aviv area, although some concentration in central Tel Aviv suggested that they were aiming

more or less at the Ministry of Defense complex in the middle of Tel Aviv and anybody else they hit would be fine. But the scuds continued to fall almost daily, and sometimes more than once a day, throughout the Gulf War. There was no indication that our Air Force ever got any of the mobile launchers. They may have knocked out the fixed launchers that were spotted before the war, but the mobile launchers continued to function right up to the end when they lost the terrain that they were firing from.

As a result, I was very much happier that my family was gone when I saw what the situation was, even though of course, the threat of chemical warheads was not in fact carried out. We were told that the Iraqis had that capability. Subsequent to the war, we found out that they did indeed have it. I presume the reason they didn't use it was because they feared Israel would retaliate with a nuclear weapon. But that's just a presumption that we all shared.

In any event, we went about our business. My section had been scheduled for a fairly sharp draw-down because it was the economic section. It was thought that normal economic activities wouldn't be going on during the war and we wouldn't need so many people. As it turned out, we did different things, but we were all very busy. One of my secretaries quickly volunteered to come back, and we agreed to that as an exception to the usual rule. The rule was that once you'd been taken out, you didn't come back until the Department allowed everybody to come back. But we stayed very busy during that time. Nobody on my staff really wanted to be withdrawn, except for one secretary. So it was a good outcome that they weren't.

Q: Were there any cases of Foreign Service people, the professionals in the embassy just getting out, not panicking, but just leaving?

CLARKE: I can't confirm from my own experience anybody acting very panicky. I do know some questions were asked at these town meetings that sounded kind of panicky. I believe that there were a certain number of people, whom I did not know very well, who took this annual leave option very seriously and left. But the prevailing opinion among Foreign Service officers was that if they left and couldn't come back for months because the scuds stopped but the war was still going on, that they would just get stuck in the States. This was one argument against families going back too. I lost about \$600 that I was never able to claim. FSOs would be stuck in a temporary situation in the states, losing money, and basically unable to do their jobs. So there wasn't great enthusiasm for going home. I was certainly glad to stay in Israel. This was, as one other officer put it, my first Middle Eastern War, so I was interested to see how it was going to go.

Q: I interviewed Chas Freeman, who was ambassador in Saudi Arabia. There they were faced with a problem that it was essential that they have a full operating embassy. They also did not want to give an example for ARAMCO, and other organizations of Americans to pull out and stop pumping oil. So maybe you were caught in that too, and the idea that Saudi Arabia was going to be more of a target than Israel might have been a factor.

CLARKE: It could well have been, although American Israelis and others were making their own decisions without checking with us. It is true that there was a domestic political issue in

Israel that so many people were bugging out because they had relatives in the West. There was also a certain amount of internal migration as well. People were parking their families in hotels and motels and whatnot in those parts of Israel that were seen as difficult to hit or not targeted. It was their home so it's understandable that this was more stressful to Israelis.

Certainly than to people like me. But I can't say that my attitude was necessarily typical. I did spend a certain amount of my time trying to make it possible for economic activity between the United States and Israel to continue normally. Even before the first scud hit, commercial aviation dried up, even though Tel Aviv Airport was too small a target given the range and unreliability of the scuds. Apparently the insurance companies wouldn't insure a plane that went there, so they didn't go there unless there was government insurance provided. We did get some flights in and out on that basis. I think it was Tower Air or another contractor that was operating in the build up and resupply of our colleagues closer to the Gulf, stopping off in Tel Aviv and picking up passengers in Israel. But we had an interest on the part of Tower to expand that service because they had been a carrier, not just a charter company. We had a terrible time convincing people that we should maintain normal trade and transportation links as much as we could. But that was about it.

The major diplomatic effort was to keep the Israelis from intervening, and that was done by then-Deputy Secretary Eagleburger coming out and spending a lot of time in Tel Aviv and showing that he was personally willing to sit it out, not merely to recommend sitting it out. Indeed, perhaps that did help keep the Israelis from retaliating.

Q: Did you get any feeling from your contacts that the Israelis you talked to were thirsting to have a whack at Iraq or were they hoping they could stay out despite the scuds coming in?

CLARKE: The military certainly felt uncomfortable in the role of sitting tight. They were ready to do something and did not like leaving the fighting with Iraq up to other armies. There was a professional concern there, undoubtedly shared by many other Israelis who had served in the military, which is nearly 100 percent of the men and a lot of women. So clearly that sentiment was there, but it was not really a subtle point. They really understood that the Arab coalition that we had organized against Iraq could be broken up if Israel were identified as part of that coalition. This was not too subtle a point. Most Israelis understood it very clearly and realized they were weighing one concern against another. In the end they were pleased with what they had done. I think it was hardest for the political leaders in Israel where for several years tit-for-tat was the rule of the day. If you get struck by Arabs, you strike back. It was no secret we in Israel were certainly being struck and considerable damage was being done. What was fantastic was the small number of Israelis killed by these scuds, even the scuds landing in heavily residential areas, at times of the evening when people were at home. Lots of damage. Only a very few deaths. It's just remarkable. Miraculous.

Q: What about economic activity? Was there just a pause?

CLARKE: There was a considerable pause. There was even a question of whether ships would dock. Haifa was a port. Haifa was fired on very rarely by scuds. There was no real reason not to continue operations out of Haifa. Tel Aviv was not a port, but the airport shut

down to all intents and purposes. El Al may have done some flying, but the other airlines did not. It was a period in which it was hard to get in and out of the country.

Q: What about normal shopping and that sort of thing?

CLARKE: There was a real effort to keep things going. In terms of retail trade, they needed to keep serving the public. A lot of restaurants managed to stay open and somehow continue operating. Every place open to the public was supposed to have a sealed room that you could go into when scuds started to land. Everybody was supposed to haul along their gas masks everywhere they went and we pretty much did. I had a little Pan Am bag with my little walkie talkie from the embassy and my gas mask and that just became like a women's purse, part of my uniform for the month or so this was going on.

We did go out to restaurants, but that was a little discouraging because it was in the early evening hours after nightfall in Iraq and therefore dusk and nightfall in Israel that almost all the attacks occurred. There were a few very late at night or in the early morning. The pattern must have been 80 or 90 percent of the scuds in the early evening, so that did break up the business of going out and celebrating. Israel was a quiet and gloomy place compared to the normal scene there. It was also very tense. You were very conscious of the raids. Not only because everybody would listen to the radio and go to their rooms and put on their gas masks in a very disciplined way, but we also had these batteries of missiles that would fire back.

Q: The Patriot missiles.

CLARKE: The Patriot missiles. They made almost more noise than the incoming scuds. They provided a great deal of moral support, especially at first, because it seemed that we could do something besides just sit there if you heard these things firing off. I think two of them were being manned by Americans, and one of the batteries was turned over to the Israelis and they ran it. It was only after the war that we found out that they never hit a thing, that it was totally ineffective. Just as the U.S. Air Force never hit a mobile launcher, the Patriots never hit a warhead.

Q: This was a war that played on TV around the world. After it was over and even at the time, did you feel that this made an impression about how the war was fought with the Israelis?

CLARKE: Our stock with the Israelis as a nation capable of meeting its military commitments was really raised. As they gradually began to figure out that the Patriots weren't doing any good, that aspect of it and the assumption that any technology from the United States must be good technology probably evaporated. The success of the military operation in the Gulf was tremendously impressive, not only to the Israelis but to the Arab countries all around. It was a very unusual kind of war in which we had all of these months in which to get ready and build up. If we hadn't done it, it would have been a great disgrace. As it was, it was a success, and everybody liked to praise it.

Q: Let's go back to the economic side. What were you seeing in Gaza during this time, '89 to

'92?

CLARKE: The thing I've already hinted at, the incredible contrast between economic conditions in Gaza and economic conditions in Israel was evident to anyone who crossed the line. But not a lot of people were crossing over the line in those days. Traffic in and out of Gaza was mainly those Gazans who were lucky enough to get some work in Israel. They were able to travel into Israel except when the government shut the border, which they did rather regularly in response to acts of terrorism in Israel.

Gaza is one of the most highly concentrated populations in the world, comparable to the extreme levels in Asia and elsewhere, with very little natural basis for economic activity. That was also before the Intifada, the violent uprising of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Before the Intifada, there had been a number of factories developed in which cheap Palestinian labor was working together with Israeli capital and marketing to produce a lot of consumer goods. The Intifada brought that kind of cooperation to a halt. Those factories either shut down or moved away. What was left was against Israeli rule, really extraordinary poverty and poor health conditions, and a steady loss of potable water. Then the settlement movement continued building even in Gaza, the most unlikely place for a settlement movement to be. There's at least some historical and religious background for settlements in the West Bank, but in Gaza, it was purely exploitative.

There had been claims that there was some military advantage to it, but in fact the military demands of protecting these settlements actually made them a great weakness rather than a military advantage. They used a large part of the available water and arable land, leaving the rest of the Gaza population, basically the urban population, with no means of employment.

We had a very small aid program there. They comprised community development-like activities, either helping Gazans with small business or assisting with medical, and educational and other projects which we maintained on a very low profile basis. But we were anxious to let the Gazans know that these were American projects, and we were financing them, and we certainly looked forward to the day when they would be much more successful economically. This was an issue because some organizations like Save the Children preferred not to have American vehicles and officials and whatnot visiting their projects. For accountability purposes and to report to AID, we had to visit their installations. We insisted on doing so in our cars, even though we tried to do so in a low-key fashion. We wanted to make sure there was no confusion about this. This was not just private donors in the U.S. giving money to Save the Children, although there may have been such funds available. This was a U.S. government-funded aid program. That tension continued the whole time I was there. Interestingly enough, our people carrying out these projects in Gaza and those of us who visited Gaza over this period were almost never harmed or threatened. The Gazans knew what was going on.

Q: We're talking about Gaza. The Israelis, at the time we're talking about, were responsible for Gaza. We were giving considerable amounts of money to Israel for aid, and a great deal of it was going to the military, but looking at the non-military as a rational use of our money to Israel, it would go to where it's needed most. It would strike me that Gaza would be it. If

we weren't giving it to Gaza, it would strike me as being in a way racist. Was this an issue?

CLARKE: You have to go back and recognize that it was we and not the Israelis who made a very clear distinction regarding who was responsible and in what way for the occupied territories. We did not consider Gaza to be part of Israel. We did not route our aid to Gaza through Israel in any way. In Washington it was a totally separate little program for the West Bank and Gaza and we had an aid person, an American, in Jerusalem, dealing with the West Bank. That had not always been the case. There had also been a period when there was a State Department officer handling that. But for very clear political reasons, we kept the two programs totally separate. What we were paying to the Israelis was essentially a cash transfer of 1.2 billion dollars per year that went into their budgetary and foreign exchange support. It was not designated for any specific purpose whatsoever, but rather for economic "stabilization." It went back to the crisis period some years before in the Israeli economy. Israel never intended to spend one penny of this on Palestinians.

What we were doing in the West Bank and Gaza was much more the classical type of aid program with technical assistance, small business development, and humanitarian programs, in which we provided money to non-profit organizations. In a few cases they were indigenous, Gazan non-profit organizations. In other cases they were American-run organizations, delivering these very specific programs which required the usual aid thing, verification that the program achieved its goals. And do we want to expand it or contract it or end it or do something different? What do we want to do was always the question. Whereas with Israel there was no such question. This money was not going to be accounted for because once it had been received by the Ministry of Finance, its purpose had already been served. It's two very, very different approaches. The amounts of money that we're talking about in the West Bank and Gaza at no time were substantial compared with the amount we were providing Israel. Israelis who hoped for peace probably would have supported our programs for Palestinians, but AIPAC and the Israeli politicians ignored that aid.

Q: Did this cause any disquiet? Israel does not seem to be an impoverished Third World country. We all understand the basic underpinnings, that this is an American domestic policy, driven by American Jews and by non-Jewish groups within the United States, Friends of Israel, as opposed to real need.

CLARKE: There was practically no reexamination of real need. Once the Israeli economy emerged from its crisis, at some point in the 1980s before I ever got there, inflation was still running high, unemployment was still high by American standards, and they had not undertaken the privatization of their economy. It was still basically a socialist economy, even if democratic. We continued to have an annual or semi-annual dialogue with them, which I continued between sessions, urging them to reform their economy. That was our real economic policy, although I cannot say it was taken seriously by the Israeli leadership. This 1.2 billion dollars was simply a check that was conveyed in Washington annually, based on a commitment made some years before. I mentioned in our last discussion the Airgram that we wrote, suggesting that this economic part of our assistance could be gradually reduced and it would be in Israel's benefit if we did so. As far as I know, not only was that report purely voluntary, some would say it was masochistic for a U.S. government organization to write it,

since it was destined to leak and did in fact leak immediately. No one else was justifying these funds, to the best of my knowledge.

Q: I would think at a certain point that your conscience would take over, that you'd have to do something when it's on your watch by saying, "Is this really justified?"

CLARKE: It was on my watch when we sent that in. My deputy and I worked on it. The Ambassador and the DCM went over it with a magnifying glass. I saw the futility of it as soon as it appeared in the newspapers. We'd made our point. Anybody who wanted to could go back and look that up. Basically, nobody gave a damn about that money.

Q: It is a little bit like spitting in a hurricane.

CLARKE: It was considered foolishly quixotic.

Q: You left there in '92. Looking at it from an economic point of view, how did you see Israel as an economic entity?

CLARKE: As so often with Western countries, it was an economy that was doing pretty well, considering what it had going against it in the way of political handicaps. The concept was that they should be on the dole without weighing properly the effects of that on their export industries. The other sorts of socialist things that they did caused damage throughout the economy. I could list a bunch of them, but the damage was particularly obvious in the small business sector.

I actually met a guy who tried to expand his one-man business into a slightly larger one and the regulators drove him out of business. He had to fire his employees, and he went back to being a one man business. That pattern prevailed throughout Israel. In the United States employment is created chiefly by small business. That fact is not only accepted here, it's basically not surprising to anyone. The ruling ideology behind Israeli regulations in those times was that the people who hire other people are exploiting them, not that they are giving them a job and giving them the chance to make a decent living. It was an old Eastern European socialist viewpoint. So Israel was a land of one-person shops and handicrafts, and bloated, inefficient public companies as in Eastern Europe. Real private companies fought to survive and often did not.

Q: Did you see a new generation coming in that would make any difference?

CLARKE: Sure. I felt the most affinity with those officials in the government – in the permanent government, the civil servants – who were determined to try to get some of these reforms to work. Every time I needed a morale boost, the most effective way to get it in terms of what was going on in Israel, was to go have lunch with one of these guys and listen to his frustrations and come away realizing there are people out there trying to improve it. I haven't been back to Israel in a long time, but I would guess by the relative success of their high-tech industries that this is gradually working its way through.

Q: Was there a feeling of concern that they were moving, but all of a sudden the Soviet Union collapsed, just about the end of the time you were there. All of a sudden a lot of former Soviet citizens were coming in. These were not exactly entrepreneurially motivated, at least that's not how they'd been brought up.

CLARKE: They were overwhelmingly doctors and musicians. That had been their employment in the Soviet Union. The result was the concertmeister from Kishinev, Moldova, was auditioning for umpteenth violin in the Herzliyya community orchestra. They had a totally skewed employment background. And you're right. They did not bring with them great instincts on how to do business, although some certainly did try to start businesses right away. A good many, no sooner had they parked their bags in Israel, than they tried to set up trade between Israel and the Soviet Union where they really did have contacts and knowledge of possible business opportunities.

Q: You were saying that Israeli government officials were turning their attention to this phenomenon?

CLARKE: The primary Israeli interest in the former Soviet Union was to get Jews to emigrate to Israel. The Jewish Agency in many cases set up shop in places before the Israeli government ever had a chance to set up an embassy or a consulate. The Jewish agency was already there to facilitate emigration because the restrictions on emigration ended before the Soviet Union collapsed. The triggering thing for massive immigration into Israel was our decision to put a cap on refugee admissions to the United States. Those refugee admissions were almost exclusively Jews and Armenians. So we effectively caused a huge backlog of applicants to the United States. People who wanted to leave the Soviet Union because they really thought the place was going to pot, or if they had been refused for many years, then saw Israel as the next best place to go. That caused a big influx. Then when this trade began to develop, a small level of trade at least, it caused the Israeli government to realize there was more to the Soviet Union than just getting more citizens for Israel. I don't know on the macro level how successful it has been, but in almost every capital in the former Soviet Union you'll find some signs of Israeli trade taking place.

DAVID WINN
Deputy Consul General
Jerusalem (1989-1992)

David M. Winn was born in Texas in 1942. He graduated from Swarthmore College in 1964, received an MA from the University of Texas in 1966 and an MPA from Syracuse University in 1969. He served in the Peace Corps and then joined the Foreign Service in 1969. He has served overseas in Vietnam, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, France and Senegal. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: How was the Intifada?

WINN: Well, the Intifada had geared up pretty heavily by the time I got to Jerusalem. As I say, that was the only post in the Foreign Service I bitterly regret, for internal professional reasons. The situation on the ground had become bad of Deputy Principal Officer in Jerusalem - much too bad to take a sick spouse to (her MS had gotten much worse). I was long since used to bombs and rocks and whatever, but it developed so quickly, that from being the most heavily bid post in the Foreign Service - 82 souls bid for the job when I got it, "more than for the Court of St. James," as one diplomat put it Now you cant force people to go to Jerusalem. Virtually no one bid on my job when I left. So, it had become quite a source of concern although nothing like it is now. There were not any suicide bombers then. It was the risk of being brained by rocks every time you got on the road in Arab East Jerusalem, not in West Jerusalem. There were no problems in Israeli Jewish West Jerusalem, by the way where half of our staff lived, but my wife and I lived far out in East Jerusalem, where young Palestinians would throw rocks at my wife.

Q: Why was Jerusalem considered such a good job?

WINN: Oh, for years and years and years, you were in the thick of things, you were at the center of the Arab Israeli problem, it was a very nice city, it was then, but not now. Your reporting always got read in Washington. Its funny how that deputy's job over the years was regarded as a plum. We had a very nice house up in the hills overlooking Jerusalem and East Jerusalem, a beautiful house which had become a slum by the time I got there and was given up when I left. People were living the past, you know the Mandelbaum gate and all that. Everyone in that job looked back at the old British mandate in a way. The '67 War had been just one huge adventure, as indeed were the events of 48. The Consulate was a historic building. Its been there for 100 years. The fact that the job seemed to destroy everyone who served there, their careers were sort of quietly ended with a few exceptions, was overlooked. Everyone was living in the past.

Q: Well, you were there from '89 to?

WINN: '89 to '92.

Q: Who was Consul General?

WINN: When I arrived and for the first two years, a fellow by the name of Phil Wilcox, whom I had never met. He chose me sight unseen from among the candidates. The last of the three years there was Molly Williamson. She is still in the Foreign Service. Phil has retired.

Q: I've interviewed Phil. When you got there, were you seeing Jerusalem with fresher eyes than the people around you do you think?

WINN: Not the people immediately around me because they had been in the thick of it, to their credit. I was shocked when I got there, shocked by the contrast between Jerusalem I imagined and had recalled from Amman, and the Jerusalem, that I found. I recall from Amman in the '70s that there and there was scarcely a distinction between West and East Jerusalem. Israelis on both sides, Palestinians on both sides. I got there in '89 to find a war zone, no Israelis in the East, but the attitudes had changed so gradually over the years that what I found didn't shock everyone

else. Everyone else was living in a state of siege that they had taken for granted for sometime and that was more startling to me. I did not expect to find a place where no Israeli socialized with a Palestinian, where you could not have a dinner in your house and mix Israelis and Palestinians. It was incredible, because you could do that back in the '70s. I didn't expect to find a city so strictly divided that no Israeli would set forth in Arab East Jerusalem and regard us as either insane or traitorous for living over there.

Q: Well, what had caused this?

WINN: The Intifada, the stonings. At that time, just stonings would occasionally kill people. I mean our cars, the minute I got there, you know, we had to have Mylar tape reinforcement put in the windows because if you were hit in the head by a big rock it would kill you. The Israelis went around with pistols. For all I know they do to this day. Its so startling to see grown men walking around wearing holsters, I mean it was all so primitive, particularly when they would make the occasional foray for business reasons over into East Jerusalem. I would sit on my porch and look at the main road from Jericho to Jerusalem and watch these kids. In those days we didn't have video cameras and I wish we did. I could see the kids down below the road, get their rocks, I would see them spot a car and I would see them stone it and I would see the drive get out with a pistol and start shooting at them. I wish to heck I had video cameras, they hadn't been invented when I was there. Then I of course, we ourselves were incessantly stoned. They would just see a foreigner and just throw rocks at them. My car was burned up. It was burned in front of the house. So, it was such a strain, given my wife's inability to walk by them

Q: Oh boy. Well, what about how did you find relations between the consulate and the Palestinians?

WINN: Well, our brief there in many ways was to deal with the Palestinians, whereas the embassy in Tel Aviv was supposed to deal with the Israelis. Now, of course, that's very glib and superficial, but of course in Jerusalem we deal with the Israelis, and Phil did a very good job of maintaining contacts on both sides. The only Israeli officials we were permitted to deal with were at Jerusalem City Hall. We didn't go to the Foreign Ministry. We had the absurd spectacle of the Embassy personnel driving an hour up the hill to go to the Foreign Ministry, which was across the street from us. Phil had a wide range of non-governmental Israeli contacts. I had a very few. The Israelis couldn't stand the sight of us, not to put too fine a point on it. They resented our presence in Jerusalem, as did the Israeli man on the street. The minute they found where I lived, that was pretty much the end of any contact with any Israelis, with the exception of a few fringe peace groups. The fact that we lived in the Israeli East Jerusalem was a subject of intense dislike, intense anger even. I remember even before, in Paris, the Israeli embassy diplomats I dealt with were furious that we still lived in, we had a presence in East Jerusalem. So, it was as contentions relationship with the Israelis. So with the exception of the Consul General, we dealt about exclusively with Palestinians. Remember that half or more than half of our staff was in East Jerusalem. The American staff below me. I remember being a little envious of the fact that most of them lived in safe West Jerusalem. We all got a hardship post, we all got a hardship differential in Jerusalem. But I was one of only three or four people in East Jerusalem getting brained by rocks. That's the way it goes and I gather we've all now pretty well left East Jerusalem.

Q: How about the contacts with the Palestinians?

WINN: Well, they were more than happy to see us at every level. That was our bread and butter, the usual list of cast of characters, all of whom are still pretty much active today. I mean Saeb Erekat - I almost rented a house from him down in Jericho. We used to see him all the time. They were happy to see us on the one hand and on the other hand, it was a litany of misery and complaining. The conversation was pretty much all the same as it has been for 30 or 40 years. So, it was kind of a boring job, frankly. The same damn thing over and over. Discouraging.

Q: How did you find relations with the embassy at that time?

WINN: Oh, its always been kind of an odd strained relationship. "You're the Arab lovers up the hill." I would go down once a week to attend their staff meetings, that would take all morning, after all it was an hour drive down, an hour drive up, the meeting itself. Remember, few people recall that Jerusalem is an independent post. We do our own reporting. People always assume we have to have our reporting approved by the embassy, that's not true. We'd send stuff directly in from Jerusalem. So, it didn't always track with what the embassy wanted to hear. Often its a function of the personalities, the Consul General and the ambassador and you know, Phil was his own man, as have all the consuls general there been. I think he worked out a pretty good *modus vivendi* with the embassy. In later years Ambassadors and Consul Generals scarcely spoke to each other. I wont name names, but rather recently there have been tales of shouting matches and epithets flung between the Consul General and the ambassador in more recent years. He worked out a good *modus vivendi*, a mutual respect.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

WINN: Totally forgotten. I met him twice in the three years I was there. The DCM with whom I dealt was Mark Parris, who later became assistant secretary of NEA and ambassador to Turkey and has since moved on to the private sector.

Q: How were we viewing Intifada? Did we see this as a futile effort?

WINN: Well, toward the end of my stay by the way we had the Madrid Peace Conference, but we saw it as, certainly an irritant. Another irritant and a major element of our reporting were the Israeli settlements. Steve Kashkett, whom had been the terrorism guy in Paris, whom I was instrumental in bringing to Jerusalem, was our settlements guy. They of course have expanded exponentially since then. To his credit, Phil Wilcox, we didn't have a very close relationship, but I've got to give him credit, was constantly on top of the settlement and human rights issues. Phil should have been a lawyer. I've got to hand it to him. He wrote detailed and damning cables pointing out human rights and legal abuses of the Israelis' expansion into East Jerusalem. There was a constant keeping an eye on Israeli encroachments on the West Bank. Now, that didn't answer your question. Weekly we would get the latest Palestinian communique of the Intifada resistance, which eventually I think numbered into the hundreds. We had a wonderful political officer there, Marc Foulon, who has since left the Foreign Service in frustration, actually writing speeches for Richard Haas now and he would translate these things every week. I gather to some

extent we succeeded in focusing Washington's attention. George Bush finally tied down some of the financial aid, on condition that it could not be used in the settlements. As the months wore on, I found it increasingly irritating to drive to work; I risked my wife and I getting killed by these stupid kids with rocks. I often would pull over to lecture them in Arabic. I would say, "Listen you miserable little sons of bitches, don't you realize who I am? I'm half on your side!" It's so funny, that you could sit there and have a cup of coffee with them. In other words it wasn't personal with the guys who burned my car up. You know, I never feared them for my, never one for my bodily danger as an individual in Jerusalem. One could be a random target, but assassination was not a factor. Although we had no guards, I lived openly. It was always a political thing, these kids throwing rocks at the car because they saw a foreigner and thought it was great fun.

Q: Did you fly the flag?

WINN: Well, that might have almost been a provocation. In any case, we had diplomatic plates. Again in my house, I lived in the thick of it. I repeat, my car was burned up in front of the house, torched in front of the house, but I never once worried about my physical safety as an individual. Oddest situation.

Q: Well, what about monitoring what was going on in the West Bank?

WINN: We would drive around talking to the Palestinians all over the place. We encountered endless Israeli checkpoints as we monitored the settlements physically. That was more Steve's job, but I did my fair share of it. We were met with hostility of course by the settlers. Often the Israeli guards of these individual settlements wouldn't allow us in the settlement, and often they would and we would physically monitor - this house, this wall has been extended. We'd go around and just eyeball everything constantly, particularly Steve. He wrote some wonderful cables counting houses and settlements.

Q: Was there supposedly a stop on the enlargement of the settlements?

WINN: There were so many claims by the Israelis. They would say, we aren't building, just "natural expansion." There was at one point a freeze on new settlements, but they never to this day claimed to put a freeze on this enlargement of existing settlements even if the enlargement was on the next mountaintop. So, they would always get around the restrictions. As I recall there was finally a freeze on settlement building, on new settlements, but never on the expansion of existing ones. Now its quite shocking to see how enormous these settlements are. My God, there's one, Ma'ale Abumim, just basically a huge suburb of Jerusalem, halfway down to the Dead Sea by now. These settlements are enormous suburbs, the size of Reston. Some of them are just a few trailers on a hill, but some of them are huge, huge complexes. Most people don't realize that.

Q: How about American Jews who were also Israelis? Did you have much to do with them?

WINN: Again, to them, to all Israelis, the consulate was pretty much the enemy. It was bizarre how we in the consulate would cling to American policy in order to maintain a hard line, and in

other ways conveniently avoid touching on other aspects of American policy - such as the fact that to this day, the USA does not acknowledge Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem - a fact we were never permitted to mention despite the fact that in the lobby of the consulate, for all I know to this day, there is the old original plaque that says, "The American Consulate General In Palestine." Now that is a provocation to any Israeli who came in. Our international mailing address was always American Consulate General Jerusalem - we would never put Jerusalem, Israel. That's why I say our pathetic little attempt to hold the course but of course we didn't use the international main anyway so because we didn't acknowledge Israeli sovereignty. We were the enemy to the Israelis.

Q: What was your impression of how the Israelis on the West Bank?

WINN: The Americans particularly the American Israelis that we were really traitors, but they couldn't stand us. Every once in a while the settlers committee on the West Bank, most of them were American Jews, Americans, would come in and talk to Phil. They'd put on a suit and tie. I was always struck by that. The Israelis never put on a suit. They would show appropriate respect and come in and have a meeting with Phil and he would hear them out. It was a contentious relationship.

Q: Were we reporting on human rights violations and that sort of thing?

WINN: Oh, boy were we. The annual human rights report was the major event of the year of the Consulate General. Again, that job was like being nibbled at by swarming bees, it was anything but fun. There was not a fun moment. The human rights reports was certainly one of the most agonizing exercises where traditionally, the Consulate General would send in a tough draft and it would be whittled back both by the embassy and by Washington. We would reach agonizing compromises, and I always thought we did a heroic job. I haven't read it in 15 years. I just walked away from that place. Remember my wife died there, so I just walked away. One of our major products was the human rights report in which I thought we acquitted ourselves well.

Q: How did you get your information?

WINN: From Israeli human rights groups, who were vigilant, and Palestinian human rights groups, the Palestinian al-Haq was the Palestinian group that did a very good job. Betsellem was Israeli equivalent. And from our own monitoring and endless talking. It was just a lot of hard, scut work, hard research, going out and talking to people, interviewing people, comparing the notes, comparing notes of the Israeli groups and the Palestinian groups. It was hard research and my hats off to our political officers and the rest of the Consulate staff, including our overworked Consular section. I did, too.

Q: How about did we get involved in trying to protect Palestinian-Americans who were over there?

WINN: Yes, but we worked on behalf of Palestinian non-Americans, in the sense of reporting on Israeli incursions, when they would just plant a settlement in the middle of nowhere. The Israelis would buy up property in East Jerusalem or occupy property in East Jerusalem. I would go, often

Id find myself in East Jerusalem physically eyeballing the settlers with their guns who would then eyeball me. I mean, not threateningly, but they just didn't like to see us and encroachments when the Israelis would go in and just occupy houses in East Jerusalem, just occupy houses that allegedly had been Jewish in biblical times. Many settlements, I've forgotten your question by the way.

Q: Did we get involved with?

WINN: Oh, American Palestinians. Not that often. We would occasionally, yes, when one was arrested. Anne Barry, not to be confused with the consul general, the woman who was chief of our consular section, was very active. Any time a Palestinian-American was detained she would be over there at the prison and trial. Anne Barry, I think she's still in the Foreign Service, we were witnesses at the occasional trial. Yes, we were quite vigilant. Endless, some of these cases went on and on and on. My stepbrother was recently on a bus in Santa Fe, New Mexico and he fell into conversation with the driver of his bus who turned out to be a Palestinian. My brother-in-law said, "Do you know a fellow named David Winn?" He said, "Yes, David Winn saved my house from demolition." I don't remember this incident. That was another thing, we were often involved when the Israelis would threaten to blow up a house and we would occasionally, apparently, I don't recall this guy recalled me personally succeeding in preventing his house from being blown up. I take that story with a grain of salt, just an example of our high profile out there.

Q: What was your impression of how the Israelis were treating the Palestinians?

WINN: Constant humiliation just inside the law. The Palestinians were used to humiliation, with good reason. The Israeli soldiers at checkpoints, would never miss a chance to harass. They would make life difficult for the Palestinians. They would seize on small violations of a property deed or of a building permit to destroy the house. The point was to constantly keep the Palestinians off balance. To constantly remind them they were there at the sufferance of the Israelis. Frankly, the goal was to get them to leave, particularly from East Jerusalem. So, these are small things to the West, but its day to day, day in and day out. Remember this was at a time when there were no bombings in East Jerusalem. Its not like they were a problem to the Israelis, but the goal was basically to humiliate the Palestinians and to make life just miserable enough that they could expand the Israeli presence on the West Bank, let me put it that way. You had the Intifada, which basically was an irritant to any Israeli, who went over to East Jerusalem, but it was not a problem for the Israelis West Jerusalem. It was clear, a constant pressure, lets put it that way.

Q: How about with the other officers, particularly the junior officers there? You know if you have a time of tension like this and things going on, sometimes its hard to keep almost control of the officers because if they see injustices and all they over identify and all this. Was this a problem?

WINN: I take your point. I have to say that the experience of having your car torched - which several officers had - and having rocks thrown at you mitigated to some extent the indignation of seeing Israeli abuses. Over identifying was strangely enough never a problem because the

Palestinians, we got so sick and tired of having rocks thrown at us and our cars blown up and torched, it just irritated the hell out of us. “Can’t you people see where your bread is buttered? Stop trashing us!” So “clientitis” was not a problem. It might have when life was more comfortable on the Palestinian side, but not when we were there.

Q: So, it was sort of a plague on both your houses?

WINN: Plague on both your houses. We were all ready to leave.

Q: What about the Gulf War and its, you left there when?

WINN: Oh, in ‘91, I mean the Gulf War came and went.

Q: Tell me about how.

WINN: Well, we were first of all irritated that Arafat came out and declared on the side of the Iraqis. He thought that was great. So did King Hussein as I recall. I’m trying to get back the chronology of this. We had Jim Baker coming and going. Back in January, ‘91, I heard on the BBC at the crack of dawn that the Iraqis had invaded Kuwait. I got to the consulate to find on my desk an all points NIACT from the ambassador in Kuwait, Ned Howell, in which he said, We’ve seen these press reports that the Iraqis have invaded Kuwait. Its a ridiculous rumor. Now, I cite that as an example that the embassy was taken utterly by surprise and in defense of April Glaspie. People really didn’t see this coming, for all they may say so after the fact. In Jerusalem, it finally got to the point that the hostility in the East became such that we were told to move all our valuables into the embassy, just before the war broke out, so I did take all the clothes to the Consulate because we might have to pull out of East Jerusalem. (My wife was visiting her family in Paris at the time.) Then as tensions began to mount I remember Baker, Secretary of State, had his last meeting with the Iraqis, it broke down. Then, those of us living in the East physically left our houses and apartments in the East and moved into a hotel in East Jerusalem and within 24 hours we had launched Operation Desert Storm. We were woken up in the middle of the night by phone calls and said from the communicator. He said, We have just launched Operation Desert Storm. That reminds me of a colleague in Yemen when he was down in ‘74. We had a consulate general in Taiz, Yemen. He was woken up in the middle of the night and told that Richard Nixon had just put the U.S. on Nuclear Alert Five. He said, I didn’t know what to do but to pull the blinds. That’s the way I felt, so I just went back to sleep, but within an hour the Israeli air raid sirens began going off. We had been issued gas masks. We all had our gas masks and we were all hurriedly hustled into various rooms of the hotel, where there were taped rooms with all the other hotel guests which included a large group of American Hasidic Jewish young men, teenagers. So there we all were. I had my radio and to my incredulity I was listening to the communicator talking to the DCM down there saying “We’re getting SCUD missiles down in Tel Aviv, hitting Tel Aviv. This was all incredible. At that point the news began to spread around Jerusalem. The Hasidic young men crowded into the bathroom to shave off their beards, because they could not get a close fit on the gas masks otherwise, and they turned on the TV. Were all in this small room taped up and the only thing on Israeli TV was a rock and roll band, which they left on to get the news. Now this quickly became intolerable. This I mean the Israeli rock and roll music. So, I said, I have to go to the consulate. I’ve got to get out of here. The Israeli soldier

wouldn't let me leave the room. I finally talked my way out of there blessedly and made my way to the consulate and we even took a few SCUDS over the next few months in Jerusalem itself. I don't think we took any that night. As you know, only one Israeli was killed during throughout the Gulf War, and that was from a heart attack.

Q: How about were you getting in with Americans and others trying to get out of Israel at that time?

WINN: We weren't. The rush to the airport came from the Hasidic Jewish community. They were the first to leave. A notorious display of Let me out of here, Kimosabi. But people had already left to some extent. There was a rush for the exits, yes. Now in our case the families had already been given what is the term, not ordered departure, but voluntary departure. My wife as it turned out was already in France on vacation. She had chosen that time to go on vacation, and this became ordered departure, so the dependents that were already out were not permitted back in to her fury, to her absolute fury. No, it always remained voluntary. It always remained voluntary, but anyone who had the misfortune to be out then was not allowed back in. So, many wives did stay on throughout.

Q: I think that was a real problem. I've gotten through interviews with Bill Brown who was ambassador.

WINN: Well, that's it, the name I couldn't recall. The problem lay in the Department's not allowing those who had happened to be out of the country to return. That was Renee's dilemma - she couldn't get back to Jerusalem.

Q: He was ambassador to Israel and then with Chas Freeman, particularly the problem with Saudi Arabia. We had a lot of Americans who were essential in running the oil fields even though they were closest to the action and if we got people, Americans out of other parts of the area, then that would cause the Americans, so I mean it was a very tricky situation.

WINN: Yes, we were always voluntary. I remember the fury of my wife trying to get back, couldn't get back to Jerusalem. Wasn't permitted. Finally she came up with a plan of renting a house on the Israeli on the Egyptian side of the border down at Gaza. At least she could be within commuting distance to Jerusalem. By that time the war had ended before she implemented this plan. I remember that Bill Brown wanted it "ordered" for some reason and never got it. He was angry for a different reason. He wanted to get more money for the excuses if it was ordered. I've forgotten the reason why.

Q: I think then if it was there it was under government orders and that meant they had to support the people who left.

WINN: Who left, right, as opposed to those who stayed.

Q: Otherwise it was sort of like a vacation.

WINN: Yes, but yet they couldn't come back. I remember being particularly irritated with Phil,

because we had about a 48 hour notice that the war was going to start and I got on the phone to tell my wife to come back in a hurry. But the Department wouldn't let her come back, even though the hostilities hadn't begun. However, DCM Paris down in Tel Aviv allowed family members quietly to return without blabbing to the Department, even after the war had begun. He showed common sense in a practical concern for family welfare. Screw the rules. So, they really did diddle the family members. As I assume they diddle unto this day, but that was minor. Finally, because of her MS, after six weeks into this I had to leave to join her. You know, she couldn't even walk by then. I finally left Jerusalem to my bitter dismay. I didn't want to leave the action. I stayed for with her for three weeks, then returned. She came back a few weeks later.

Q: You talked about the Hasidic Jews.

WINN: Yes, that was not a very seemly spectacle, and many American Israelis, they got the hell out, too. We all had our gas masks. Some took it seriously, others didn't. I remember the Newsweek bureau chief Ted Stanger wouldn't even own one, much less put one on. He's a friend to this day now, he lives in Paris. It was an eerie feeling to be sitting in a restaurant and hear the siren go off and then to see the SCUDS at night. See the scuds go over, you could see them physically go on down to Tel Aviv.

Q: There must have been a certain amount watching these things head towards Tel Aviv?

WINN: Yes, I mean, yes, well of course. Excuse me, I've got someone at the door.

Q: We were talking about you know watching the things heading down.

WINN: Yes, yes, down to Tel Aviv. We had a few hits in Jerusalem, but again no one hurt.

Q: How about, I mean, you know in your part and your fellow officers to see the Israelis jumping up I mean the Palestinians jumping up and down with joy. That must have really...

WINN: That really rankled us. We continued to live in these hotel rooms and we continued to go there to do our reporting realizing that there was no physical danger to us. The fact that has really irritated the hell out of us, yes, of course. The idiocy of Arafat declaring for Saddam. We had to tell him how stupid that was, and we just would press on with our reporting. I always take the Arabs with a grain of salt in any of their public displays. They felt they had to do it and we kind of rolled our eyes.

Q: Did you have any you and your colleagues have any feel for Arafat and his leadership?

WINN: Its funny, Arafat was a dimly perceived figure We dealt with the Palestinian fellow named Hussein al-Husseini who died last year of a heart attack, but they would pay obeisance to Arafat, but we really had a very strong impression of a local, a local leadership - Hussein and his deputies. Arafat is a dim figure.

Q: He was in Tunisia.

WINN: He was in Tunisia.

Q: Traveling around.

WINN: Our day to day contacts with the local guys. They had to tow the line when he came out and declared in favor of Saddam and of course, King Hussein for that matter. It's funny, the Americans seemed to have felt in Jordan they were in greater physical danger for some reason. They really pulled out fast there. There seems to be a greater sense of urgency. Well, its true though to be fair, we left East Jerusalem, of course, that makes sense. They were surrounded. So, as it turned out none of these bodily threats against Americans never did transpire.

Q: Well, you left there before the war ended is that right?

WINN: Yes, yes, and came back just two days after it ended.

Q: While the war was going on, did you begin to notice a change in temperature in the Palestinians as they were watching what we were doing and all?

WINN: You mean more hostility?

Q: Well, in a way less hostility, I mean a realization that Saddam wasn't going to get anywhere?

WINN: Of course, I wasn't on the ground, but I will say when we got back I didn't discover any particular anger. The Arabs, the Palestinians are always going to see which way the wind is blowing. I didn't discover any resentment when I got back. The war was over and that was the end of that and okay, lets move on. If that helps you. Had I been there I might have noticed the fact that they accepted this with some resignation. But it was amazing how it was back to business as usual when I got back. It was back to the peace process. The Gulf War was almost forgotten.

Q: On the personal side, it must have been a terrible strain on you obviously on your wife with this MS.

WINN: The house, the famous house in East Jerusalem, was a three story house so two of the stories were the living quarters and the third was a beautiful pool down below out, which I maintained out of my own pocket. Indeed the first year I was there was spent I must say in total preoccupation with her inability to get from floor to floor of the house, because her condition had worsened in Paris. Had her condition been as bad in Paris when I bid for the job, I never would have done so, and would have taken an offer to be DCM in Madagascar which of course in retrospect I should have done Renee would have had much more personal care there - household staff, etc. My first year there was spent in equipping the house for a handicapped person, to include spending \$10,000 of my own money to bring in an elevator, a British made elevator. So, I was so distracted the first year. Inexplicably, the Deputy in Jerusalem is not granted the "perks" that a DCM in an Embassy is - no household staff or expenses. So it was hard finding people to help. The Israeli doctors would not set foot in East Jerusalem. I had to physically go up and take Renee to physical therapy in West Jerusalem and take her back. You can imagine. Half the day I

wasn't even in the consulate. So, that was a big strain, yes. But Renee came back after the war, and passed away of liver cancer at Hadassab Hospital once she got back. It was one thing after another. No one looks back with fond memories of Jerusalem. It tends to chew up everyone who serves there. Phil did well. He later became head of S CT and acquired the title of ambassador, but other consuls general, it was almost as if the job cast a cloud over their career. It beats me why anyone would want to be consul general out there frankly.

Q: Did you ever get involved in, I mean to Israel proper, there was this constant stream of congressmen playing obeisance to... sort of like the ones that go to Rome and hit the Pope to make sure they look good to their constituents. How about on your side of the thing?

WINN: They would come up and mainly want to see Teddy Kollek, the mayor, and occasionally they would want to, tour East Jerusalem and would want a settlements tour, not very often. We always had a bit of a tussle there. When they went to the Foreign Ministry they would be accompanied by someone from the embassy. When they went to see Teddy Kollek, they would be accompanied by someone, Phil or if he wasn't there, by me, and this always confused them because the embassy didn't deal with the mayor. Again, we always had the same problem: the Israelis would want to accompany visitors around the old city, and we would tell congressmen that they should not be accompanied by the Israelis around the old city since it was not officially under Israeli control. We had these absurd turf battles that they should be accompanied by me or Phil or someone or an embassy officer around the old city, but that we would not accept an Israeli escort. We wouldn't go with them if they insisted on an Israeli escort. Often a Congressman would take the Israeli position and insist that the Consulate officer not come! I remember once or twice giving senators, or congressmen a tour of the West Bank settlements, who was the guy? Senator Kerry the fellow who lost a leg in Vietnam, I toured him around. But many congressmen weren't that interested in the settlements.

Q: What about Teddy Kollek? What was your impression of him?

WINN: Well, I must say, I have to say that he pretty much lived up to his billing. You know so often these guys you know present one face, but no I think he was sincerely appalled by the settlements and the takeover of Palestinian housing in East Jerusalem. I think he was sincerely appalled by the encroachments in East Jerusalem. I heard him on TV recently and he talked that way privately.

Q: Did you get a feel or was this purely coming from the Israeli side of the really hardlined settler types and all this?

WINN: No, I think they were harder lined than you could imagine. We would occasionally go talk to them, but boy they were bristling with guns. You would go into these places and almost invariably American immigrants from the Bronx. These guys were tough. I always referred to the average settler as a failed filling station attendant from the Bronx and that's only a slight exaggeration. These were just the worlds losers come out there to find meaning in their lives and they would set up these fortresses and they sure didn't want to talk to us. They were pretty mean guys and still are. Now, you got the occasional visionary, sincerely motivated by religion. But they were just a blinkered group if ever there was one out to recreate whatever they wanted to

recreate on a mountaintop.

Q: Were they getting solid support from the Israeli government?

WINN: I think so sure. The Israeli government had troops around these settlements. Yes.

Q: Looking at subsidies?

WINN: Oh, subsidies, the whole thing, sure, sure. I mean they are a pretty mean bunch out there and I don't know what to add.

MIKE METRINKO
Consul General
Tel Aviv (1989-1993)

Michael John Metrinko was born in Pennsylvania in 1946. He graduated from Georgetown University in 1968. After entering the Foreign Service in 1974, his postings have included Ankara, Damascus, Tehran, Tabriz, Krakow, Kabul, Tel Aviv and special assignments in Yemen and Afghanistan. Mr. Metrinko was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well, then, so you went with your mother.

METRINKO: I took my mother to Tel Aviv, yes.

Q: And you went to Tel Aviv. You were there from when to when?

METRINKO: I was there from the summer of 1989 until the late summer of 1993. I extended at post. I did a four-year assignment.

Q: Just to sort of round out the thing, did we open up our embassy again in Kabul?

METRINKO: It's still not open.

Q: Yes.

METRINKO: And that's been from 1989 until now, and the Mujaheddin have still not taken over the city. And I'm sure all the CIA people who kept insisting it was going to happen imminently, have now conveniently forgotten what they were saying.

Q: Well, let's go to Tel Aviv. First let's talk a bit about the embassy, the ambassador, and here is a very high-powered embassy - it always has been - what was sort of the atmospherics and the people who were involved on the ground? Then we'll talk about the situation there and what you did.

METRINKO: Our embassy in Tel Aviv, at least in those years, '89 to '93, was a tortured place. How do I want to say this? It was four years of people with raw nerves who were there for a variety... very few people were there for straight old professional reasons, as in "I want a Middle East assignment; this looks interesting." We had American Jews who were there to rediscover what they thought might be their homeland. We had American - how do I want to say this word? - I don't want to say "fanatic" Christians, but American Christians who were there to find Christ.

Q: *Yes.*

METRINKO: We had a rather large number of Mormons there, because the Mormons think of Israel as a fairly important place. It was a place where people went for lots of reasons that had nothing to do with professionalism - religious, psychological reasons. And it was a place where the word *happy* did not exist.

Q: *Who was the ambassador - Bill Brown?*

METRINKO: Bill Brown was the ambassador when I arrived. And he was the ambassador there for approximately two and a half years after I got there. The DCM was Mark Parris. He had just arrived at post about a month or so before I did. And of course, what we had happening in the country was a full-blown *Intifada*. The uprising was going on all around the West Bank and Gaza. This was at a time when our relations with the Palestinians were not good and at a time when our relations with Israel were not conducted by the embassy but conducted directly out of Washington and New York, so the embassy was very often shunted aside when it came to dealing with the Government of Israel.

Q: *Well, now, how did sort of this religious mix of people, particularly those who wanted to be in Israel to find their soul or their roots or whatever the hell you want to call it, translate itself into a... It sound like it could be a touchy situation, because almost anything you said could be taken the wrong way.*

METRINKO: I'll put it this way. The embassy in Israel, the American staff, was one of the most bigoted, prejudiced, racist, completely non-impartial groups of people I had ever worked with, and that went in every direction. We had some who were so pro-Arab they couldn't see straight, others who were so pro-Jewish that anything the Government of Israel did was holy writ. That went all the way up to and included the ambassador. It was an embassy of people who were basically not very professional, and it was a depressing, unhappy place to be for many people.

Q: *Well, let's talk about your work there. No, let's talk about the situation there. You say Intifada. What were you all seeing, and how were you dealing with this, really, revolt of Palestinian rock-throwing youth and military attempts to repress this?*

METRINKO: Well, it was an uprising by the Palestinian people, who were very, very tired and weary of living in an area that could only be defined as apartheid in full bloom and living as not even second-class citizens, but living as non-people in an area controlled by a very oppressive, very heavy-handed Jewish military presence. How did the embassy, how did this impact on my

work? The Consular Section was a big and busy one. I had more than 30 FSNs and, oh, I think seven or eight FSOs. We were responsible for all consular affairs in Gaza, which had more than a million Arabs, Palestinians, and to which we were not supposed to go. We were responsible for all consular affairs, of course, in the State of Israel. We were responsible for a fair amount of consular work in the West Bank, and we were also responsible for much of the consular work in southern Lebanon.

Southern Lebanon is the easiest. I'll start there. Southern Lebanon was occupied by the Israeli Army. Lebanese who lived in the so-called "security zone" could not go to Beirut for consular services, and in fact in Beirut we did not have a functioning consular section most of the time that provided consular services. So if you were Lebanese, you went for consular services to Damascus or Cyprus. If you were from south Lebanon, you came down to Israel and to the embassy. This meant that if you were from south Lebanon, you did not speak, of course, Hebrew; you spoke Arabic. Why was I dealing with the West Bank? In theory, the consulate general in Jerusalem was responsible for consular services in the West Bank, but the consulate general in Jerusalem was not accredited to the Israeli Government. Therefore, whenever they had to deal with the Central Government of Israel, even though that government was located by and large locally in Jerusalem, they would have to contact the embassy for us to arrange appointments, for us to arrange access or *entrée*. If someone had problems - a Palestinian American, for example, was put in prison in the West Bank - it was the embassy that had to arrange for access by somebody from the consulate to go and visit, at least initially. We had to arrange for appointments with the police. It went on and on like this. It meant that I worked on a daily basis with the consular people from Jerusalem, every day on the phone, constant visits there or their coming down to see us. We did a lot of consular business together, as a matter of fact, just to make sure that we kept the consular relationship going, despite the bad relations between the embassy and the consulate. That coldness was never true of the Consular Sections. We worked together constantly.

The Gaza problem. Gaza is the Gaza Strip and the city of Gaza. We were responsible, my section, for all consular affairs or all consular matters related to the Gaza strip. There was an embassy ruling that said "No embassy officer, unless he or she has an explicit permission on a case-by-case basis from the ambassador or the DCM, can enter the Gaza Strip or the West Bank. So this meant...

Q: What was the rationale behind that?

METRINKO: What was the rationale? The rationale was supposed to be "security concerns." This played very nicely into Israeli hands, because the Israelis thus made sure that people from the American Embassy never went to the West Bank and very rarely to Gaza, so that we did not have a good idea of what was happening there. The consulate people from Jerusalem were allowed to go, of course, to the West Bank. They did not go to Gaza at that point. This meant that even though there were cities in the West Bank that were fine, easy, we could get there very easily, we simply never went there - cities like Tulkarm, Jenin, and Nablus. They were close. I could have been there in a 30-minute drive. I went there once at night, for example. And I did more traveling than most of the people in the embassy. In fact, I did far more than almost anyone else in the embassy. I was always traveling around the State of Israel. I was frequently in Gaza,

frequently into the West Bank, but that was because I was doing consular work and I was accompanying either consular people in Jerusalem or I got permission. Soon I realized no one from the Consular Section had been to Gaza for a couple of years before I got there... The head of USIA, for example, in the embassy in Tel Aviv, whose name I have (thank goodness) forgotten, used to brag that he had never been to Gaza and saw no reason to go there. He was fanatically pro-Israel. I could not imagine anyone being that unprofessional and serving the United States, that he refused to go into a whole area that was part of his responsibility. But he was incredibly Zionist, to the point where it was embarrassing to talk to him. And he later partially retired in Israel to a kibbutz there. This was what was going on. It was a time for four years when there were constant street problems. What's going on this week, for example, in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza with the uprising reinvigorated? What's going on all the time there? We had shootings, we had bombings, we had large numbers of people being hauled into prison. We had a lot of Americans getting caught up in this. American protest groups came to Israel. They got arrested.

Q: *They were protesting on what?*

METRINKO: Well, in Israel itself - Israel, West Bank, and Gaza - we had at that point something over 100,000 American citizens residing there. They were Jewish Americans, they were Palestinian Americans, and there were a fair number of religious-based Americans, Christians especially who were there as missionaries or priests or nuns assigned to the various churches, monasteries, what have you, hospitals, schools. We had groups coming in. For example, I remember at one point when the *Intifada* was especially heavy, probably '92, I would guess, we had a group of something like 30 or 40 Americans arrive. It was one of your solid middle-class group of aging liberals who were going to...

Q: *Children of the '60s.*

METRINKO: Who had gotten a little bit older. It included a few priests, nuns, etc., that group, absolutely fine people who decided that they were going to enter the West Bank despite the efforts of the Israeli police to stop them. So they went up to the northern border of the West Bank and tried walking across, near the Golan Heights, if I remember correctly. They all got arrested. We had about 30 arrest cases in one night. What I did for that was... I knew that they were going to have problems if they went up there. I had already assigned consular officers, pairing them with FSNs, got them all set to go up and conduct a whole series of prison visits that same night. They were arrested in the evening; they all had prison visits from us that same evening. We sent out approximately 30 arrest cables to the State Department that same evening, and by the next day or so they were all released. This was going on.

Q: *Something like this, I would imagine that... you know, normally if you have an arrest case you've got to take care of it, and something like this, I would assume that the ambassador would go up to somebody in the Ministry of the Interior and say, "Are you out of your mind?"*

METRINKO: Bill Brown didn't give a damn, quite basically. He was extremely pro-Israel. He hated Arabs, and he would say so. He only used the word *Arab* when he hyphenated it with *terrorist*. He would say "Arab-terrorist" often in conversation. He had little or no contact with

Arabs in the area.

Now what we had were constant arrests of American citizens, Palestinian Americans, basically, by the Israeli armed forces, and a constant refusal by the Israelis to inform us that Americans had been arrested. Approximately a month after I arrived in Israel, two young Americans, aged 15 and 16 years old, were arrested. Their arrests were reported to us by their family. They were first cousins. And the Israelis denied, as they always denied, they had ever heard of these two guys, the two young kids. They denied it, denied it, denied it. We kept insisting. We knew that they had been picked up. The Israelis kept saying, No, we don't have them. And then about a week later, the body of one of the young boys was discovered, shot in the back, lying dead in a *wadi* - with Israeli bullets, I might add. He'd been killed by the Israeli soldiers. There was a bit of a brouhaha. Even the ambassador had to get a little bit involved, despite his inclinations. What I did at that point was to go up to Ramallah, where the Israeli army had a sort of command headquarters, with the mother and the young sister of the other missing boy and basically sat in the office of the commander. I was accompanied also by the head of the Consular Section from Jerusalem, and we sat there until he finally told us that they had located the other boy. And then we insisted on seeing the other boy and went up to the prison that night to see him. But it was that sort of thing.

Q: Did the boy tell you what happened to the other?

METRINKO: He had been picked up stone-throwing, and they had been separated after they got picked up.

Q: In other words, he -

METRINKO: He didn't know what happened to his cousin.

Q: But they were both in Israeli custody, so it wasn't a matter of his getting shot while throwing rocks.

METRINKO: No, both in Israeli custody. The Israelis killed two American while I was there. That was one. They also killed an old man, an American Palestinian who had retired to the West Bank. He was in his home one evening, and Israeli soldiers broke into the house, insisted that he clean graffiti off some walls on the street. This man had a serious heart condition. He and his wife explained that he had a serious heart condition, that he couldn't do any physical activity. The Israeli soldiers made him drag a ladder out, made him ascend the ladder. He died of a heart attack. Reaction from the American Congress: zero, zero.

Q: Did you have a feeling that - in the consular regulations, all of this stuff normally arouses all sorts of reporting on it - there were sort of "world rules" and "Israeli rules," and Israeli rules were different than treating anywhere else?

METRINKO: I had the impression throughout my four years serving as consul general in Tel Aviv, that the Department of State, NEA, and the Department of State, Consular Affairs, did not give a damn about American citizens who were Palestinian in Israel, the West Bank, or Gaza -

that if they could keep it out of the news that was fine, that they weren't going to do anything to rile the Israelis. That was my feeling throughout the time.

Q: Did you have a feeling, too, that you were being monitored, in a way, both by the Israeli intelligence service and by friends of Israel in the United States to see whether you were politically correct on Israel all the time?

METRINKO: Absolutely, completely. Monitored isn't the word - watched constantly. And - how do I want to say this? - threatened, professionally.

Q: How would this go?

METRINKO: I'll give you an example. There was a point when... When did this happen? We were between ambassadors at the time. We had a DCM who was very good, Kent Wiedeman. The Israelis had arrested an American Palestinian, and the Israeli military spokesman declared him guilty of all sorts of terrorist activities, claimed that he had been bringing money and using money for terrorist activities in Israel. I complained to the Israeli Government that the person had been arrested, he had not been tried and found guilty, and said that I considered it inflammatory and unprofessional, etc., for Israeli Government officials to be acting as though he were a tried and convicted criminal, that he was still pretrial status. The Israeli lobby got in touch with Ed Djerejian.

Q: We're talking about APAC, I guess.

METRINKO: Somebody from APAC called up Ed Djerejian, who was then the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs and complained to him that I had gone beyond, that I was going too far. I was warned by the State Department to back down. That was fine. Now about three or four days later, there was a small piece in the Israeli press about what was the Israeli Government's... Oh, Ed first had told Consular Affairs and told the embassy that he would raise this issue. Ed told Consular affairs that he would take care of the issue because we were trying to get access to this man and everything else, and here the Israelis had declared him guilty of terrorism. Ed had said that he would take care of it, that he would raise the issue and that he would treat it very seriously. In the Israeli press a few days later, there was a small article about someone who had just met with Ed Djerejian, and the reporter asked him, did he raise the issue of - I think the man's name was Saleh, if I'm not mistaken - of Saleh, the American terrorist, whatever, and the Israeli official laughed and said, "Yes, he did. He brought it up at lunch, but it's not very serious. We just laughed about it." And I wanted to send that newspaper article to the Department. Our front office stopped me, and they said it would just annoy Ed. That's the way it was handled.

Q: I would have thought working under these conditions... You say you extended. Why?

METRINKO: Israel's a fascinating place. Israel is four or five million individuals, not one of whom is boring. I never had what I would say was a happy day in Israel, but I never had a boring day. I would rather be interested and have interesting work than just sit back and be content. Individuals in Israel, whether they are Jewish, Christian, Muslim, whatever - the individuals

there were fantastic. I had a huge number of what I consider friends. I knew most of the grand rabbis in Israel. I knew them well. I used to go to their homes. I had access to an incredible array of Israelis, both the religious, the ultra orthodox, the non-religious, the military, and I have no problems with individual Israelis. It was our way of *dealing* with them, with the State Department, that gave me problems.

Q: Did you have a feeling that here was essentially the United States being represented in a country that could reach out and jerk us around any way that they wanted because of their political clout in the United States?

METRINKO: Absolutely. It was more than a feeling; it was an absolute certainty. And people there knew, too, or we strongly suspected, that if you did anything that was too out of line it would affect your career. NEA was not going to back you up - never. Consular Affairs was certainly not going to back up anybody. Consular Affairs at that point was headed by - Oh, gosh, what was her name?

Q: Joan Clark?

METRINKO: No, Joan Clark had left. Joan Clark was fantastic. She's the one who sent me to Tel Aviv. She left shortly afterwards. The political appointee from New England.

Q: Oh, yes. And she got into deep kimchi, as they say.

METRINKO: The suspected Clinton passport application. What was her name?

Q: It'll come. But she's from New Hampshire.

METRINKO: New Hampshire. She came to Israel when I was there. It was an amazing trip. This gave me an indication of the sort of leadership we had from the Department of State and Consular Affairs. Let me go back a moment. I am talking about a time when we did not have, at least initially, for the first two years I was there, daily contact with Consular Affairs. Today, everybody is on e-mail. Today, you can communicate all day long, very easily leave messages. At the time I'm talking about, you had to send telegrams. Therefore, anything you sent had to be cleared unless it was a standard visa cable or a standard congressional. It had to be cleared by the front office. You couldn't go back with questions about policy, questions about support, questions about how far can I go, how far can you go, will you help me on this? Because it would have to go through the front office. Therefore there wasn't that good a support system in place yet.

I extended in Israel. I did it for personal reasons as well as professional reasons. My mother was living with me. She was diagnosed in Israel with cancer. I had a choice. I could either leave Israel immediately - this was my second year there - to get her back to the United States for treatment, or I could start treatment in Israel. She and I decided after talking to doctors there to let her go through the treatment there. We paid for it out of our own money, instead of using her insurance in the United States, but the doctors were excellent. Her chief doctor had been at Sloan-Kettering in New York. He went over the potential expenses of medical care. He said,

"Look, by the time you finish the entire series of cobalt radiation treatments, it will cost you as much to pay for everything here as you would pay in incidentals if you were in the United States." So we decided to stay. Because we were going to stay, we had to stay for a longer period of time than my original assignment would have lasted. I asked for an extension to give us four years and thus to be able to take a long R&R right in the middle. So it worked out.

To go back to the assistant secretary of state. The day I came back from R&R... It was home leave, one of the first times in the State Department that I was actually able to get home leave from a post. It was great. I had a month off. About two weeks before I was due to go back, the assistant secretary announced that she was going to Israel on a visit. Fine. She arrived in Israel the day after I did from home leave, but my assistant had done everything, and everything was fine. The Assistant Secretary was Betty Tamposi, Elizabeth Tamposi. She wasn't interested in going to the Consular Section. She wasn't interested in seeing it, and she wasn't interested in meeting any of the FSNs. She was interested enough to meet the American officers at someone's home over a brunch, and then I drove her and her special assistant up to Jerusalem, where she was going to meet with the people from the consular section there. In the car going up, she turned to me and said, "Michael, you've been in the Holy Land for a long time now. Have you ever met the Blessed Virgin Mary?" I know, I can see the expression on your face. I looked at her, and I thought first that I was still going through jet lag, because I had just arrived the day before from a 24-hour trip back. And I said, "Excuse me?" And she said, "Well, have you ever met with the Blessed Virgin Mary?" And I said, "I'm not sure what you mean." She said, "Well, you know, she's been appearing so many places. She's been appearing in Yugoslavia, and she's been appearing at that apartment in Maryland" - that was news to me. She said, "I thought that since this was her home she might have appeared here and that you'd had a chance to talk to her." I looked at her special assistant, who averted his eyes immediately and stared out the window. And I just said, "No, I'm sorry, I never have." Fine, fine. We got up to Jerusalem. Before I could warn the head of the section up there about this, Donna got into the car, and Betty Tamposi -

Q: *Donna - ?*

METRINKO: Donna Sherman, an absolutely wonderful, superb officer who died later in Cairo, absolutely fantastic officer. Donna got in the car and Donna was a rather large woman and very expressive. She sat down, and Betty Tamposi turned toward her and said, "Donna, I'm so glad you're here. I'm glad to meet you." She said, "You know, I wanted to ask you, you're up here in Jerusalem. Have you had a chance to talk to the Mother of God?" And Donna looked at her, and then turned and looked at me, and her eyebrows went all the way up in the air, and I just shrugged, and Donna said, "Well, no, not really." Fine. We get out to the church in Bethlehem. The church in Bethlehem, by the way, was the whole reason Betty Tamposi was in Israel. She didn't seem to care about the consular sections in either place. She wanted to see the church in Bethlehem. We got up to the church in Bethlehem, and the priest whom Donna had arranged to give the tour of the church walked over, and the first question Betty Tamposi said was, "Father..."

Q: *Ha, ha, ha, ha.*

METRINKO: I asked her special assistant later, "What is going on here? Is she flipped, or

what?" He said, "She's been under a lot of stress." She was indeed under a lot of stress. Not long afterward she went passport-application-hunting.

Q: Yes, and it became quite a political scandal in 1988 - no, it was the 1992 election. She was looking for dirt in the passport files against Bill Clinton.

METRINKO: To see whether or not he had actually ever gone to the Soviet Union on a visit when he was a student at Oxford.

Q: And also, I think even there was a rumor that he might have attempted to renounce his citizenship over the Vietnam War.

METRINKO: But that was the kind of support we got from the Department of State. Now, having said that, we did get support in one area. They were absolutely afraid to get involved with Arab-Americans. They were, however, very interested in the problem of the Black Hebrews, and the Black Hebrews are one of the most fascinating consular cases I've ever dealt with. The Black Hebrews, or the Hebrew Israelite Community, were a group of about 1200 black Americans who had migrated to Israel with a charismatic cult leader. His name was Ben Ami Carter. Ben Ami Carter had been a bus driver in Detroit, if I remember correctly, who had had a vision back in the time when black groups were becoming Muslim - Mohammed X, etc. Ben Ami had decided that he was really Jewish, and he had a series of visions and dreams that led him first to go to Liberia looking for the promised land, and then, when he decided that Liberia was not his place, he went to Israel, went in as a tourist, settled down in a small area not too far from the Negev Desert. His followers started to come. And his followers were a very strange group of people. We had, among others, the hairdresser from The Supremes there.

Q: The Supremes being a popular singing group.

METRINKO: I guess we do have to explain The Supremes, don't we?

Q: Well, you know, we're talking about history.

METRINKO: 1966-67. We had the daughter of a bishop. We had a lot of solid, middle-class black Americans who had migrated to Israel and claimed to be going in as tourists and had simply settled there around their leader. Now, the group was a strange group. They dressed in their version of ancient Hebrew/African clothing - long robes, turbans, beautifully embroidered, beautifully colored robes. They looked like what you would envision an Orientalist view of the Middle East circa the year zero. They were vegetarians. They were vegan vegetarians - no meat, no dairy products. They had come in without the Israeli Government really knowing what was going on. They had come in in dribs and drabs and ones and twos and threes and fours, and suddenly the Israelis turned around and realized there were more than a thousand of this community living in a town on the edge of the desert.

Q: Where was their money coming from?

METRINKO: Good question. Well, some of them were escaped felons from the United States.

They had done bank robberies and things like that. There were a number of convictions outstanding for credit card fraud. They had a large... But those were the... Right now I want to say I've always thought those were the exceptions, a couple of people who had done financial crimes at a time when a lot of young black Americans thought that getting the man was okay. It goes back to a time in our history of ultra-ethnic nationalism, ultra-racial nationalism, in the '60s. The money they raised in the United States - they had a large number of followers in the United States - they raised the money. People who went to the community would sell their property and bring the proceeds with them. They also raised money in Israel. They worked illegally in Israel. They made jewelry. They took care of people's houses. They did other things, bits and pieces of work.

Now, what was the situation when I got there? When I had my long conversation with Joan Clark prior to going out to Tel Aviv, she explained about the group to me. She said, "Look, we don't want another Jonestown" - Jonestown being a settlement, a community of Americans who were living in Guyana under the leadership of a somewhat similar cult leader, Jim Jones. They committed suicide *en masse*, or were murdered, depending on the version. But several hundred or a thousand -

Q: I think we're talking of around 800. There was a mass suicide sort of coerced murder. They all drank poison.

METRINKO: And what was going on in Israel at this time, in 1989, was this. The Israeli Government wanted these people out. They were illegal in Israel. They had no residence permits. They could not work legally. They were existing on charity, handouts of money. They were suspected by the consular section of mistreatment of children, to the point of almost torture of children, of coercion, of forcing people to stay in the group, in the community, not allowing people to break out of the cult. There were requests from the United States. People couldn't locate family members who had joined the cult. They couldn't communicate with them. In order to avoid deportation, the entire community had renounced their American citizenship. Therefore, everyone from the leader on down to young children was stateless, and children who were being born - and there were lots of children being born down in the community - were all being born stateless. Israel does not grant citizenship based on birth on the land of Israel. And they no longer had American citizenship, either of the parents, so the children were being born stateless, which was something awful to contemplate down the road. They had highly annoyed the Israeli religious communities and the Israeli Government. They practiced polygamy, which was biblical, but not legal in Israel. And they just looked "other;" they looked different. They were black Americans wearing long robes and turbans who thought that they were the only true Jews and told the Israelis that they were the true Jews and not the Israelis and that the Israelis had gone astray, period. Okay.

Joan Clark said, "We don't want another Jonestown. Whatever you do, please go down there, get that straightened out. That's what we have to do." My predecessor, for reasons I don't understand, had cut off all relations with the group. He didn't want to see them. Once they renounced American citizenship he didn't want them in the Consular Section. There was a serious problem because they needed help. It took about three years, but working with the Israeli Government, the Ministry of the Interior especially, working with the Jewish-American Congress and a

wonderful, intelligent, prescient rabbi who was the head of it in Jerusalem, who saw this as a bombshell for American-Israeli relations, working with the community itself, working with the State Department, we got it solved. It took forever.

Q: How did you come up -

METRINKO: Well, the final arrangement was this. The Black Caucus, number one, was threatening -

Q: This was in Congress.

METRINKO: Yes, the Black Caucus in Congress was threatening retribution against Israeli interests in Congress if the Israelis did anything to this group. That was fine. The Israelis, nonetheless, were trying to get the group out of Israel. They thought they were responsible for every crime that had occurred in the State of Israel. First, I made it a priority to establish relations with the community. I think the first or second day I was in Tel Aviv, I told my chief FSN, I said, "Please call them up, tell them I would like to come down and pay a courtesy call." And that news was greeted with absolute dead silence, and then after a couple of days, "Yes, we'll be happy to receive him." So I went down there and played it straight. "I don't care if you renounced your citizenship or not. I'm still the American Consul General, you still have ties to the United States, and I'm just here to see if there's anything I can do for you." I went over all the problems with them, welcomed them, established a relationship to the point where they started coming back to the consulate, to the embassy, when they needed help, especially for repatriation, especially the younger children, if they could get away from the community and wanted to go back - because very often they had a mother or a father in the United States. There were a lot of divided families in the community. Working with the Jewish-American Congress, convincing the Israeli Government that they had to go easy, and over the course of time, worked out a wonderful deal, where the State Department, Consular Affairs, looked at the whole questions of the renunciations and decided that, except for the top leadership, everyone else had been coerced into renunciation, therefore they were not valid renunciations. Therefore, they could be given their passports back. We even hired a PIT -

Q: A part-time intermittent employee.

METRINKO: We hired a part-time employee just to issue passports. We had to issue more than 1000 passports, and they all had to come in and go through the renunciation of the renunciation ceremony and make sure that everything was on the dotted line. Now we did all this working with the leadership, and the leadership were being excluded. At the same time, working with the Israeli Government and the Jewish-American Congress, we got the Israeli Government to agree to give them residence permits, which gave them permission to work in the country if they got their American passports back. The Israelis wanted to be able to deport them if they had to, but promised they would not unless in an individual case they had a serious reason to. So the Israelis gave them residence permits. We gave them their passports back, and we actually got the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration in the State Department to give a million-dollar grant through IOM, the International Organization for Migration, to this black American community. Now they were American refugees, American citizen refugees, but on the books all of this was

absurd. In fact, it was wonderful. We used the million dollars to pay some of the community's debts to the municipality of Dimona. Dimona was the Negev town where they were living. They had not paid their electric bill or their water bill in lord knows how many years. They paid off their bill, made the municipality deliriously happy. We also used the rest of the money, through IOM, to build a school, and the Department of Education in Israel agreed to fund the teachers, hiring people from the community to be teachers in the school. There were a lot of certified teachers there. So what we had, as I approached my last couple of months at the embassy, were 1200 new black American citizens living in Dimona being rediscovered by the Israeli press as sort of an interesting ethnic composition down there, being rediscovered by the tour buses, so that tour buses would pass by and say, to American foreign tourists, "And there is a community of..." you know, da-da da-da.

Q: Did they sell trinkets?

METRINKO: And they would sell trinkets, and they would sell little pieces of silver jewelry, and they would walk around in their wonderful robes. And they started coming on Israeli TV. They were superb entertainers. They had used their methods of cultural expression, singing and dancing, in their services, and they could sing...

They had taken a sort of Christian Gospel approach to music and applied it to Judaism. It was sort of really "out there." And they were getting awards, and they were going to jazz festivals and everything else, and working out.

Now, this still left the leadership. The leadership were a different kettle of fish. Several of them had outstanding federal warrants. They had renounced their citizenship. Nobody liked the leadership. I did. They were fine. They were my kind of people. They had all been rebels, and they were okay. They were okay with me. They did not have their citizenship because they were the ones named by the other 1100 or whatever as the people responsible for forcing them to give up their citizenship. What we did was, I helped them write sort of *mea culpa* explanations about pressures of society, politics, fear of being deported, etc. that had made them do this. And once again, the State Department came through and sent us permission to reissue passports, and one of my last official acts there was to be able to present his new American passport to the Messianic head of this community. It was great. He came up to the office, and we had a ceremony.

Q: Now, let's talk about another group of Americans I think would be much more difficult, and this would be the Jewish Americans, highly orthodox, maybe Hasidic, maybe not, but of that ilk, who went to Israel, who often seem to be the spearhead of extreme Israeli nationalism.

METRINKO: Orthodox Judaism covers a spectrum of religion. You have the ultra-orthodox, you have the orthodox, you have the Zionist orthodox, and you have the anti-Zionist orthodox, just to name a few. There were a couple of orthodox groups, highly ultra-orthodox groups, that did not accept the existence of a State of Israel, for example, the Satmer group. The Satmer grand rabbi lives in New York City. I had met the Satmer grand rabbi in my old days in Poland, when I hosted him on a visit there once. The Satmer grand rabbi dealt directly, as far as I remember, with the Palestinians. His belief, and the belief of his followers, was that the State of Israel can exist only when the Messiah comes; therefore, anything claiming to be a state, in the absence of

the Messiah, is not real. It is an illegal organization. So we had lots of Satmers, and I was on very good terms with the Satmers. They would help me a great deal with other orthodox groups. You had the Vishnitzer and you had the Bostoner and you had the Lubavitcher. The Lubavitcher grand rabbi, the *rebbe*, as he was called, lived also in New York. In fact, he died when I was in Israel. I had a chance to meet him in New York. I paid a call on him, which was fairly highly publicized. The Lubavitchers were sort of like missionary ultra-orthodox. They felt it was their job to reconvert Jews to true Judaism. They were great. The Lubavitchers actually had an emissary to the embassy who would come in once a week to see me, and he and I would sit down for at least an hour every Friday morning and discuss Israel, Judaism, and various parts of Jewish law, Jewish dietary law, etc. I used to go to his home quite frequently, and I made sure that I took my whole consular staff out to visit their community. Every new group of people went out to visit them. I knew most of the grand rabbis in Israel, and I knew a number of those who were living in the United States because their groups have traditionally lived in the United States. They had an interest in knowing me because they had to deal with the Consular Section constantly. Many of them were American citizens, including some of the grand rabbis. They needed passports. They needed certificates for this, notariats, etc., etc. Their wives and children needed passports and needed documents. If, for example, the Satmers did not like the State of Israel or did not admit to its existence, they certainly had no problems about the government of the United States. That was their country. That was a legal government. Therefore, they always wanted to be sure their American documents were in order, because that's how they lived and traveled. If they weren't American citizens, the members of the ultra-orthodox groups, the ones who followed the grand rabbis, were interested in going to the United States to visit the grand rabbis. The Lubavitcher *rebbe* had a court in New York, in Brooklyn, to which hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands, of people went every week. Everyone in Israel who followed him - and there were many thousands - traveled to the United States to visit him, to ask questions, just to go and look at him. And so it was incumbent on the Lubavitcher community to have good relations with the embassy. We had excellent relations. And that went all up and down. There was a very ultra-orthodox group that ran a medical charity. I went down to Beni Brak, where they had their center, visited them there. They were very impressed. They ran a medical charity where they would match up people in Israel who needed emergency medical treatment and could not be treated in Israel with doctors in hospitals all around the world, but especially in the United States. And if you qualified for this program, if you were a child with a bad heart or something like that and could not be treated in Israel, this group would pay for everything. They would arrange for your passport, arrange for your visa, arrange for your medical transportation, arrange for a member of your family to accompany you, arrange for a place in the United States to stay, arrange for kosher food, arrange for a doctor and all the hospitalization in the United States.

Q: *Admirable.*

METRINKO: It was wonderful. They had a huge warehouse of free medical equipment. If you needed a wheelchair you could go there and get one and bring it back, or not bring it back, as the case might be. But I was on good terms with them, and because I knew so many of them, they introduced me to others, to the point where my Jewish staff, a lot of them were offended that I was on such good terms with the ultra-orthodox community. There are large gaps between the ultra-orthodox and regular secular Jews. Not only gaps, there's a great deal of enmity, hostility.

But you talked about American Jews who came there for nationalist reasons, Zionists. Yes, they existed. I did not have very much personal contact with them, because they were basically living up in the West Bank. They were settlers. The American Jews who lived in Tel Aviv or up and down the coastline were a bit laid back. They were there for family reasons, professional reasons. They had gotten citizenship one way or the other. They tended to be very well educated. There was a large contingent of retired Americans, and a lot of these people were my friends. I'd go to their houses for dinner; they'd come to my house. We'd see each other. We'd go on trips together. I'm still in touch with a lot of them. The last time I saw anyone like this was about a month ago here, when two of them came from Tel Aviv, were visiting Washington, I took them out to dinner. They tended to be more liberal, more live-and-let-live, than the type you're talking about on the West Bank.

Q: I would have thought that these people, the type I'm talking about, the extreme nationalists, were in a way sort of a cutting edge of the right wing of the Likud Party, weren't they?

METRINKO: No, they go beyond Likud. In my mind it's so far gone - I'm trying to think of the name of the party that was so famous. It's just slipped my mind right now.

Q: It's something Oshaz, or something.

METRINKO: Yes. No, not Shaz. I just can't think of it. It was declared illegal in Israel anyway. I would see these guys occasionally when they were arrested. And we did have American Jews who were arrested, a steady stream of American Jews, usually for murder, for murdering Arabs. They tended not to stay in jail long. If you were picked up... it's funny, if you were Arab and you killed a Jew, you would go to jail forever. If you were Jewish and you killed an Arab, it was a temporary stay.

Q: Did it remind you of what you'd heard about the deep South?

METRINKO: Oh, very much. It was worse than the deep South - the deep South in the United States, say 1920 or 1930, yes, very much, absolutely. But... Oh, good Lord, all the names are going, thousands of Hebrew names are going through my mind, and I just cannot think of the name of the Party.

Q: You can add this. You will get a -

METRINKO: But basically, my work brought me into contact with every type of person, everything, Christian, Muslim, Arab, Armenian.

Q: Did you get involved in extreme Christianity, people waiting for the Second Coming?

METRINKO: The Messiah complex.

Q: The Messiah thing or something.

METRINKO: Extreme Christianity, a lot of religion in Israel in that area is extreme. If you

scratch anybody there you're likely to get a fanatic at one point or another. The extreme religious Christians tended to be up in Jerusalem, and they were specifically a Jerusalem problem. I didn't have to be bothered with them very much. In fact, I don't think I ever even met one. I dealt with a fair scattering of American clergy, your standard Roman Catholic monks and this and that and nuns who worked in Israel for good professional reasons. It dealt with visitors who were there for religious purposes, but none of the Christian fanatic types.

Q: Well, you were there '89-93. I mean, we're talking about the Gulf War and all of that. Can you talk about what your experiences were at that time?

METRINKO: The Gulf War was interesting. As we started to build up to the Gulf War, the United States had laid an ultimatum down: the Iraqi forces had to leave Kuwait or there was going to be trouble. I instituted a policy in the Consular Section of burn, of getting rid of documents, which nobody could understand, but I simply said it's from my experience in Iran. I don't know what's going to happen here, but we might as well go through old files. It's time for it anyway. The embassy had a series of meetings. It was handled pretty well by the ambassador, by the DCM. A series of meetings to go through the various emergency evacuation things and this and that - thank goodness, because it was amazing how ignorant many of the American officials are about emergency procedures. And we went through a series of who's essential to embassy operations, and it was rather funny, when consular sections are often looked down on as not being on the cutting edge of anyone's embassy, in one of the meetings I had the economic counselor say, "Well, nothing we do here is essential in the Economic Section. We could all leave tomorrow and nobody would notice. I can't really say that anything I've done as an economics officer has been essential to running an embassy." Well, as it turned out, by the time push came to shove, we ended up with the ambassador, the DCM, one person from USIA, one political officer, nobody from the Economic Section, and the *entire* Consular Section, including all the FSNs. And we ran a 24-hour shift in the Consular Section, for the first several days, anyway.

Q: For the first several days of what?

METRINKO: The first several days of when the Iraqis actually... we started to bomb the Iraqis and they started to retaliate and bomb Tel Aviv.

Q: These Scuds were coming in, these rather inaccurate missiles.

METRINKO: If you're going to get hit by a missile, it doesn't matter if you are targeted with finesse or by mistake.

Q: No, they just drop it.

METRINKO: And in effect, it's better if they're targeted well because then you can stay away from them.

Q: I've heard stories about when all of a sudden the going got rough, an awful lot of groups like both who had been posturing and all this all of a sudden decided it was time to get the hell out of

Israel and head for back to the States. Did you find that?

METRINKO: This was a funny time, a very funny time. First, a lot of Israelis simply ran away. If there had ever been the old, you know, Leon Uris myth of *Exodus* and everything else.

Q: You're talking about the '48 War and all.

METRINKO: Yes, all Israelis are brave and heroes and all that. They took off like rabbits. They disappeared. They ran. I mean, it was almost funny to watch. To give you an example of how many people ran, the local newspaper decided to send a reporter to an old-age home in Tel Aviv to see how people who had gone through World War II in Europe were faring now. They got to the old-age home, and all the pensioners were still there, but there was no staff. All the doctors, all the nurses, all the administrators had taken off. The only people who were there taking care of the old people were the Arab char force. And this was reported in the newspapers, that the entire Jewish staff had deserted the hospital.

Q: Where did they go to?

METRINKO: They went to the United States, they went to Europe, they went off to various kibbutz's, they went up to Jerusalem. They just disappeared. Streets in Tel Aviv were empty. One of my consular officers, who lived about a block from me, one night there was a knock on his door, and a man looked at him and said, "You and I are the only two people who have stayed on this entire street. Would you like to come to dinner?" The mayor of Tel Aviv stood up early on, the first day or so or the second day of the Scuds, and started to talk about how all the people who are running away are cowards and traitors, and someone said, "Where is your son?" His son had run away, and he had to stop talking like that.

Q: I'm told the Israeli television sort of relished showing people dressed as orthodox Jews getting on the planes and so forth.

METRINKO: You know, it wasn't only that, it was everybody, and you know, a lot of people came to Israel at the same time, but they tended to be Americans who thought that they were somehow going to help Israel. It was a mixed bag. I had friends who stayed. A lot of my friends stayed. I can't say that it was the orthodox who left or the seculars who left or this group or that group. A lot of people stayed, but far more left.

Now, the State Department. The State Department was fairly supportive in a stupid way. Consular Affairs was not really geared up to assist us, I would say. We had done everything possible. We certainly had made it known... Well, in Israel it was never possible to have what consular officers refer to as the "warden system." In Israel and the surrounding areas, we had 120,000 American citizens residing there, and we had at any given day many, many thousands of tourists. In Israel there are English newspapers that are pretty good. There are English broadcasts on television, English news. You had access to English on the radio, and certainly, the Israeli Government was making every possible announcement about what's going on. Also CNN was making every possible announcement, and you could get CNN in Israel at that point. So there was no way that any American who was there could say that he or she was not notified of what

was happening. The buildup had been international press for about two months. Everybody knew this was happening. In fact, the Israelis were so well organized that tourists had access to gas masks. Hotels passed them out to anyone who was staying for the night. The airport in Tel Aviv never closed. The American liners weren't coming in, but El Al was coming and going every day with direct flights to the United States, and we had a deal, an arrangement with travel agencies. We had set up a small consortium of travel agencies, five or six. Any American who called the Consular Section during this period, during the first week or two, who wanted to leave Israel, we could get them a regular seat on an outgoing flight. If they called up and they had had trouble getting through to the airport, we had the emergency numbers, the sort of unpublished numbers of our group of travel agents, and we could put them in direct touch. And we had absolutely no problem. The State Department never quite understood this. But anyway, that was happening.

Now, the problem with the State Department. Right in the middle of all this, when it's getting down to like two days before the rockets are going to start going up in the air, our defense attaché announced that a special plane was coming in to make deliveries and that the military wives, the dependents, were going to be leaving on it. The ambassador went ballistic, so to speak, saying, "You can't do this. If you go, the whole embassy has to go. You're not separate. You can't just call a plane in to take away your dependents, and we are not evacuating this post." It went back and forth. They backed down, but the plane did come in at the last moment, and while it was in the air we were told that there would be 100 or so seats on it for people who wanted to leave. Consular Affairs went a bit ballistic. All this was being done by the ambassador and the defense attachés. We only found out about it in the Consular Section quite late, as the consular section up in Jerusalem found out about it quite late. When I told CA about it, they said no one from the embassy should get on the plane unless there was a public announcement to allow American civilians from Israel to get on the plane. Well, as I told them, the airport was opened; planes were flying routinely; any American who wanted to fly out of Israel could go, get a ticket (and there were seats available on every flight), and leave Israel. It went back and forth, back and forth. The end result was that I think some of the American military dependents did go. A number of dependents from Jerusalem went, even though they were never in the problem, although they didn't know that at the time.

What else was happening? Oh, this was when we finally had to do a sort of ordered departure of all dependents from the embassy, and they were sent down to the Red Sea area, to Elat to spend some time in a hotel. And eventually most of them left there and went back to the United States or to other places to sit out the war.

Q: Well, of course, one of the problems... I've interviewed both Bill Brown and Chas Freeman, who was ambassador to Saudi Arabia. You had this very peculiar situation where we wanted to keep Israel out of the war and keep Saudi Arabia in. Particularly in Saudi Arabia, it was absolutely essential that we not evacuate the American civilians, because they were essentially running the oil companies and you couldn't have done the war.

METRINKO: You could not have done the war. You would have impacted on American oil prices back here because nobody knew how long the thing was going to take.

Q: Yes, but I mean at the time, the oil was -

METRINKO: - the reason for the war.

Q: - and the planes were being fueled by Saudi oil. So you had this peculiar thing where you really didn't want to evacuate, tell all the Americans to get the hell out, and so anything we did anywhere in the neighborhood would impact and scare the people in Saudi Arabia, who were essentially at more risk.

METRINKO: My understanding was that the oil companies and the American companies in Saudi tied their evacuation policy to whatever the evacuation policy of the embassy was. Therefore, if American civilians were evacuated from the embassy, then the oil workers would also have to go with their families. That was sort of a trip-wire.

Q: And so you had essentially sitting there, in a way, using Americans - the term isn't quite right - as hostage to the political situation. But it was a very serious one. Were you aware of this dynamic where you were?

METRINKO: Oh, a little bit, yes. But you know, things were also happening fairly quickly, and as it turned out... Well, what I did, I don't trust the Department of State. I haven't for many, many years. I don't trust the Department of State to protect me. I had my mother with me. She was an invalid. She was also quite old. She also needed help. What I did, I had had a personal friend who was visiting and her vacation was over. She was going back to the States. So about a week before anything happened, I told my mother that I was buying her a ticket and that I wanted her to go back to the States for a month or two. I wasn't going to sit around and wait for our front office or the Secretary of State to make a decision about American dependents when I knew there were so many other factors in play. And I simply sent my invalid mother back to the United States on my own. Any American officer who whines about evacuation policy can do that with his or her family. We can afford plane tickets. We can send our own families anywhere we want to. We don't have to wait for somebody in the Personnel Office at State or a deputy assistant secretary to finally make a decision. We can make our own decisions, and I did it.

Q: As one looks at these things, always after a war, the claims are always much greater than the accomplishments, but what was the sort of the feeling around with American troops coming to Israel, with the Patriot missiles, at the time?

METRINKO: They were highly welcomed by the Israelis. They were fêted, in the sense of 'given feasts.' Israelis gave them gifts, visited them, invited them out to their homes. It was great. I made a number of new friends at the time, too, because there were several retired American Israelis living there who decided it was time to be nice to the people in the embassy and called up to see if they could invite us for dinners. And I went, and I had a great time. Of course, I was out almost every night during this time. It was great, some of the best parties I'd been to. Wars are good for that. Adrenaline runs.

Q: Were you involved at all in the distribution of gas masks and that sort of thing?

METRINKO: No, it wasn't a consular function; it was an admin function, to people in the

embassy. But we did not provide gas masks to anybody who was not an official American or an official American dependent because the Israeli Government provided them to everyone in the country - except not on the West Bank.

Q: In the regular work and all, a Consular Section always gets stories, and people come in and our offices are open, and they talk. People talk, you know, getting visas or having problems, and say, "Oh, yes, did you hear that?" Did you find that information coming through the Consular Section... how was it received, say, by the Political and minorly the Economic Section?

METRINKO: In general or during this period?

Q: Well, in general.

METRINKO: In general, unfortunately it was fairly typical in the embassy in Tel Aviv, as it is in many embassies, where political sections and economic sections are not interested in consular sections or in anything they can provide or do. Our DCM was interested. I did long series of reports on visiting Arabs, doing this, doing that, various groups that I'd been involved with, some of my ultra-orthodox contacts, and he encouraged me to write as much as possible. He himself rarely went out, so he didn't have the contacts in the society. I encouraged the officers to write, but what happened there is what usually happens, that consular officers say, "I'm too busy. If I write this reporting telegram, I will never get the 25 visa telegrams out." On the other hand, did we get the interesting stories? It was too much of a mill in many ways. We had the interesting American Israeli stories. We certainly had access to anything in the country, but it wasn't quite the same as when I had been, for example, in Tabriz or in Teheran in the Consular Section.

Q: What about your dealing with the Israeli Government, particularly on the, I guess, Ministry of the Interior and the military, with people who were in trouble and all that? What was your -

METRINKO: As individuals, Israeli officials could be fine. They also lie a lot. They will look you straight in the face and lie about whether or not they have an American in custody. I had one Israeli official who complained about me, lied, made a direct complaint to the ambassador. All I could say was, "He was lying." But that was that. Israeli officials are no better or worse than any other officials. I had good relations with individual police officials and individual army officials, very good relations. It was my good relations with one Israeli military official that got us access, for the first time in the history of the *Intifada*, to one of the major detention centers. They hadn't been letting anyone at all visit a particular detention center, called Ansar 2, and I met an Israeli at a party, had a great time with him, and he invited me to come and visit him where he worked, and that's when I discovered he was the deputy commander of... all I can say, it was a major concentration camp. I told him I'd been trying to visit there for months and that his government had always refused to allow it. He said, "Call me tomorrow, and I'll arrange it." I did, and he did, and two or three days later, I was visiting American prisoners in a prison that we had never been allowed access to and no foreigner had ever been to.

Q: Well, on this American prisoner thing, I mean, sort of the creed of a consular officer of any country, but especially an American consular officer, you have to see American prisoners who are in jail.

METRINKO: Yes, all that has changed. Consular Affairs no longer does that, as far as I can see. But at the time, yes.

Q: But you did find yourself... I mean, if you couldn't see an American, you knew an American was in a prison - I don't want to overemphasize this point, but I think it's an important one - you didn't feel that back in Washington or the embassy itself, but I mean basically pressure from Washington was not pulling out all stops to make sure that you were able to fulfill your consular functions and your treaty functions?

METRINKO: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. That's putting it very diplomatically. Visiting prisoners for me is a personal thing. It's one of the things that I consider the most important of the consular functions. It was personal for me because I had spent so long in prison. I get incensed when I cannot get to Americans who are under my jurisdiction, part of my responsibility, and are in prisons in my area. When I arrived in Tel Aviv, I discovered that the prison visit program had largely been dropped. I don't know why, but my predecessor and the officer responsible for American citizens' services had decided it wasn't so important. They had stopped making visits, and they claimed it was an economy measure, to save money. I looked at the woman officer and said, "How does it save money not to visit prisoners?" She couldn't reply. She said, "Oh, it's an economy measure." I immediately had a total review done of all the prisoner files that we had and announced that effective immediately we would see every prisoner once a month. These in large part were political prisoners, and we were dealing with an Israeli system which tortured prisoners under interrogation and for punishment. You do not drop a prison visit program at a time like that. I put this into effect, and by and large we did it. I went myself on many of the prison visits because I wanted to show the Israelis how important I considered it, that I wasn't just going to send a junior vice-consul on his or her first tour, that the Consul General goes - the same guy whose picture is in the newspaper meeting with the grand rabbi or the chief rabbi of Jerusalem is also tomorrow morning at this prison meeting with an American Palestinian teenager or an American Jewish teenager who's in prison. And over the course of time, we did manage to get a good working relationship with the police, with the military who are responsible for running the prisons on the West Bank and also martial law prisons in Israel proper. And the relationship worked out. It worked out simply by pushing and pushing and pushing and pushing. Now, did we ever get quick notification from the Israelis that they had taken an American prisoner? No. Invariably, they would wait the two full weeks they thought was their due. During those two weeks they would interrogate. During those two weeks they would punish, and they would use methods that are called torture in most civilized countries. Once the visits started, by and large, mistreatment of prisoners stopped - at least for the American prisoners - and in general, once we had established a relationship with whoever was the warden of the time at a particular prison, it worked out okay. We could simply call him up, make arrangements to go. They were quite flexible about times. We would go, have coffee with the warden or have breakfast or something, be given privacy to see the prisoners, and they understood this concept. I'm sure we were being listened to because we were in standard waiting rooms and things like that, but still, given at least superficial privacy. We were allowed to receive letters, to take letters from the prisoners. We were allowed to give them letters. We were allowed to give them things like clothing, vitamins, anything else that their families would send. And it worked out. In fact, I could go on and on about visiting prisons there, because I probably made 40 to 50, at least,

prison visits. I was doing this every other month myself - not every prison visit, because it's something also that FSNs do, it's something that junior officers do.

Q: Well, sure. I mean, this is part of their experience, training.

METRINKO: But it got to the point, when I was leaving Israel, the prison camp Ansar 2, where we had had so much trouble getting in... And I have to tell you the story about Bill Brown *à propos* of that. My last visit there, the warden had become a friend. The deputy warden was a friend. I would see him socially with his wife back in Tel Aviv. On my last visit there - they knew it was my last visit - I had one prisoner there who still had several months to go on his sentence - and I arrived at the prison, went in, as always, you know, to sit and chat with the warden for a while, and he said he had a few gifts for me in honor of my last visit to the prisons since I was going back to America, and he gave me a little metal container to hold visiting cards, and it had the name of the prison and the date on it, and that was nice. And he said, "After you see Mohammed, the staff would like to have you come to lunch to our cafeteria." Fine, thank you, I'd like to. He said, "Oh, and as a the real gift that we want to give you in honor of your last visit, we're giving you your prisoner." What do you mean? He said, "You can take him with you today. We're going to set him free, but you have to take him." And I said, "You can do this?" He said, "Yes, I can." And he said, "We decided it was the most appropriate gift."

Q: How wonderful.

METRINKO: Yes, so I went to see Mohammed, who was, like, a 16-year-old American Palestinian from the USA who had come to the West Bank the year before to stay with his grandmother, had gotten caught up in the stone-throwing. I went to see him. They brought him over to me. I used to go right into the barbed wire areas. And I looked at him and said, "We're not going to talk too long. I have some things from your family here," etc., etc., but basically, "Go back to your cell, say goodbye to your cellmates because you're going with me in about another hour. I'm going to a lunch and I'll be back and pick you up." He said, "What do you mean? I'm here for another three months." And I got him, just took him out. I signed the papers, the "receipt" for him and everything else, and came out with him. My FSN thought this was great. She was a wonderful lady. I got to the driver, who had not been part of any of this, because the driver was not allowed in with the embassy car, and we told him we were going to the West Bank, to a particular town, to take this boy home. And he said, "How do you get there? I've never been to the West Bank." I said, "Well, don't you have a map?" He said no. I turned to the kid, and I said, "You know how to get there don't you?" He said, "No, I've never been in this part. They brought me all the way from home in a van with no windows. I've never seen this part of Israel or the West Bank." But we found it. We got up there, and it was great. It took us a couple of hours to get to his house, of course, which was at the far end of the country, but we drove there in a couple of hours, got him there, and drove him through Jerusalem. He got to see Jerusalem for the first time in his life, got him up to his home. We parked the car outside. There was absolutely nobody. It was a pleasant enough looking village, but nobody around. We said, "Go inside and tell your family you're here. We'll wait until you're inside, and then we'll say goodbye after you come out again." He went inside the house, and about three minutes later there was an explosion of people running out, and it ended up with a big festival in the house and everything else and dinner and the whole bit.

Q: It's wonderful.

METRINKO: It was a good gift. Israelis could do that. They could be that charming, that sensitive, that intelligent. They could also be total bastards who didn't give a damn who they killed or tortured. They'd go flip-flopping back and forth. Cultured, intelligent, educated, well-traveled - you know, nice families, the soul of civilization, and they turn around and they will kill somebody in cold blood, and they don't seem to care. This is why I was never comfortable in the country. And then they'd threaten you if you protested.

Q: You were going to say something about -

METRINKO: Oh, yes, Bill Brown. In one of my prison visits I had come back, and I had written a fairly long report because I was really the first foreign diplomat who was getting into some of these places. And in the report on Ansar I had talked about how the camp was divided and how in one barbed-wire pen, open to the elements... The pens were large barbed-wire fenced areas about the size of a basketball court, for example, just barbed wire, and you might have some canvas over the top or a tent in the middle, but basically prisoners sat outside, sun, rain, snow sometimes. And I was passing one pen by with the guard who was escorting me to my meeting with the warden, I looked at it and it was filled with children. And I looked at it and I said, "Who are they?" And he said, "Oh, those are the ones who are under age." It was a barbed-wire pen filled with young kids, Palestinians, who were in prison. Well, I put this in the report. The ambassador came down. I was eating lunch in the cafeteria the next day, and the ambassador came down and he saw me and he walked over, and he said, "Mind if I sit down?" Sure. He said, "You know, I saw that report about the kids in the pen, and I talked to some of my Israeli friends in the government about it, and you know, Michael, that's done to protect these kids because their lives are so bad at home and they have such terrible living conditions. This is really the way they get trained. This is best for them." I just looked at him and said, "Mr. Ambassador, they were children in prison in a barbed-wire pen." And he finally just got up and left. He really believed that this was appropriate. That was the mindset I'm talking about.

Q: By the way, what was your feeling about... Did you have any relations, particularly on prisoners and all and treatment thereof, with the CIA people at our embassy?

METRINKO: Yes, the CIA people there were basically not interested in anything going on in prisons. Decent social relations, entertainment, etc., go to their homes for dinner and they would come to mine. To the best of my knowledge, we had no one from the Agency working in the consular section, at least no one that I knew of.

Q: Well, then, you left there in '93.

METRINKO: Yes.

Q: What happened?

METRINKO: I left there in '93, having survived two ambassadors and a couple of chargés. I

should say, by the way, that our second ambassador, Bill Harrop, who was assigned to Israel, was perhaps the best person for whom I have ever worked - incredibly professional.

Q: And of course he was kicked out of there by -

METRINKO: - the Jewish lobby.

Q: - by the Jewish lobby, yes. Of course he was.

METRINKO: But incredibly professional, sensitive, intelligent. But, anyway... And a nice man. I left there and came back to the States with an assignment to Population, Refugees, and Migration - PRM - in the Refugee Bureau, where I was the office director for what they called ENSA, Europe, Near East, and South Asia. I was the office director for an area filled with hot spots. I had all of Europe, so we had Yugoslavia and a civil war, or whatever kind of war you want to call it.

Q: You were doing this from '93 to when?

METRINKO: '93 to '96, a three-year assignment. I had the collapsing Soviet Union and a whole variety of flashpoints there, everything from, good Lord... I mean, the whole Soviet Union was just -

Q: Yes, you had Georgia and you had Azerbaijan and Armenia.

METRINKO: Chechnya - I had that. I had the remnants of the Afghan situation. I had a civil war in Yemen. That was sort of brief, but I also had the Palestinians and the Jewish Agency. And a major part of our budget, or a huge chunk of my budget, which was about \$350 million per year for refugee work in my area, went to the Jewish Agency to support Jewish refugees going to Israel, of which there are none (not by any standard definition of refugee, anyway), and also the Palestinians in the camps. This was at a time, '93, when everybody had decided it would be in our interests, because of Oslo, if we could -

Q: Oslo being the first meeting of the Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

METRINKO: Everyone had decided, or at least the State Department and the White House had decided it would behoove us to start throwing larger amounts of money at the Palestinians to make it seem that we were doing something to make their lives better. The State Department, through the Refugee Bureau, had been supporting UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine refugees ever since it was founded and had been the major donor throughout that time for UNRWA. This means that we were the ones providing a major percentage of all the money spent on Palestinian refugees by the United Nations. But both of those portfolios also were handed to me. And a decision sort of had been made in State that AID would take care of doing things for Gaza and the West Bank and that Refugee Bureau money would go to Palestinians in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria - which was fine. It meant that I had a lot of travel to those areas and traveled to other parts, too. I got to Serbia; I got to Croatia; I got to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen; and also many times to Jordan and Syria, the West Bank and

Gaza, Israel itself, and even into Lebanon once.

Q: Well, let's talk about the whole Palestinian thing. What was your impression of this '93-96 period about what was happening, effectiveness, non-effectiveness?

METRINKO: We had a problem dealing with the Palestinians, as we do dealing with Israel. There are no American political leaders who have the balls to speak frankly or the truth to either the Palestinians or the Israelis. The Palestinians - I'm going to use harsh terms now - have been whining about being refugees since 1947. Most of them are not refugees. All of the Palestinians who went to Jordan, for example, which is the bulk of Palestinians, a couple of million, were given full citizenship status by the Government of Jordan back in the early 1950s. They are citizens of Jordan. They do military service; they pay taxes; they carry Jordanian passports. The present king of Jordan is married to a Palestinian wife. They are fully involved in Jordanian society, and they are some of the richest people in Jordan.

They're up and down throughout the government, every part of the government. And yet when they want to, they continue claim refugee status. This is bullshit. And a couple of times we made - not *we* in the sense of me, but various administrations in the United States made - feeble attempts to sort of wipe the Jordanian Palestinians off the refugee rolls. The United Nations is trying to do this off and on, too. The Government of Jordan always said, "Please don't do it because if they get told they're no longer refugees, then they will have an uprising here and our government will have trouble." So for Jordanian internal political reasons we still consider the Palestinians in Jordan refugees. They are not. That's like total bullshit. The ones in Syria have full legal status except that they are not citizens. Fine. I guess, in theory, you could consider them refugees, but it's been three generations. That's a bit long to be a refugee. The ones in Lebanon are treated generally despicably by the Lebanese Government. Lebanese Governments are best known for their cupidity and corruption. They have been awful dealing with Palestinians. Early, early on the Christian parts of the Lebanese Government got the Christian Palestinians declared full citizens. They were given Lebanese citizenship back in the late '40s, early '50s. So the Christian Palestinians there are fine. They are full Lebanese citizens and vote - if anyone votes in Lebanon. I guess they get paid for their votes in Lebanon. Am I a bit acidic about the Middle East? But it's all those 16 or 17 years of living there. The Muslim Palestinians have been treated very, very harshly by everybody - by the Lebanese Government, by other Lebanese groups, by Syria, by the Israelis, by the United States. Every time they would stick their heads up and try and get some dignity, we'd call them terrorists and smash them down again. Or we let Israel go in and smash them down again. They are treated very poorly. Yes, they would qualify as refugees because they have never been accepted in Lebanon. Syria, not really, not any more. Jordan, not for a long time. The question used to come up of the Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank, areas under Palestinian control. If you have a Palestinian travel document, or if you have a Palestinian passport, are you still a refugee if you're living in a Palestinian area? Well, the legal answer would be no, and yet we've allowed the Palestinians for a long time to continue claiming this. For many it's because they're on the dole. They get education; they get medication; they get other things courtesy of the United Nations. It's a free ride.

Q: Did you feel while you were doing this that you were basically handing out a dole or involved

in a -

METRINKO: It was done for political reasons, but I had great fun. I was given many, many millions of dollars. I was the only one in the refugee... I mean, this was my bailiwick, the Refugee Bureau, and I was told to select projects that would be public, look good, make the United States look good, and make it seem for the Palestinians as though there is movement and that they had not been forgotten by the world or by Arafat, who had indeed forgotten them. "We're building you a school. Now shut up!" - basically. "We're putting up this clinic. Now stop making noise."

Q: Well the situation there, but when you go look at it, one almost gets a feeling of a terribly squalid situation.

METRINKO: It depends. You know, the camps in Syria and Jordan are no worse than the Syrian and Jordan towns. I mean they're part of the towns. You really can't tell in most case when you're in the camp and when you're in a normal town. And the squalor is often the irresponsibility of the people living there. If someone doesn't clean the street, it doesn't matter if you're a refugee or a multimillionaire. It looks squalid. A lot of it is the "give me" mentality of the Middle East, just as in Israel. Give me, give me, give me.

Q: Before we move to the Yugoslav thing, what about central Asia and the Soviet Union? What were we doing there?

METRINKO: Logically we had some rather ridiculous programs in the former Soviet Union. And we had some very ridiculous programs in the former Yugoslavia. What were we doing in the former Soviet Union? We were helping in Azerbaijan. We were helping in the Armenian areas.

Q: We were feeding the heavy hand of the Armenian lobby, or not?

METRINKO: You couldn't give direct aid to the Azerbaijani Government or Azerbaijani organizations. You had to work with third parties, but you know, what we were doing, a lot of it was very basic stuff like supporting women, businesses, supporting doles of food. A lot of it was absurd, but we were supporting programs, for example, these mom-and-pop-type minor business enterprises in Russia proper. And I remember I used to bring this up at meetings. Every time we would get a proposal in, we were expected to give a certain amount of money. We couldn't just stop giving money. And I would say things like, "You know, Russia has billions of dollars worth of art that it has locked up in various basements. If they would just sell a painting, they could provide food for this area for the next ten years. Why are we giving them American taxpayer money for something that the Russian central government should handle?" I'm conservative fiscally. But we just continued to give. The refugee business is a business. There are a lot of organizations in Washington, in the United States, and internationally that exist sort of as businesses.

Q: And you have to have refugees.

METRINKO: And you have to have refugees. And if you can't find an active refugee who's running with a pack on her back from a burning town, then find somebody who's been there for the last 20 years but was wretched and is willing to take your money.

Q: I've talked to people who were, say, in places like Thailand looking at refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam who were saying that when they were saying, "You know, these really aren't your real refugees" - these were beginning to move into economic refugees - the NGO organizations would go howling because this was taking away their numbers.

METRINKO: You take away the numbers of refugees and you take away the budget from the organizations; therefore, Jim and Mary, who are nice people, lose their jobs.

Q: Yes, you were breaking their rice bowls.

METRINKO: Breaking their rice bowls, yes, breaking the rice bowls of a lot of middle-class American liberals who enjoy being overseas.

Q: Social welfare has always been considered middle-class welfare, in a way.

METRINKO: In a way it is.

WILLIAM C. HARROP
Ambassador
Israel (1992-1993)

Ambassador William C. Harrop was born in Maryland in 1929. He received a bachelor's degree in English literature from Harvard University. Prior to joining the Foreign Service in 1954, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps and studied for a year in the graduate school of journalism at the University of Missouri. Ambassador Harrop's career included positions in Italy, Belgium, and ambassadorships to Guinea, Zaire, Kenya, and Israel. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1993. Ambassador Harrop was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: How did this appointment come about?

HARROP: I had had a message from the Director General, who called me up to say that I was one of the candidates for Ambassador to Pakistan or Israel. I said that I was surprised to hear that because I didn't have any deep background on those areas but that I would certainly be delighted to take either assignment on. I did not think that such an appointment was likely to be made, because I could think of two or three colleagues who had deeper knowledge of those areas than I did and who might be available for them. In the autumn of 1990 I talked about this with the Director General again, and he said, "No, you are a serious candidate, and I'll let you know if anything comes up." Then I had a visit in Zaire from Congressman Steve Solarz, an old friend of

mine who still follows Africa, though at that time he was pretty much focused on Asia...

Q: This is Congressman Steve Solarz...

HARROP: A Congressman from New York.

Q: Very much involved in foreign affairs.

HARROP: Very much so and very much involved in Zaire, as the former chairman of the House of Representatives Subcommittee for Africa. He came for a visit to Zaire. I must say that we had some very interesting discussions with Mobutu during his visit there. When he arrived at the airport [in Zaire], he said, "Well, congratulations! I hear that you're going to be our next Ambassador to Israel." I said, "Well, I'm very glad to learn that." Then on the next day I received a formal note that the President had approved me for that job.

So I set about trying to prepare for it. I had not had experience in the Middle East before that, so it was a great challenge.

Q: Two questions on this early period. First, did you have any feeling that you were being "vetted" by the "American Jewish Lobby" before you went there?

HARROP: No, I don't think so. I must say that, during this whole experience leading up to my appointment and during my service as Ambassador to Israel, I never had a sense of hostility or of "vetting" from the very articulate American Jewish community. There was only one occasion when I went up to address the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations in New York during the autumn of 1991, as I was getting ready to go to Israel. They have a sort of formal program there. This organization is one of the many efforts, and the most successful so far, to try to coordinate and rationalize the "world" of Jewish organizations in this country. American Jews are very competitive, very organization minded, and very political. They have dozens and dozens of overlapping organizations. In an effort to rationalize that situation and to be more effective they set up a Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. This organization has been in existence for some years.

The occasion was one of their lunchtime meetings, which is their custom. There may have been 45 people there in the room in New York. I gave a talk. There was, I would say, some quite critical questions [asked of me]. There were questions about American relations with Israel, about the loan guarantee, some of the usual political hobby horses about the sentencing of Jonathan Pollard...

Q: He was convicted of spying [for Israel]...

HARROP: That question came up over and over again during my tenure [as Ambassador to Israel]. In fact, it came up just a few weeks ago once again, when Prime Minister Rabin raised it with President Clinton. A number of rather critical questions were asked, but I sensed then -- and afterwards reached the firm conclusion -- that this was a matter of style. I was not being subjected to any particular inquisition, nor were they being particularly hostile toward me. These

were questions on which a lot of these organizations had a particular slant, and they were pushing their own slant. [The people attending the luncheon] had to go back to their own boards and report what they said to the new [United States] Ambassador.

I concluded that this process was not a particular case of "vetting." In fact, I really felt that, starting from the beginning and throughout my time in Israel, I had a very satisfactory and successful relationship with the American Jewish leadership. Of course, they come to Israel frequently. I must have spoken an average of once a week to a visiting American delegation of one sort or another. Many of these organizations have their annual, directors' meetings in Jerusalem. I saw a great deal of these Jewish leaders, and some of the individual leaders -- people like Abe Foxman, of the Anti-Defamation League; Robert Lifton, of the American Jewish Congress; or Al Moses, of the American Jewish Committee -- are people whom I regard as good, personal friends. I saw them very often. In fact, I'm going up next week to an award ceremony for Robert Lifton in New York.

Although the American Jewish community, AIPAC [America-Israel Public Affairs Committee] and Jewish organizations maintain a considerable pressure on policy toward Israel, it is a pressure which is not entirely seamless. That is, there are differences within the Jewish community. As a matter of fact, you go from a fairly "liberal" point of view in the American Jewish Congress with Robert Lifton, across the spectrum to really "hard Right," hard "conservative" positions. You can even go to the left of Lifton to the "Americans for Peace Now" group. Some of the senior members of the Clinton administration were active in Peace Now. Peter Adelman, who, I think, holds a sub-cabinet position in the [Clinton] administration and was Assistant Dean at Georgetown University School of Law, was the president of Americans for Peace Now. Then you had the ultra-Orthodox group and you had some hard line Right-wing people, many of whom I dealt with frequently in New York. They are really, I think, to the Right of the Likud Party [in Israel]. They support the concepts of a Greater Israel, "Don't Yield an Inch of Territory," "It is the Biblical right of the Jewish people to this entire land [of Palestine]," and "You cannot trust any agreement made with the Arabs." "The Syrians will attack the Golan Heights if they're allowed to do so again." Really, they hold "harder" positions than you hear, except in unusual quarters, in Israel.

The relationship is an extremely interesting one. You have the situation in which a huge outflow of private money -- around \$1.0 billion a year -- goes to Israel in many different forms. I guess you could not call all of that money "grants," because a good deal of it -- several hundred million dollars -- is in the form of State of Israel bonds. These are rather a good economic investment, among other things, because legislation was put through to make this a tax-free investment [in the U. S.]. A lot of money is spent on that. Many people give money to their synagogues by purchasing these bonds in the name of the synagogue.

Anyway, I developed a theory, since I was interested in the Israeli economy and the reform of the Israeli economy -- to try to liberalize it a bit and to get rid of the overhang of socialism from the early days [of Israel]. There is still a very large parastatal sector -- about 40 percent of the economy is either in the hands of the government or in the hands of the great labor union, Histadut, which, like labor unions throughout the world, is now losing influence and political authority but still has these huge holdings. It owns banks, corporations, conglomerates, and all

sorts of things. I was really working, as a matter of fact, with the new Governor of the Bank of Israel, Yaacov Franke, who'd been...

Q: Was this before you went there?

HARROP: No, after I got there. I was just going into one section of my activities there. [Franke] had been a senior executive of the IMF [International Monetary Fund] for some years and was very interested in reform. As a matter of fact, the Faculties of Economics of Hebrew University in Jerusalem and particularly of Tel Aviv University were very active in these matters. The Labor Party was very active in these matters, so that it was a worthwhile issue to follow.

While on this subject, because we were speaking about the American Jewish community, I found that it was a matter of disappointment to many Israelis and to anyone who cares anything about Israel that American backers of Israel are prepared to give extraordinarily generous aid to Israel, but not to invest there. What's needed is investment, particularly in view of the large inflow of new immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Jobs are very important, and the expansion of the economy is crucial. That is what the debate over the [U. S.] loan guarantee was about -- to provide funds for [economic] expansion.

I frequently spoke to the American Jewish community about the fact that if they really wanted to help Israel, they should invest there and not just grant money to the government. Invest in some productive enterprise. They were very reluctant to do it. Only a very few have done that.

Q: Why would they be so reluctant?

HARROP: Well, there are several theories on that. One theory is that successful Americans, whether Jewish or not, are reluctant to put their money in an economy which, in fact, has a lot of difficulties for the investor. There are rather numerous controls -- over regulation, in fact -- on labor, capital, foreign exchange, factory location. American supporters of Israel, as much as anyone else, are concerned about security questions and about the security of their capital. However, you might suppose that some of those questions would not make much sense if you were prepared to give a million dollars to Israel. You might be prepared to invest it there.

In fact, it doesn't work out that way. One theory which people cite is that American Jews who support Israel tend to look on Israel as in some sense a charity. The way they look at their synagogue. You don't do business in the synagogue. You give money to the synagogue to support it. There is an odd, psychological feeling there that you as an American Jew may be in some particular business, where you are a very effective and a very tough businessman, perhaps. But you don't think of Israel as a place where you do that sort of thing. I don't know whether that theory holds water or not, but it's hard to find a theory to explain such a peculiar phenomenon. It was and is too bad.

I was struck by the intensity of interest on issues among the American Jewish community. I had dinner with a group of ultra-orthodox rabbis and others in New York and met with many people of many political viewpoints there. Some American Jews from Washington were extremely helpful to me in arranging meetings with all of the different [Jewish] organizations, setting up

schedules for me to meet people. I felt that I was able to get a pretty good footing in this whole community here before I went to Israel.

Q: In getting ready, obviously you had to touch base or become immersed, because of its importance, with the American Jewish political community in all of its factions. What about the other side of the equation, the Arab world? This was not your area, but you were in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. Did you get involved in that?

HARROP: Not very much, as a matter of fact. I tried to call on Prince Bandar, the Ambassador from Saudi Arabia. I wanted to meet him and talk to him. I had met the Egyptian Ambassador and chatted with him very briefly. However, I was not able to see Ambassador Bandar.

Q: Did this sound like a policy decision [not to meet with you]?

HARROP: I don't know. He tries to keep himself on a lofty plane of political and social activity which makes it hard to get at him. So I would hesitate to say that he made a conscious decision not to see me. He may just not have been available.

Q: What about the "Near Eastern hands" [in the Department]? It was basically a new bureau for you. One of the things that you hear at times is that whoever is our Ambassador to Israel becomes a captive of the Israelis and their supporters and is sort of at odds with the people working in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. Did you get any of this feeling?

HARROP: No, I didn't. It's a fairly sophisticated bureau. I think that there are some pretty heavy, pro-Israel pressures, but the bureau itself is fairly balanced. The heavy, pro-Israel pressures, which are very subtle indeed, came out of the... Well, I think of Dennis Ross, who is now the coordinator of...

Q: He was on [Secretary of State] Baker's staff.

HARROP: He was Baker's right hand man for both Soviet activities and the Near East and was, in many ways, the creative mind behind Baker's remarkable feat in bringing about the peace talks, [beginning with] the Madrid Conference. [Ross] is a man of extraordinarily high intellect, with a very agile, supple, and creative mind -- a forceful fellow. However, I think that he is essentially concerned about the welfare of the state of Israel. I suppose you can go a step beyond that and say that it's all very well to criticize him for not being impartial, but if, in fact, he's doing something for Israel which is also in the American interest and in the interest of peace, he should be congratulated for that.

But the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs did not give me that impression. I spoke with the former NEA experts, and there I think you find a little more of an anti-Israel slant. I mean all of those people who have worked for so many years on the Middle East, like Talcott Seelye, Dick Parker, Bill Kontos, an old friend of mine, and many other such people. I think that they often have a little difficulty being even-handed, because they have been steeped in the business for so long. They've come to resent the role of Israel very much.

Q: What about Congress? Did you spend a lot of time with...

HARROP: Yes, I did. I called on, probably, 15 members of Congress and met with segments of the [House of Representatives] Foreign Affairs Committee and others there. I found that there's a great deal of interest there, of course. I spent a good deal of time with Senator Lautenberg..

Q: Senator Lautenberg is from...

HARROP: From New Jersey, a Democrat. He is a former President of the United Jewish Appeal in the United States -- a very fine man. I spent some time with Congressman Lee Hamilton [Democrat, Indiana] and quite a few others. It was an interesting experience to hear their point of view. Most of them said, "Well, I'll be seeing you over there," because they visit Israel in large numbers. In fact, it's true. I guess that later on, in Israel, I saw almost all of the members of Congress whom I had called on.

Q: When did you go to Israel?

HARROP: January, 1992. I was delayed a long time in Congress. I did not experience the systematic kind of opposition there that I'd had in the past from various quarters -- Senator Helms and others. It was more a question of bureaucracy and slow-going. I think that when it became known that I was not really intending to go to Israel until early in 1992, the Department did not press as hard to push me forward, because my approval was not as urgent as some of the other nominees.

Q: When you went out to Israel, did you anticipate facing any major problems there? There, more than anywhere else. Some places you go to and you just take things as they come. There are always some issues. What were they [regarding Israel]?

HARROP: The primary issues included the peace process, which had begun. Secretary of State Baker, by a remarkable effort, had made nine trips to the area in eight months. It was just a superhuman effort on his part, and I respect him immensely for it. He had finally broken through to get direct peace talks started between Israel and her four main adversaries, if you will, the Lebanese, Syrians, Jordanians, and the Palestinians themselves. That process had just begun at the end of October, 1991, and more talks were being scheduled. They were still at the point, then, of haggling over the "great" problems of where they should meet, the shape of the table, and that kind of thing. However, the breakthrough had occurred, and advancing the talks was a central preoccupation.

Secondly, we were in the middle of the very tough discussion on loan guarantees for Israel, due to extremely heavy immigration [into Israel]. About half a million Jews from Central Europe and Central Asia had come in...

Q: What was the issue of the loan guarantees?

HARROP: Well, let me go through it. Because there had been this huge immigration into Israel, the Israelis were in need of funds for [their] absorption. Under the laws of Israel any Jew is

welcome to come [to Israel] at any time, and, of course, they encourage [this inflow] immensely. They want [Israel] to be the homeland of the Jewish people. They feel that it's a matter of survival for them, since the population growth rate of the Palestinians and Arabs generally is much, much higher than that of the Israelis. So they were looking for financial help to absorb these people. It's very expensive to arrange for housing, care, language instruction, jobs, education, health, and all the rest for these immigrants. More than one-tenth of the previous population of the country came to Israel in this new wave from the Soviet Union. In fact, it was really more like one-fifth. There had been talk of the United States providing guarantees for Israel to raise, in international capital markets, something like \$10 billion over an unspecified period of time to use for the absorption of these recent immigrants. They could obtain that money at a vastly more preferable rate of interest and preferable terms if the loans were guaranteed by the United States Government.

We were then dealing with the conservative and hard Right, Likud Party government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Secretary of State Baker and President Bush had said that the American taxpayer is just not going to finance settlements in the Occupied Territories indirectly. That's all there was to it. They said that the settlement policy of the then Israeli Government was making it very hard to have a peace process of any validity. The Arabs won't talk when the Israeli Government is trying gradually to shift the situation on the ground to the point where there isn't need...

Q: Would you explain for the historical record what "settlement policy" means?

HARROP: The "settlement policy" in this sense was the practice of the Likud government of implanting as many Israeli villages, towns, and settlements in the Occupied Territories -- in the West Bank primarily but also, to some extent, in the Gaza Strip and on the Golan Heights. This was to make the Occupied Territories more "Jewish" and to make it more difficult ever to turn that land back to the Arabs. It was a very systematic operation. The Minister of Housing in the Shamir Government was Ariel Sharon, one of the toughest and hardest of the Right wing Israeli leaders for many years. They were spending a very large part of the Israeli budget on this program, providing all kinds of incentives. The Israeli Government was actually building housing and settlements at a great rate and subsidizing interest rates and, indeed, every aspect of life to encourage Jews to live in the Occupied Territories. In fact, over a period of a few years they more than doubled the Jewish population in the Occupied Territories. The figure varies -- it depends on whether you include the suburbs of East Jerusalem, but the number commonly used is 130,000 or so. That's quite a lot of people. This practice was such an anathema to the whole Arab world, and not only to the Palestinians, that any [Israeli] Government that pursued this kind of policy was fairly clearly not interested in a negotiation based on the exchange of land for peace.

So Secretary of State Baker and President Bush were really tough on this. But it was not just those two leaders who took this view. It was many influential people in Congress as well, particularly Senator Patrick Leahy [Democrat, Vermont], the Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee and also the Chairman of the [Senate] Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance. The loan guarantees would have to be considered by that Subcommittee.

This was a very difficult issue. AIPAC [America-Israel Public Affairs Committee] was extremely active on this issue, pressing for the loan guarantees to be approved, without any condition on settlement policy.

Q: Just to clear up this point. The [Israeli Government] policy was, basically, very Right wing oriented. Was AIPAC at that time a supporter of the Right wing [in Israel]?

HARROP: Absolutely. AIPAC gave the hard Right, [Israeli Government] its support, because that government, in one form or another, had been in power for 17 years, starting with Prime Minister Begin and the Right wing Likud Party. The American Jewish community has tended to reflect the political outlook of the government in office in Israel -- though this later changed a bit, during the time I was in Israel. The American Jewish community, by and large -- not the Left, not those most interested in negotiations [with the Palestinians] and peace -- from the broad center all the way over to the Right was very much in favor of these loan guarantees to help Israel and to help [the absorption] of the immigrants. It was regarded as a very important thing for everyone concerned that all of these, perhaps two million Jews from the Soviet Union, who were thought of as being under great risk, [be resettled in Israel]. This dates back to the days of the late Senator [Henry] Jackson [Democrat, Washington] who was trying to arrange linkages of all sorts...

Q: The Jackson-Vanik Bill...

HARROP: All sorts of arms control agreements with the Soviets linked to the release of the Jews [from the Soviet Union]. One of the liberal things that Gorbachev did was to allow [these Jews] to leave [the Soviet Union]. They began to pour out. The American Jewish community had a real sense of identification with and support for those people and pushed for [the approval of the loan guarantees]. The watchword was, "Why should you mix up humanitarian questions with political questions?" They felt that it was a matter of humanitarian aid to help in the absorption of these hundreds of thousands of Jews. The political issues of the settlements should be dealt with on other grounds, in this view. Anyway, it was a major debate. That was one of the things that I was going to have to look at.

American defense support of Israel has always been a tricky and difficult question. There were allegations of diversion of American technology by the Israeli arms industry before I went there. I was concerned about that subject.

The intimacy and the breadth of the United States-Israel relationship is such that it's almost impossible for an American Ambassador to complete his homework before going there -- even with the six months that I had.

I called on a good number of the members of the cabinet of the United States Government. You know, you seldom would meet a senior official in any government department in the United States who did not have some type of bilateral program going with a counterpart agency in Israel, who was not that very week receiving a delegation from Israel in his area of concern, or who did not have a delegation or mission over in Israel at the time -- whether it involved questions of environmental science or other matters. I recall that the head of the Federal Aviation

Agency, with whom I had a long talk, said that he really had a deep span of cooperative activities with Israel. His was one of the areas where no one could say that it was a one way street, with just the United States helping out Israel. We were, he said, of considerable help to them because of our experience and expertise in air traffic control matters -- a difficult question in Israel because of the minute size of the country. He said that we benefitted immensely from our two-way cooperation and consultation on aviation and airport security, in which the Israelis were probably world leaders in the technology of airport security as well as the practices of...

Q: Perhaps historians in the future won't be concerned about these matters, but we're talking about bombs or weapons being smuggled on board...

HARROP: Sure. They're very expert and very experienced in this. FAA, in fact, was helping to fund some research, and we were purchasing, as I recall, some of this equipment which was particularly effective in the detection of weaponry or explosive devices at airports. But that is just one example. In education, in almost any field that you'd care to look at, such as transportation or communications, there is a rich, two-way exchange of information and cooperation. Israel benefits, really, from research and technical support money from a lot of different government agencies here, which is not covered by foreign assistance appropriations. For example, in the field of agricultural research some of the advances made in Israel in dry land agriculture have been funded in part by American private and public sources. It was really a challenge to try to keep abreast of all of these things. In a way, although it's not quite the same, you could make an analogy between being Ambassador to Israel and being Ambassador to Canada.

Q: I was just going to say that it sounds like that.

HARROP: The parallel, transnational lines of activities are so great, and the telephone is used so commonly. Although the telephone is probably not used quite as commonly between Israel and the United States as between Canada and the United States, this is a major challenge for the American Ambassador to Israel. The Ambassador's mettle is constantly tested in keeping abreast of these things.

Q: What were you getting from the [U. S.] Department of Defense? We had just finished the very successful operation called "Desert Storm," in which our main diplomatic effort seemed to be to keep the Israelis out of the action and from "queering the deal," in a way, because we had Arab allies. I've always felt that the Department of Defense has not been too happy with the Israeli connection because, first, it absorbs an awful lot of its power. Also, as seen from the defense side, [Israel] really isn't all that much of a bastion for the [U.S.] military as it's been touted.

HARROP: There's a certain schizophrenia, I think, in the Pentagon toward Israel. There is some resentment of the fact that a lot of aid and resource transfers to Israel are "imposed" upon the Department of Defense by the Congress. In recent years particularly -- for example during the last three years or so, as the United States budget generally and the defense budget like all the rest have come under increasing pressure -- the strong supporters of Israel in the Congress, seeing that it was going to be difficult to increase the appropriations for foreign assistance under that category, have begun to make inroads within the defense budget to earmark appropriated

defense funds for Israel. Whether it's the transfer of excess or supposedly excess equipment or weapons systems or whether it's in the form of the financing of R&D in Israel, this is very large.

Q: "R&D" means Research and Development.

HARROP: Very large funds have been involved there. So the Department of Defense feels some resentment. On the other hand I say the defense attitude is schizophrenic because there is tremendous respect, on the part of the American defense system, for Israel, for Israelis, for the military job that they've done, and for their competence -- both as scientists, engineers, and as military leaders and fighters. There is a very close and warm camaraderie between the Israeli and American military establishments at all levels. I mean, I saw a great deal of it. We have approximately 3,000 Department of Defense visitors to Israel per year, from generals who come to visit -- you almost always have the commanders from NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] forces in Europe -- to people who come down from all the different branches of the [U.S.] military service, as well as the Supreme Allied Commander [of NATO]. This is entirely aside from the large number of joint exercises that we have and entirely aside from the 50,000 or so American sailors who come on shore leave during Sixth Fleet visits to Haifa and Ashdod. Most of the service secretaries come over at one time or another, as well as the Chief of Naval Operations. The Sixth Fleet commander visits Israel several times a year. Other visitors include the heads of the different commands in the United States which do cooperative work with Israel regarding one system or another.

We must have to have a very large Defense Attaché office in Israel. I guess that about 60 percent of my mission was composed of defense personnel, because of the volume of business, commerce, and traffic, back and forth. So I spent a lot of time at the Department of Defense before I went to Israel. We have a structured series of collaborative conferences and consultations every year with Israel. There is a Joint Political Military Group, which meets twice a year, as well as a subgroup which is concerned with military activities, as opposed to political and military activities. The Joint Political Military Group is chaired by either the Under Secretary of State for Security Affairs or by the Assistant Secretary [of State] for Political-Military Affairs. Then there is a separate, annual, structured conference on the setting of the assistance levels for the following year. These are planning groups which have real meaning, and the Israelis attach great importance to them.

Q: You arrived in Israel, when?

HARROP: In January, 1992.

Q: What was your impression of the staffing, size, and composition of the Embassy when you got there?

HARROP: It's a large mission -- about the same size as two other missions which I have headed: Nairobi [Kenya] and Kinshasa [Zaire], although in both Nairobi and Kinshasa a very large component of the mission consisted of personnel from AID [Agency for International Development] and the Peace Corps. In Israel there is no Peace Corps assigned. There was no AID component there when I arrived. Finally, one AID man was assigned in early 1993. I was

afraid that it was the opening wedge of a classical large AID personnel presence. The military element in the mission in Tel Aviv was the big component. I would say that it was a well-staffed mission in terms of composition and the structure. We had a good-sized public affairs office with, I guess, five officers. But you need those people, with so much going on. There is a huge Fulbright program, a large selection of Fulbright professors back and forth. We have continual cultural visits. American symphonies and ballet companies come. Arthur Miller came for a visit. I just can't name them all. And the Israeli press is so hyperactive, so omnipresent, and such a large element of society that relations with the media are a very important part of the responsibilities of the Ambassador as well as the USIS [United States Information Service].

We had a single commercial officer to try to expand American exports to Israel. There are a lot of American businesses in Israel -- although not as many as I think there could and should be. But there is a good deal of two-way trade, particularly in the advanced electronic fields. The Israelis are really on the leading edge of many of those areas, in medical and military applications among other things.

We had a five or six man Political Section and a four or five officer Economic Section. We had a very large Consular Section because virtually all of the American citizens who have made "aliyah" -- the term for emigrating to Israel -- have retained American, as well as Israeli citizenship. There are about 100,000 American citizens in Israel. This leads to a tremendous volume of consular work.

Q: How did you deal with the Consulate General in Jerusalem? I've interviewed a number of people over the past decade. The relationship has waxed and waned. The Consulate General is both independent and involved with our Embassy. How did you find it?

HARROP: It's historically been a difficult relationship, because the Consul General [in Jerusalem] is not subordinate to the Ambassador in Tel Aviv, for reasons that are fairly easy to see. We don't recognize Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. The Consul General in Jerusalem, aside from being concerned with the city of Jerusalem, is really our liaison link to the Palestinians. That's pretty much what that job is. You have the dangers of bureaucratic frictions or jealousies resulting from the autonomy of the post. There is jealousy on the part of the Ambassador that any Consul General in "his" territory is really independent of him. Then there are the technical problems which you can have over budget matters, such as who's responsible for visits and the division of certain functional support responsibilities. Then there was also the almost inescapable, political unease like that which has at times developed between the Embassies in Athens and Ankara, the Embassies in Algiers and Rabat, Delhi and Rawalpindi, or in many other places in the world where there are conflicts between countries. It seems that American Ambassadors and Embassies, despite their best efforts, can't help but reflect local sentiments to some extent.

I was determined not to have this problem. I spent some time with the new Consul General in Washington before she went to post (a few months ahead of me).

Q: Who was that?

HARROP: Molly Williamson, a person of vast experience in that part of the world. She speaks very fluent Hebrew and Arabic. She is a quite exceptional and very intelligent officer. We just wanted to avoid these problems and we actually did. We inherited certain jealousies because there had not been a good relationship previously. One of the big areas of jealousy was over security -- who was responsible for it and did the Regional Security Officer in Tel Aviv supervise the security operation [in Jerusalem]? You can see how such issues could develop in Jerusalem when a Secretary of State, a cabinet member, or a senior Congressional delegation came to Jerusalem for a visit, which frequently happened. Who was responsible and so forth? You can see that these things could become delicate. Who was responsible for determining the nature of advisory cautions to American citizens when the "Intifada" [Arab Palestinian uprising] became particularly heated and there were shootings...

Q: The Intifada involved attacks on private citizens.

HARROP: We managed to work that out. I had a very capable DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] when I arrived, Mark Parris, a superior Foreign Service Officer. He and I worked very hard with Molly Williamson to arrange the relationship [between the Embassy and the Consulate General in Jerusalem] on the security side -- which I think was quite satisfactory in the end and has worked out well since then.

Then there was also a certain, inescapable jealousy over the fact that, just as a matter of economy, the Budget and Fiscal system, which is, of course, located in Tel Aviv, handles the budget of [the Consulate General in] Jerusalem. The budget [of the Consulate General is handled as a part of] the budget of [the Embassy] in Israel. You have to be very careful of jealousies on that subject.

Obviously, you get to the question of resources and money, and money is such a terrible problem everywhere now, as I'll go into in a moment with regard to Israel. But we worked these problems through.

On the political side, we simply refused to have problems. We kept in very close consultation, and we had only occasional differences. I really rode very hard on my substantive staff to be certain that there was no lack of communication [with the Consulate General in Jerusalem]. Any cables that went out were to be fully discussed between us. The only problems we ever got into were situations in which, from our [the Embassy's] point of view, more junior officers in Jerusalem had sent out messages which were of joint [Embassy-Consulate General] concern but which they had not cleared with us. I'm sure that they felt that we did the same thing. But we really kept this to a minimum. It worked very well.

Q: You're talking about a phenomenon within the Foreign Service where, essentially, the junior officers go out and look at the periphery of things, the dissidents, and the problems. They are younger. They get very much engaged in these things. When you have two organizations doing this, it turns into...

HARROP: Into an area of emotional and ideological involvement. I think that most of our professionals are able to resist the emotional involvement, but it's simply inescapable when you

live in a society in which you only hear one point of view, over and over again, day after day. Anyway, as it turned out, that was not a major problem for us. We were able to coordinate very well the visits of Secretary of State Baker and Secretary of State Christopher and of the numerous Congressional groups. That was a matter in which I take satisfaction. I think that Ms. Williamson can, too. We were able to handle our relationship with maturity.

Q: When you arrived there [in Tel Aviv], you mentioned the press. I've been in places where the Ambassador arrives, the press immediately picks up and says, "Ah, Mr. X has come as Ambassador. This means that he's either out to ride roughshod over us, or he's our friend, or something like that." Did you find yourself being characterized before you knew you had any particular character as far as this was concerned?

HARROP: There was a lot of that. Israel is a very special place in many, many ways. One aspect is the press, which is just extraordinarily outspoken. I think that there are more daily newspapers per capita in that country than in any other country in the world. Any Israeli newspaper, almost by definition, is a national paper because the country is the size of New Jersey. Speculation is simply uncontrolled. The line between editorial comment and news doesn't exist, so there was a lot of speculation about the outlook of the new Ambassador -- is he going to be this way or that way? The speculation ran across the whole gamut. A number of theories built up.

One of the things that I had to decide very early was how I was going to relate to the press. This is a big problem, because you get misquoted. If you make a slip when you say something, it's going to be "blown up" to the skies as a major policy declaration. People are going to be after you. You're going to be quoted, efforts will be made to manipulate you, and so forth. Some of my predecessors had taken the position that they simply would not deal with the press. This was true of my immediate predecessor. As the media never tired of telling me, they could never get at him. He would never make any comment. In a country which is so obsessed with and so thirsty for news -- people walk around the streets listening to transistor radios -- this seemed to me to be foregoing voluntarily a major opportunity for communication. Newspapers have a huge circulation. It seemed to be a lost opportunity for the Ambassador not to have some relationship with the media.

So I decided that, with the greatest prudence and with the advice of a very excellent Public Affairs Officer, I would be available and essentially would try to meet with the press fairly often. In fact, after I'd been there for about five or six weeks, I went onto what they called the "Moked" program. This is Israel's "Meet the Press," "Face the Nation," and all the rest, all rolled into one. There's one weekly program featuring an hour's interview of a news making individual. It has astounding ratings. A very large proportion of the country listens to this program. A country that has been through the security experiences that Israel has and a country where hardly a single family has not lost a relative in war is very, very interested in news, in what's going on, in the security situation. That's the explanation for it. I went on that program, and my appearance turned out to be successful. I worked very hard to prepare for it. The interview was in English, and then they "dubbed it over" into Hebrew for the broadcast. I was quite pleased. I was able to make the major points that I wanted to make. I was able to present myself as an individual sympathetic to Israel and aware of the main concerns of the Israeli people, while having a rational, analytical, American view of matters. Also, I was able to avoid appearing to be an

intuitive, 100% pro-Israeli American. I was quite pleased with the outcome. I think that, by and large, it went pretty well.

I had other such experiences, interviews, and discussions with the press, both one-on-one's and in group forums. I got into trouble in Washington on several occasions, usually through a slip of the tongue, a choice of words which was picked up and then expanded by the Israeli media, which is always a great danger. That is immediately picked up by the wire services. Several of the American newspapers have full-time correspondents in Jerusalem -- the "Washington Post," the "New York Times," and other large publications. That would happen, and people would get upset back in Washington until they learned the context of the quote. We went through this several times. But I think that, by and large, the gain far outweighed the cost. None of these little slips ever caused a real problem, in policy terms. Everyone is always so nervous about relations with Israel that anything on the news is very much noted. I think that my decision to be occasionally available to the press was the right decision, and it worked out fairly well. It was difficult to deal with the public through the media in Israel, but also enjoyable, in many ways.

Q: You went to Israel. The Shamir Government -- the Likud Party government, you said -- had been in power for about 17 years. It was a "hard Right" wing government. We had our difficulties with it for a long, long time. How did you find dealing with the Shamir Government at that stage of its existence?

HARROP: This was the last six months of the Likud government in Israel, which, as I mentioned, had been in office for about 17 years. It wasn't clear by any means that Likud would lose the election. It looked like a very close election, and it was. The United States is very important to Israel. I could always meet with the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister, if I wished to. They make themselves available to the American Ambassador. In fact, the government makes itself available to any member of the American Congress. Even a freshman Congressman, in his first months in office, if he comes to Israel, can see the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, or the Foreign Minister if he wishes. They will make themselves available because they recognize the importance of the United States to them.

The situation now, under the Rabin Government, is a little bit different than it was under the Shamir Government, because the perception in Israel [during the Shamir Government] was that the Bush-Baker administration was rather tough on Israel. They felt that they would have to obtain what they sought in the United States, through the Congress -- not the Executive Branch. A great deal of effort was made to work through AIPAC and through the several, intimate friends of Israel in the American Congress -- such as Larry Smith and Tom Lantos in the House of Representatives and Senators Inouye, Moynihan, and Lautenberg in the Senate. Anyway, the relationship with Congress was rather special for that reason. At the present time that's no longer quite the case because one of the changes which Prime Minister Rabin wished to make was to deal directly with the Executive Branch of the American government and not go around it. Prime Minister Rabin made that clear during my first meeting with him. That point came up immediately.

However, it was not difficult to deal with the Likud government because of their perception of the United States. But there were differences. I had a long and difficult interview with Arik

Sharon. He was trying to justify his "settlement policy" but was doing it in a very confrontational way, knowing that I would not agree with him. I had difficult meetings with Ehud Olmert, who is now Mayor of Jerusalem. He was then Minister of Health and was, I thought, irresponsibly critical of the Bush administration. One or two other members of the Shamir Government were difficult, but you could always be received and could always work with the government. Israelis are, by and large, personable, attractive, vivacious, intelligent people. For a diplomat it's an exciting and fun place to be assigned, both professionally and personally.

Q: I've heard this from a number of people who have come [to Israel] from other places where either you're a peripheral person, as an American diplomat, or else, say, involved with the Arabs. You really don't get into [the society]. [In Israel] you were right in the middle of everything.

HARROP: The Israelis are engaged in issues, personally and ideologically, and you talk about issues. I remember that I was taken aback, when I presented my credentials to President Herzog, a most engaging and charming man -- an intellectual and a man of parts. He set an example, which I encountered over and over again. I had presented the diplomatic letter. I said a few words in Hebrew to him, and he said, in English, "Not bad!" Then, as we sat down to have coffee, he turned to me and said, "I don't know what I'm going to do about the Likud [Party]." I said, "What do you mean, Mr. President?" I thought that he was going to open our conversation about the day, what nice weather we were having, or how many children I had and that sort of thing. He said, "I'm trying to change the electoral system. I'm trying to raise the threshold of votes needed to obtain a seat in the Knesset to cut down on the mess we have with this large number of small parties, which makes it hard to form coalitions. I think I've got Labor on board, but Likud is getting difficult again." We immediately entered into a highly substantive and highly political discussion of that, among other issues.

I found subsequently that Israelis simply don't have time for small talk. They don't bother with small talk. You meet someone for the first time and you begin discussing tough economic and political issues, right away, which I rather enjoy. I think that most people do. It's just a national characteristic. I enjoyed my introduction to this, but it was surprising.

There was a little sense of distance with the Likud because, in part, they were disingenuous about the peace process. I think that the global, political circumstances had backed them into agreeing to become engaged in this whole peace discussion. They couldn't resist, when it was offered to them -- direct, face to face negotiations with their Arab counterparts. But they were not serious about it, which I think in retrospect was reprehensible. Prime Minister Shamir actually made a statement which made clear, after he'd left office, that he was not really committed to this process. He was not wholeheartedly or frankly engaging in negotiations. The Likud criticism of the Bush-Baker administration I found offensive. In fact, I spoke publicly about it a number of times because I feel, to this day, that, if you strip away all the rhetoric, and all the pro-Israeli "sweet talk," which is so common in our political system, no American administration has done more for Israel than the Bush-Baker administration. The Gulf War neutralized their primary adversary in the Middle East -- Iraq. [The Bush administration] then went forward with this tremendous commitment to the peace process and was able to reach [agreement] on real negotiations with Israel's adversaries, on Israeli terms. Lastly, the resource transfers to Israel

grew during this administration, in part because of the Gulf War. Grant aid to Israel from the United States, you know, is about half of our aid to the entire world. It's more than half in terms of grant military aid -- 53 percent. It's about 45 percent of our grant economic aid to the entire world. I'm not talking about Israel plus Egypt. I'm talking about Israel alone. Transfers like that were actually expanded in various, temporary ways under the Bush administration. I was offended when I encountered a common perception among both Israelis and the American Jewish leadership that the Bush administration was somehow hostile toward Israel. Nothing could have been farther from the truth.

Q: To what do you attribute this?

HARROP: I attribute it to the lack of a kind of "touchy feely" style. There was a kind of pragmatic toughness, a rhetorical toughness within the [Bush] administration. Also, there was no great personal warmth. Actually, President Bush and Prime Minister Shamir really didn't like each other much, and did not easily communicate. It was a big problem. Then there were such things as the celebrated quotation of Secretary of State Baker, using four-letter words about "the Jews" in an American political context. This quotation may or may not have been accurate, but it's the kind of thing that politicians say privately. I think that the context was that someone had asked what the American Jewish reaction would be to this or that. Baker was quoted as having said, "F___ the Jews. They have never been for us anyway." Whether he said it or not, this reported remark had nothing whatsoever to do with the policies of the [U.S.] Government toward Israel, which were, from any objective point of view, extremely favorable.

At any rate the negotiations were very difficult. I dealt a great deal with the members of the negotiating teams. The Israelis had to have several negotiating teams to handle this complex of negotiations [on preparations for the Middle East peace talks]. They were dealing separately with each of these negotiating sessions. All of the teams would come together, gradually focusing in Washington. It was all done in Washington after a time. They would have an Israeli group dealing with Lebanese and an Israeli group dealing with Syrians. There was an Israeli group, a bifurcated, double group, dealing with the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, which, in fact, was two delegations, and these were separate talks. So there were four separate negotiations going on at once, plus five different, multilateral, regional negotiations including most of the Arab countries. A total of 12 different Arab countries were involved. It was really a success to get them together. There were also the major world powers, the Europeans, Japanese, Chinese, and even some of the smaller powers. The Australians were involved. The Canadians took an active role, as did the Austrians and the Scandinavians. The negotiations concerned water, refugees, arms control, and economic development.

So there were the four, bilateral negotiations that I mentioned with the Syrians, Lebanese, Jordanians, and Palestinians, and then five of these large, multilateral, regional talks on the future of water and water availability for development, on the environment, on refugees -- a very sensitive subject in the Middle East because of all of the Palestinians who left the territory -- on the economic development of the region, and on security and arms control. These [negotiations] were all held separately -- amazingly, in different cities around the world. Our tactic was to involve the world as much as possible in the whole thing. [As a result], we would have arms control and disarmament talks in Moscow; we would have refugee discussions in Canada; we

would have the environment discussed in Tokyo; we would have economic development discussed in Paris; and so forth.

That kept everybody very busy and it kept the Israelis extraordinarily busy, because they had to mount delegations for this whole range of talks. They were a participant in every single one. They've done quite a phenomenal job of it. However, it also kept me and my staff very busy, trying to keep in contact, not only with the [Israeli] Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, and the senior policy makers, but also with all of these delegation heads who were men and women of parts themselves and took a major role in the policy questions. It was a very busy, political job to do all of that.

Q: There was an [Israeli] election about six months after you arrived in Israel.

HARROP: The election was held on June 23...

Q: 1992.

HARROP: 1992. It was a very hard-fought election. In retrospect, I think that historians will say that that election was decided back in March or April [1992], when the first political primary ever held by a party in Israel took place -- in the Labor Party. Yitzhak Rabin won over his longtime rival, Shimon Peres, for leadership of the Labor Party. It was with Rabin that the Labor Party could win, because Israelis tend to be quite conservative on security matters. Although they may be interested, if you can generalize, in a peace process or negotiated peace, but they will resist anything which would appear even remotely to put their security at risk. In Rabin there was the combination of a man who had been a lifelong, professional military officer, who had been chief of staff [of the Israeli Defense Forces] during the Six Day War in 1967, had been present at the liberation of [East] Jerusalem, was thought of as being a hard headed, tough, military man, but also was interested in land for peace and in negotiations. With someone in whom they could have confidence for the security of the nation at the helm, the [Israeli] people were able to vote for the peace process, which is what they did. They put Likud out of office and made clear that the Israeli people wanted to have real negotiations.

At that time the process had been going on for eight or nine months, since October, 1991, but it had not gone very far because of Likud's actual beliefs and policies. But now [after the elections] the process could begin to move more rapidly. That was a sea change in Israeli politics.

Q: Were they trying to drag you in -- you, the American Embassy, and so forth?

HARROP: Into the campaign? Sure, it came up all the time, but we were able to avoid that pretty well. I think that any career Foreign Service Officer, any diplomat who's been around for a number of years during a political campaign is very sensitive to the importance of trying to keep out. Israel is particularly difficult because [the Israelis] were determined to bring us into it. However, we were able to keep out. In fact, the situation was that each side was sort of campaigning against the United States. It was peculiar, but that happens from time to time, as you know. I think that the Embassy was able to emerge unscathed on the issue of partisanship.

Q: There were some other things going on at the time. Were you involved in the General Motors engine scandal, and all of that?

HARROP: The so-called Dotan Affair. Yes. I don't want to spend much time on this, but for the past seven years there has been about \$1.8 billion of defense equipment procurement per year by Israel using American grant aid. Israel has purchased squadrons of American aircraft, patrol boats, and all kinds of military equipment in the United States. They have had -- unique among the beneficiaries of American defense support -- their own, very large purchasing office, with scores of people employed, in New York, which undertakes this procurement, rather than having the [U. S.] Department of Defense do it on their behalf. They do this rather skillfully. They are rather good at getting competitive bids from American manufacturers -- the best price, the best goods, and so forth. From a military engineering point of view they are plain competing. They know what they want and what they need for their theater of war. The "Dotan Affair" refers to General Dotan, who was among those responsible for procurement. He was found to have diverted funds in a deal which included General Electric and other American companies. He was tried, convicted, and sent to jail in Israel. The whole story continued to unfold -- particularly on the American side -- after that, but there have been no indictments as yet in the United States. However, the Department of Justice [in the U.S.] was and is very much interested in pressing forward with prosecution in America. It wants some good, exemplary convictions in the United States to "nip off" this kind of thing.

There was a tremendous need to interview General Dotan and get from him the facts in a deposition which could be used in the American courts. The Israelis were very resistant to allowing Dotan to be interviewed. It became a real "cause celebre". We spent a lot of time on it, between Department of State and Department of Justice lawyers and the legal advisers of the Defense and Foreign Affairs Ministries in Israel, trying to work this thing out. It may have been concluded by now. Just as I left, four or five months ago, we'd finally reached an agreement on the nature of an interview which could take place.

I think that the Israelis exposed themselves to suspicion by resisting having Dotan interviewed. People from the United States, critics of Israel, could say, "Now, wait a minute, what are they trying to hide? Is there more here than meets the eye?" Others said, "Well, the Israeli reluctance is [based on the consideration that] they don't want to set a precedent for other powers interviewing [Israelis]." Others said, "Well, they [the Israelis] don't want Dotan to have an opportunity to try to involve people as high as he can, including then Minister of Defense Rabin in this matter. Dotan is a very bitter man, understandably. He's going to try to sour Israeli politics." Anyway, it was rather complicated. It's not over yet.

The other big effect of the Dotan affair was to have many people in the American Congress look with a skeptical eye upon the existence of this [Israeli] purchasing agency [in New York]. Perhaps purchasing should be done by the Pentagon, in the same way as most other programs are handled. I don't know. The Israelis feel that they can do better by purchasing for themselves, than having the Pentagon do it for them. There is a cost to the [U. S.] taxpayer with all of the paperwork. Actually, there's a cost to the Israeli taxpayer as well, in a sense, since the huge costs of the Pentagon bureaucracy doing the purchasing for Israel is deducted from the grant. I think of this off and on but I don't believe it is a major or enduring issue.

Before we get into the Rabin administration, the more important thing of this nature, during my first six months [in Israel] were the allegations of diversion of American military technology, particularly to China and to other powers. The Israeli defense industry is a large, complex, and very effective structure. It is largely government-owned, part of the parastatal system. The Israelis have an active military export program. This enables them to lower unit costs of their own equipment, the same as every other nation which exports [military equipment]. This is a major foreign exchange earner for them, and it is also a way for them to fund research and development, which would be more difficult to fund, [if they did not have] the economies of scale and have customers overseas to do the research for them. They are the world leaders in certain areas, such as night vision, and night flying equipment. In some other areas of electronics and avionics they are at the front of technology. In fact, when they purchase American aircraft, such as the F-15 and the F-16, they actually install their own, classified equipment -- improvements, if you will -- to make these aircraft more adaptable to their own image of what they need to be doing.

Anyway, the major allegation, which became very public indeed, was that the technology having to do with the famous "Patriot" missile, which had defended Tel Aviv and Haifa during the Gulf War, had been, in fact, "leaked" to China. China is a customer of Israel for defense equipment. This became a very serious matter. American intelligence [information] was sufficiently sobering on the subject that we asked for and obtained Israeli permission to send a special team to Israel to do a thorough investigation. This was done along in March or April, 1992. The result was publicly announced that evidence of diversion [of this technology] could not be found. Now, that did not mean that the intelligence information was refuted or brushed aside. There are many people who still feel that there is evidence of some problems in this area, possibly involving the "Patriot" and possibly involving other technology. That is a continuing chancre, a continuing boil that must be lanced. Many Israeli leaders who attach great importance to their relationship with the United States, and are very proud of their own integrity, are extremely bitter that they are suspected [in this connection]. They say, "Why in the world would we divert technology to China or North Korea, which is the charge, which could then be sold back to our enemies here in the Middle East?" They argue that this doesn't make sense.

Other people in the United States say that we have intelligence information which is just so "hard" that we cannot ignore these things. We know that the Israeli Government may not always completely control the Israeli defense industry, the same way as we know from experience that our government does not always control the American defense industry, and leaks could happen, etc. And so it goes, on and on. Efforts are made to set up systematic reviews, cooperative investigations, or other such things which will put these problems to rest. They will never be entirely put to rest at a time when the world arms industry is in great trouble. Obviously, it's part of our domestic political agenda to deal with the problems which major employers like Lockheed, Boeing, and General Dynamics are having. The same thing, of course, is true in Israel. So pressures become more acute. The search for markets for arms is a big issue. That was and is a troublesome bilateral issue between Israel and the United States.

When the Rabin Government came into office, they made it very clear that they were determined to move ahead with the peace process. In fact, the Prime Minister announced that within nine

months of taking office there would be a deal with the Palestinians. That proved an unwise kind of a statement to make because such announcements inevitably harden your negotiating partner into feeling, that if he stands fast, you are going to give up some of his own positions in order to meet your own deadline of nine months. This statement may even ensure a lack of cooperation from the Palestinian side. There were plenty of other reasons why Rabin was not going to give in to the Palestinians. The legitimacy of the Palestinian negotiating delegation was not a very solid one. They had not been elected or appointed by any real, recognized political force. They were always playing "catch up" and trying to sell themselves to their own constituencies in the Occupied Territories at the same time that they were trying to negotiate against more experienced, more skilled, and better informed Israeli negotiators.

It was a tough impasse, despite herculean efforts by Prime Minister Rabin and his team. They did step back from the "settlement policy," although there is still some limited financing of settlements going on -- I think more than the Labor Party should be involved in based on its own platform. They could be more forthright on that subject, although they have, by and large, cut back on support of settlements. [Former Housing Minister] Sharon and his friends had made so many commitments and signed so many contracts before they left office. They explicitly and expressly left the maximum amount of ongoing construction in settlement activity. This presented the Labor and Meretz (a Leftist, "Peace Now" party which is the major partner of the government in Israel at the present time) with a great overhang of settlement activity to contend with.

Anyway, negotiations [with the Arabs] were not going anywhere up until this recent breakthrough in August, 1993, following negotiations in Norway. In August, 1992, I accompanied Prime Minister Rabin to Kennebunkport, [ME] to spend a weekend with President Bush and Secretary Baker. On that occasion we had some, I would say, tough but friendly discussions. There was a sense of reestablishment of positive relations between the Israeli Government and the personalities in that government and the United States Government. There was also some very blunt talk about settlements and about what the actual policies were going to be. The end result was what was politically necessary to both sides. The Israeli side agreed to sharply reduce settlement activity, and the American side agreed to go ahead with the large loan guarantee program. This was done, with the proviso, which was very much desired by Senator Leahy as well, that there should be a deduction to reflect settlement construction. Up to \$2.0 billion would be guaranteed each year for five years for a total of \$10.0 billion. Each year there would be a close accounting made of what money had been spent the previous year on settlement activities. That amount would be deducted from the amount to be guaranteed in the following year.

At present, in November, 1993, this is a big, political issue in the Clinton administration, since we have deducted almost one-fourth, almost \$470 million, from the \$2.0 billion to be guaranteed in 1994. Our estimate is that that amount was spent by the Israeli government [on building settlements in the Occupied Territories] during the first year of the guarantee [1993].

Q: Because of money committed by the Likud government?

HARROP: Well, it is mostly because of that, but not entirely. These are complicated, political

issues. Many people in the Labor Party also do not want entirely to abandon the notion of settlement construction [in the Occupied Territories]. However, more importantly, Labor has to retain its credibility with the public in security terms if it is going to be reelected. Israel is a very real democracy -- no question about it. The relationship of the voter to the government is an ever-important element.

President Clinton, to my dismay, is now speaking about "forgiving" the \$470 million or so and allowing it to be guaranteed, despite the fact that that amount of money was spent on settlements. I think that it would be a bad political mistake to do that. I think that the pressure should be kept firmly on the Israeli Government not to engage in settlements. I think that if we are going to have a durable peace in the Middle East, we must really have Israel honestly prepared to trade land for peace. Anyway, that's an issue that's being discussed at the moment.

Q: How did the American election of 1992 impact on Israel and your mission?

HARROP: Well, it impacted on Israel because Israel was a part of the American election. Just as the United States is part of Israeli elections, so Israel is part of American elections. Jews represent about two percent of the American population, or slightly more than five million Jews in this country. It's a matter of great debate and discussion -- who is a Jew, as it is a question everywhere. More than most communities in America, the Jewish community votes and is involved politically. American Jews have normally voted for Democratic Party candidates. In the elections of 1992, because, I believe, of the totally misplaced perception that the Bush-Baker administration had not been a good administration for Israel, a crazy perception, in fact, it was clear that the Republicans were not going to do very well among Jewish voters. For that reason [the Republicans] were trying to do all that they could to improve that situation. In October, 1992, first the loan guarantee went through. One could argue, in some respects, that this was related to the American elections, but I think it would have gone through eventually. Then there were other announcements of defense support for Israel, resource transfers, and so forth along in October, 1992. So to that extent Israeli issues were part of the American elections.

I think that Israelis, by and large, would have preferred to have Clinton win, because they have this notion that Democrats are more friendly to them. However, I think that they're mistaken. You have a lot of rhetoric from the Democratic Party side and you may have a little more money change hands, but pursuit of the peace process was not really an issue in the American election campaign. This was a national concern. Sympathy for Israel is really not an issue in American politics. It may be that we give \$3.0-4.0 billion in support to Israel. We definitely give \$3.0 billion and how much of the rest is taxpayer money is a matter for debate. The polls in this country have repeatedly shown that it is not just the five-plus million American Jews who favor that. A majority of the American people strongly supports the independence of a democratic Israel, and a two-thirds majority of Americans over and over again have approved of these very large resource transfers to Israel. So it's a national attitude. It's not a question in American politics, whether or not we're going to support Israel. We're going to support both the existence and independence of Israel and the peace process.

I think that there is a perception that the bilateral relationship has a greater influence on elections than, in fact, is the case.

Q: In the 1992 elections Clinton was elected. However, before he assumed office were you feeling noises from the transition team that we have to do things differently?

HARROP: No, I don't think so. There was a great effort being made by the transition team to make clear that, in fact, our policies were not going to change, and particularly our dedication to the peace process and our attention to it. It was difficult for me to imagine that any Secretary of State could spend the proportion of his time on this particular issue that Secretary of State Baker had spent on it. It just seemed impossible for him to do that. For example, they made clear that they were going to keep Djerejian in office as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. They appointed Sam Lewis, a well-known Israel supporter, to be Director of Policy Planning [in the Department of State]. They appointed Martin Indyk, a former executive of AIPAC and director of AIPAC's offshoot, a think tank public policy foundation called the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, as the National Security Council's man for the Middle East. So it was clear that they were going to continue in the same direction. In fact, the first overseas trip which Secretary of State Christopher made was to Israel. His first stop was Israel. He made the usual circuit to Cairo, Amman, Damascus, and, for the first time, he even went to Lebanon, which was regarded as rather daring, from the security point of view. That was in March, 1993. No, there was no sense of change. At that time the Norway talks were not really getting anywhere...

Q: You're talking about talks between the...

HARROP: Palestinians and [officials of the] Israeli Foreign Ministry. Interestingly enough, it was the Foreign Ministry, because the rivalry between Peres as Foreign Minister and Rabin as Prime Minister has never stopped. This rivalry has come as near to stopping as it has in the past - right now -- because Peres was the architect of this relationship with the PLO. Rabin saw that he had to go along with that -- indeed, wanted to go along with that. Rabin did a complete reversal of his policy toward the PLO. He recognized the PLO. He made that move. I think that he saw that the only way he was going to get the peace process going was to do that, since without an interlocuteur valable, he wasn't going to be able to make progress. It was clear that, whatever you might think of the PLO, they were the nearest thing to a valid negotiating partner, particularly when it became increasingly apparent that Israel and the PLO had a number of common concerns.

Most of the Arab governments were concerned by the threat of the Islamic fundamentalists in the Middle East. Peres told me shortly before I left [the Embassy in Tel Aviv] at the beginning of May, 1993, that there were talks going on in Norway. We knew that, I guess, but he didn't give me the impression that he thought that they were going to "break through" any more than had a series of other, secret meetings that had been arranged in various locations between Palestinians and Israelis. All of a sudden, during the summer of 1993 that meeting [in Norway] began to acquire substance. Both teams decided that they really were going to make progress, and that's the way it came out. Rabin had been through a difficult spell before that. The American Ambassador was forever calling in to plea for moderation in response to terrorist actions.

There always are incursions from Lebanon down into Israel in the form of Katusha rockets fired

at Israeli towns. There are frequent armed attacks against Israeli forces by units of Hezbollah, the extremist Shiite Muslim fundamentalist group in southern Lebanon, which is supported and financed by Iran and operates with the quiet concurrence of the Syrian Government. Israel has occupied that five or eight mile wide security zone in Southern Lebanon to protect itself from these incursions. Whenever these rockets blast into Israel and kill Israelis in Kiryat Sh'mona and other towns in Northern Israel or, and this is a bit more questionable from an ethical point of view, when Israeli forces in the security zone are attacked by the Hezbollah, Israel tends to retaliate with great vigor. Then the American Ambassador finds himself preaching forbearance, trying to limit the retaliation. My colleague in Damascus [at the time], Ambassador Chris Ross, would go to the Syrians and say, "Please use what influence you can with the Hezbollah." I would speak to the Israelis to try to prevent all of this conflict from interfering with the peace process, which was in everybody's interest.

Then the most dramatic event of all, of course, was the second visit of Prime Minister Rabin to Washington. I was in Washington in March, 1993 -- I guess Christopher's visit [to Israel] must have been in February, 1993. Rabin came to Washington in March. There were some particularly bloody murders of Israeli military and civilians in Israel proper by "Hamas," the extremist counterpart of Hezbollah in the Occupied Territories. Rabin cut short his visit, in fact, and went back to Israel because there was such public concern at home. At that time he closed off the Occupied Territories -- sealing off the "Green Line," the border between Israel and both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. He did not allow Palestinians who worked in Israel -- about 70,000-80,000 in number -- to come over to their jobs. That gave the Israeli public a sense of greater security, with fewer Palestinians present. Also, I think, this contributed to the peace process because many Israelis began to see that they could really live pretty well with that line closed off. They derived a certain encouragement from that.

There had also been the very dramatic deportation of 415 supposedly Hamas leaders in December 1992. They were selected with such speed that not all the right ones were chosen. In fact, some of them were released shortly afterwards because they were not involved with Hamas. The deportation was in retaliation for more Hamas killing of Israelis.

That led to the most difficult negotiation I had when I was in Israel, which was on behalf of Secretary of State Christopher. I met with Prime Minister Rabin seven times in five days. I made a note of this. I must write it up some time, since it was so interesting. [I met with Rabin] to negotiate a confidential agreement between the United States and Israel on how the Israelis would behave in regard to these deported Palestinians. This agreement made it possible for us to maintain our support for Israel in the United Nations, where deportation was a major issue because...

Q: It was on television, showing the plight of these people on a daily basis. You knew what they were doing.

HARROP: It was a very difficult negotiation and one which I was pleased with. I think that Prime Minister Rabin was also pleased, because we were able to reach an understanding which bridged a very real difference between the United States and Israel. Deportation under international law, is a very harsh and politically repugnant move. We were able to get by that. In

fact, the last of these deportees will be returned [to Israel or the Occupied Territories] in a matter of a very few days. In December, 1993, the last ones will be sent back.

Q: How did you feel about the dynamics of the relationship between Clinton, the Clinton administration, and Christopher with the Israeli Government? Did you see a change between that and the Bush-Baker administration?

HARROP: Not very great, because they had made such a point of keeping people on. I think that it took a while for Christopher to develop confidence. The [Israelis] knew Baker awfully well. Not just the people in the Likud Party but also the Labor Party people. They met with Baker and knew him very well, understood what his thinking was, how his mind worked, and what he was trying to achieve. After January 1993 there was a certain disarray, as there always is when a new administration comes into office. Christopher is a dramatically different sort of person, reserved, seemingly closed. He is not warm, does not tell jokes, does not have that kind of human rapport which Baker established very quickly with [the Israelis]. I think that they were a little tentative [in their contacts with him]. On the other hand, I felt that in the Clinton administration they had people who would do almost anything for them, as had been repeatedly made clear. The new Administration was determined to be perceived as pro-Israeli and to make that the tenet of its policies.

The relationship picked up fairly quickly. Mr. Christopher had a successful visit to Israel in February, 1993. I guess that we had four meetings with Prime Minister Rabin, two of which were one-on-one meetings between Christopher and Rabin, and two -- one a luncheon and one a larger meeting -- all went pretty well.

Toward the end [of my tour in Israel] I was engaged in economic issues, because I felt it was so important that something be done about the liberalization of the Israeli economy. Investment was not going to be attracted to that economy unless they took further steps to deregulate foreign exchange and capital markets, to simplify licensing and labor regulations, to privatize the 4% of the economy still in Government or Labor Union hands. I had discussed these matters with the Israelis and, in fact, was able to persuade both Mr. Baker in August, 1992, and Mr. Christopher in February, 1993, during their visits while I was there, to raise the subject of privatization and liberalization of the [Israeli] economy. It's one issue on which the American Congress has been ahead of the Executive Branch. Many of the Congressional leaders and even many of those who are the best friends of Israel are quite concerned about this matter. I tried to work on that with them, along with other Israeli leaders. The Israeli Government itself is interested in doing this, but the political obstacles in the Israeli system, as in any other -- political obstacles to privatization and taking these measures -- are very difficult. There are always vested interests howling to be heard when you make these changes.

In fact, the supposed reason why I was replaced [in Israel], and rather abruptly, was a speech that I gave in March, 1993, to the combined Rotary Clubs of Tel Aviv on the economy and economic reform in Israel. In this speech I stated, among other things, that in the course of recent visits to Israel, Senator Inouye and Senator Leahy had each stated that it was going to be difficult, given the end of the Cold War, given the American budgetary deficit, and the shrinkage of the American presence overseas generally, to maintain for very much longer the very high level of

resource transfers to Israel. I mentioned their comments in passing as a further reason why there should be more attention paid to liberalizing the economy, so that growth could be maintained and more jobs created without dependence on American largesse to do it. American grant aid represented about 7-8% of the Israeli budget. I pointed out that, in my view, it was not prudent for any government to rely -- even on its staunchest friend -- for that proportion of its national budget.

These remarks brought a great cacophony of criticism and, I think, a somewhat hypocritical outburst in Washington, in the Congress and on the part of the press spokesman of the Department of State. I was removed very quickly but I think it was not really for that reason.

Q: What do you think was the reason?

HARROP: I think there was a perception that I was maybe a little too much of a player myself in the affair and that I spoke too much to people, to the press, and to others in Israel. I had not, perhaps -- I guess the term is -- "gone native" to quite the extent that some of my predecessors had in Israel. I was perhaps not seen by the [Clinton] administration as someone whose every automatic instinct was going to be to support Israel.

Q: Do you think that it was the gut reaction of a new administration on a very politically sensitive subject? I mean, on the political side rather than, you might say, the professional side?

HARROP: I don't really know. I was rather hurt, I must say, by the attitude of Secretary Christopher, whom I'd regarded as a friend. I'd worked with him. I was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa when he was last in the Department of State and I'd worked quite closely with him on a number of human rights issues. I was hurt that he never spoke with me at all and never discussed with me why I was being withdrawn. There was no communication of any kind. I was informed that I was to leave very quickly by Peter Tarnoff, who also did not discuss the rationale...

Q: He'd just been through a somewhat bruising...

HARROP: He had the same sort of reaction to a public statement that I did, a few weeks later, although he survived his...

Q: But barely.

HARROP: But it was all right. My wife and I were prepared to [leave]. You know, it's not unusual in a country of that sensitivity for a new Administration to want to have a change. So now they will send [Edward] Djerejian, the Assistant Secretary [for Near East Affairs] to Israel as Ambassador.

Q: I'm sure that one goes through a certain amount of introspection and thinking about this. Did any of this come from the Israeli side?

HARROP: I do not believe so. I do not believe that it came from the Israeli side and I do not

believe that it came from the American Jewish community. I'm fairly confident of the latter. I had confidence in these people, I think that they had confidence in me, and I don't believe that that was the case. On the Israeli side I know that my friend, the Governor of the Central Bank, a little bit before this, had mentioned when he was in Washington that he hoped that I would not press too urgently for privatization of the banks, though he and I had in fact been coordinating closely on economic reform. He wanted to delay privatization of certain banks for technical reasons related to changing their structure. Whether a comment of that sort had an effect, I don't know. I'm sure that he did not mean it to have the effect of hurrying my departure.

I don't believe that it was from the Israeli side. It was from the [Clinton] administration itself. I think that it was [Secretary of State] Christopher. It was people right around him -- very likely, Dennis Ross, who had no particular affection for me. What others? I won't mention other names. I don't know who it was, or to what extent it was "ad hominem". I'll probably never know exactly what happened.

Q: What was your reaction after getting this [order of recall]? One knows that things have changed, but to leave sort of under fire leaves the impression...

HARROP: It was a little difficult, and I've had a difficult summer. I haven't gone back and really engaged in things at the Department of State. It seemed to me that after 39 years of service in this system and rising to the top of it -- I guess I was the fourth most senior Foreign Service Officer in the government when I retired in May, 1993. I was the most senior Career Minister. You know, I was hurt by it. I was hurt particularly by the fact, the rather pointed fact, that the administration recalled from retirement and sent back as a temporary "fill in" the officer who had been my immediate predecessor, Bill Brown. But that also, I think, made a point regarding the nature of their concern, since Bill Brown was seen as just a 100 percent, pro-Israeli figure. He's almost, really -- he left Israel to state publicly that he thought that we should not combine humanitarian and political issues over the loan guarantees, at the time that the government was still doing that strongly. He's a member of boards of directors of Israeli banks, he's the Chairman of the Truman Institute of the Hebrew University, and he is thoroughly pro-Israeli and very concerned about Israel. I think that, maybe, that was a point that they wanted to make. They wanted someone who just did not have any reserves at all about total, even uncritical American support for Israel.

I think that it was probably known that I had certain reserves, as I did, about the advisability of our continuing current high levels of grant economic aid -- not the security assistance, which is essential to reassure the Israeli public that they can take some chances in the peace process. But I think that at a time when we cannot afford essential programs at home, and cannot give any aid to poor peoples we'd like to held around the world, it is difficult to justify allocating over one half of all our aid grants to a relatively prosperous country with a growth rate -- at this time -- three times our own. I don't think that it is any secret that I had doubts about our continuing the \$1.2 billion of grant economic aid, among other reasons because I think that it is not in Israel's own interest. It is used as a cushion which saves them from taking the hard decisions to reform their own economy, improve their economic circumstances, and attract investment.

JAMES A. LAROCCO
Deputy Chief of Mission/Chargé d’Affaires
Tel Aviv (1993-1996)

Ambassador James Larocco was born in 1948 in Evanston, Illinois. He graduated from the University of Portland (Oregon), and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He entered the Foreign Service in 1973. His overseas assignments include Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Cairo, Kuwait, Beijing, and Tel Aviv. He was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Bureau 2001-2004. Ambassador Larocco was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

Q: So you left Taiwan for Tel Aviv when?

LAROCCO: It was three-year assignment, but I only stayed about 20 months. I got a phone call from the State Department, in this case from NEA front office DAS Dan Kurtzer alerting me to an opportunity in Tel Aviv. I then immediately got a call from the PDAS, Mark Parris, who asked if I could report to Tel Aviv to be DCM right away

I said, when is right away? Tomorrow, he said, but we need you there soonest. I saluted smartly, and immediately prepared to leave.

What happened then is the director general of the Foreign Service, Genta Hawkins Holmes, understandably was against this action by NEA without a full bidding process. HR kept telling our admin chief in Taipei that I had no authorization to leave Taipei and absolutely no orders to go to Tel Aviv.

We had a wonderful admin chief who clearly understood the reality of Department regulations (regs, as we called them). There are “the no regs” and “the yes regs.” And guess what? They are the same regs. He asked me to sign a promissory note that I would pay back everything if it turned out I had to return to Taipei, but he said he was sure it would all work out, despite the firm HR objections. Needs of service can justify anything, he remarked.

I flew straight to Washington, leaving my family behind in Taipei till I could get orders and the kids finish school. I went to talk to the head of assignments in personnel for senior officers, who happened also to be an NEA friend. He smiled, said he could absolutely not support me, but then sat me down at a computer terminal with a technician to write orders.

So I co-drafted my orders and set off for Tel Aviv. I took over immediately as DCM, with a former ambassador to Tel Aviv, Bill Brown, brought back to serve as Charge D’Affaires till an ambassador was nominated.

I had to hit the ground running, working even my very first night hours after arriving as I faced a crisis involving one of our employees who had killed an Israeli in a traffic accident and had only partial immunity. I immediately ordered the person sent home on the first available flight, which

was around 6am. The next morning I got a call from the Israeli Foreign Ministry formally protesting my move, but adding that what I did made their lives easier. They were grateful I did so. I got off on the right foot with the Israeli MFA and that close relationship lasted throughout my tour.

To finish the story of my arrival in Tel Aviv, it was several months later when I got a call from Genta Hawkins Holmes and she said what are you doing out there in Tel Aviv? I said I was serving as DCM.

She said, well, you know this is all wrong.

I said that I was just doing what I was told to do.

She said, oh well, now that you are out there, do a good job. To make things right in the system, I need you to submit a formal bid for the job so we can panel you. I did so. Once again, it proved to me that there is the system, and then there is “the system.” This understanding served me well when I was PDAS in NEA years later.

Q: The job you were bidding on was what?

LAROCCO: DCM Tel Aviv.

So I had to go back so they could get the system all properly in order. I had to bid on the job I was already out doing.

Q: Let's go back to what caused this.

LAROCCO: What caused this was Bill Harrop, who was an outstanding officer but had run afoul of the new administration related to several things. I never got the full story. I was too busy to be concerned about it, and strangely, no Israelis ever raised it with me, nor did anyone in the embassy. I guess it was a thing of the past by the time I arrived. The DCM, interestingly my predecessor as Econ Minister Counselor in Beijing, Kent Wiedemann, was truly an East Asia specialist, with no experience in the region. He left of his own volition, sizing up the situation, as I was later told. I never found out why and how Kent ended up in Tel Aviv in the first place.

Q: He made this statement which is quite in line with what we said. We can't support every tsunamic request from every country and everybody's got to tighten their belts, including Israel, which didn't sit well with the Jewish lobby.

LAROCCO: Perhaps that's true. I don't know. I didn't hear much about this and didn't pursue it. I jumped into this job after the fact and had no time to think about it.

Q: It was the Clinton administration early days, and they were very nervous.

LAROCCO: In any case, I was confronted with an embassy that was rife with problems. The list seemed endless

Q: What had happened? Obviously, a lack of control.

LAROCCO: I have learned that from the military side. At the end of the day, lack of command and control is almost always responsible for situations like this. Strong, solid, ethical leadership or the lack thereof makes all the difference. I devoted much of my first year dealing with the OIG and cleaning up messes that I had inherited, some of which had gone unresolved for many years. At the same time, I had to deal with serious morale problems left over from the Gulf War. Those who stayed in Tel Aviv when the scuds were falling around them deeply resented the fact that the State Department would not evacuate them, even to Eilat. They were bitter, and there was nothing I could say or do for them. I breathed a deep sigh of relief when the last of them departed post since their bitterness spread throughout the mission

Overall, despite my high expectations for a post in such a lovely setting on the Mediterranean in a lovely country working on high profile issues, I had never seen morale so bad with so many issues poisoning the situation. And this applied to the locally hired staff as well. I decided I must sit down and take this one issue at a time. I must say that there were so many issues that would truly burn your ears off. There were almost too juicy to be credible. For the protection of those involved, I will leave it at that. But I got to see and deal with just about any issue under the sun. After the tour in Tel Aviv, managing anything else seemed downright easy.

The changing leadership of Embassy Tel Aviv

My assignment to Tel Aviv, which lasted three years, was like four separate tours. The first six months, with a temporary Chargé, peace talks beginning, and a huge array of administrative problems was a time when I rarely slept. The next six months, I served with a wonderful ambassador Ed Djerejian, but he only stayed six months. I was the Chargé for over a year, and I served my final ten months as DCM under the brilliant ambassador Martin Indyk.

Bear in mind that the embassy leadership had undergone rapid change the two years before my arrival. That pattern continued the three years I was there.

Bill Brown

Bill Brown was a wonderful officer during an eventful time. As Chargé, he was there to hold the fort till an ambassador came. He did his best, although it became clear from the moment I arrived in Tel Aviv that U.S.-Israeli relations were on such a plane that they were handled directly between Washington and Jerusalem. They were accustomed to do this over the years and expected to deal this way, and that was not about to change. This made it a painful at times for the ambassador, since it was hard to chase down and stay up-to-date with what was really happening. Bill was Chargé for about six months.

Ed Djerejian

I think Ed Djerejian, who had served as ambassador in Damascus and NEA Assistant Secretary, fully expected this to change with his appointment as ambassador to Israel. That was not going to

happen, but he also understood that his close relationship with Secretary Baker was not matched by his relationship with Warren Christopher. In any case, he informed me even before his arrival that he would be leaving the job to go Rice University to direct the Baker Center. He confided this only to me and his office manager. To this day, I marvel at the fact that this remained a secret the full six months he was at post. How no one even guessed this when he never moved into the ambassador's suite at the residence, never received a full shipment of household effects, never brought a car, etc. was downright amazing.

Ed was such a wonderful leader, who received so much devotion and affection from the entire mission, that his departure came as a real shock. I called an "all hands meeting" to inform everyone. Some even cried. It was a move never signaled to the staff.

I will relate one particular event that will always stand out in my mind about Ed and his leadership. Once again, it involved an embassy inspection. In preparation for the inspection, I and our outstanding Admin Counselor, Bob Manzanares, drafted a lengthy report to the inspectors assessing every section in the mission, warts and all. We singled out several sections as needing major help. We also listed all the areas where we felt inspectors could do us some good.

This particularly involved our near constant presence in great numbers in Jerusalem to handle the huge groups of official visitors mainly related to the peace process. Keep in mind that 1993-1996 was the only period other than 1978-81 that peace talks accomplished something significant. Coincidentally, I was in Cairo that earlier period, and now I was in Israel for this period.

We thought we had laid out everything, making the inspection easier and hopefully providing solid results. You know the old saying on the two biggest lies in the Foreign Service. They both involve the arrival of inspectors: "we are pleased you are here," the hosts say, as the inspectors respond, "we are here to help you."

The second part of this old adage proved true, much to our disappointment. The inspectors totally ignored our thorough preparatory cable and delved into sections and issues of little importance to the priority tasks of the mission. In the process, our already low morale was made worse. What's more, they didn't even bother to go to Jerusalem to see our situation and needs up there related to visitors.

I was livid when I saw the draft inspection report. I was called in to join the ambassador when the chief inspector provided an oral summary. About ten minutes into the presentation, I stood up and delivered the most passionate, no holds barred, brutally honest criticism of the entire exercise. I could not hide my anger. Our post was drowning in work, our people had no time for a personal life, and if the inspectors were not here to help, they oughta get on a plane and go home immediately.

I sat down feeling relieved that I had said this. I had to. It wasn't for me; it was for our staff and for our vital mission. I honestly didn't care if I was fired on the spot. There was one of those storybook loonnnggg silences in the room, and then Ed spoke. You know, X (I will leave out the name of the head inspector), Jim is absolutely right. He then very dispassionately went through

our situation and made clear he would fight this report as written. I wanted to go over and give Ed a huge bear hug.

In the end, the inspection report was completely redone. Our post was lauded for its work, which was nice, but none of the issues we had pointed out in our preparatory analysis was addressed. That was tragic.

An interesting sidelight was that I received an odd IER. I was “criticized” in the IER as being too strong a leader, too decisive, a wheeler-dealer who got things done. When it was presented to me, I responded “guilty as charged,” and signed the IER immediately. I was comfortable seeing this criticism in print for promotion panels to see. And I was not surprised when I was promoted later that year to MC (Minister-Counselor) rank.

Jim Larocco, Chargé d’Affaires

Ed departed, and I was informed that it would be a long time before an ambassador came on board. I would likely be Chargé a year or even longer. Knowing as I did that a Chargé has all the responsibility but may as well wear a sign around his/her neck “I am not the ambassador”, I decided to set a tone for my tenure as Chargé immediately. I used my “loss of confidence” authority to send a number of people home. They were all guilty of one or another unacceptable behaviors or performance. This action sent shock waves through the mission. At my first country team meeting as Chargé, I made it clear: zero tolerance on my watch. You see what I did with the others. Stay clean and do a good job and we will all get through a year that promised to be the busiest yet. Peace talks between Jordan and Israel were now in full swing, so there was a revolving door of official visits, reports to write and bilateral and multilateral issues and events to coordinate.

Management issues

Q: Were there sort of proven cases of malfeasance?

LAROCCO: Oh, yes.

Q: What were these?

LAROCCO: I would rather not say.

I think at one point, we had as many as six individual OIG investigations ongoing. We also had many cases of unacceptable personal behavior, most I prefer not to describe. Interestingly, these were many of the same personal issues I had encountered when I was in Cairo. Perhaps it was the extreme work load and/or the pressures everyone faced both at home and in the office. I and the admin chief and later Martin Indyk all tried to get our arms around this. We never did nail it down precisely. I also think a major factor was that expectations were so high among those coming to post, including myself. Work and life never measured up to these expectations. I had everyone departing post fill out a confidential questionnaire for me, and I would say that upwards of 70 percent were happy to be leaving.

I recall that when Martin Indyk arrived, he simply would not accept that morale could be low in Israel. After all, it is a beautiful country with so much history, so much culture, beaches, mountains, desert...so many places to visit on day trips. Only the far reaches of Israel, like Eilat, required an overnight trip. He was sure it could be fixed. He tried so hard, arranging free movie showings, happy hours, etc. He truly tried. When I left, he was still trying, but I'm afraid that getting morale to a level we all would be more comfortable with remained elusive.

There is another factor, and I hesitate to mention it, but I must. Unique to embassy Tel Aviv was the reality that we had large number of staff who were, what I would call, observant Christians who came to Israel seeking to live and work in the Holy Land. The same applied to a large number of observant Jewish American staff. The reality of Tel Aviv in those days as well as today was that it was a bustling, secular, Mediterranean city... Since our embassy was on the beach, you simply couldn't avoid the roller skaters in bikinis, the beach attired picnickers and the general atmosphere of Tel Aviv which was overwhelming secular. To our observant religious at post, it was downright hedonistic. This was a huge disappointment to those coming to live and breathe and walk and work in the Holy Land. It didn't seem very holy. I'm not quite sure exactly what they were expecting.

At the same time, the pace of activity in Israel, whether it's work or just living, is intense. Life itself is intense there. Every day brings stunning news, nothing mundane as we experience in America. And with the massive influx of Russians during the mid-1980s, one was almost better off with Russian than Hebrew in our area of Israel.

Add to this the reality that we had to go up to Jerusalem, where almost all the government offices were, as often as twice a day, and that so many of us had to stay up there during official visits, quite often for days at a time, we ended up being separated from our families, even on weekends. I found it predictable for the majority of our American staff that they would arrive with soaring expectations, only to see them whittled down steadily over a period of the first few months. By their third month, many had reached a deep hole in their morale and had to decide how they would dig out of it, or not. Many never did.

I must confess that despite my almost limitless and unwarranted optimism, I also reached that point, but not for almost a year. I realized that I had not taken a break, and even when I was with my family, I was always on the cellphone. And these were the days when we had those big, bulky, unreliable phones. I made the executive decision that I would observe Shabbat, the Sabbath, just as so many Israelis do. I would leave all except the most urgent to the duty officers, and I would spend my Saturdays taking my family to one site or another around Israel. I must say that this was the tonic I needed, and we explored all corners of the country. As small as Israel is, and despite more than two years of Saturdays venturing around the country, there were still places on our list we never got to. It is that rich a country.

Q: This is so often true. Paris is not high morale.

LAROCCO: I've heard that as well, but Tel Aviv was the worst I had ever seen. It had a long reputation as the divorce capital of the Foreign Service. That was clearly the case while I was

there. Too many families broke up during the three years I was there. By and large, I found most Foreign Service families during my career to be quite stable. This was an aberration.

Q: I would think when you are throwing in sort of Orthodox Jews and fundamentalist Christians, these aren't high divorce groups.

LAROCCO: Indeed, don't forget the Mormons. But even among these groups, there were divorces. Keep in mind that Tel Aviv had many...how can I say this?...pleasurable distractions in addition to the pressure cooker work environment. It was not hard for some to stray. Things happen, to paraphrase a slang expression.

As the DCM, I was the officer in charge of what was called family advocacy. The ambassador was supposed to be shielded from this. I adhered to this rule, and I must say I dealt with some very difficult cases. I did my best to make very difficult situations as painless as possible, but I was no trained counselor, and I looked to a variety of people to assist. My prime task in these cases was to make sure these situations did not affect the work of the mission. In some cases, I sent people home, where they could get appropriate professional help. But in family advocacy cases, it is essential to get the family to recognize the problem and accept the need for professional care.

Q: What is family advocacy?

LAROCCO: They are family problems. We had one case of a teenage boy attempting to kill his mother with an ax. We had children getting into all kinds of trouble and not properly handled by their parents. We had a rape victim. All these cases were extremely sensitive and had to be handled with maximum discretion and tact. I think the Foreign Service was wise to vest this responsibility with the DCM, who is generally low profile and geared toward management. You don't want the ambassador to be involved in delicate, personal issues like this. Then you work with the admin people and counselors, including professionals outside the embassy. As long as it doesn't affect the employee's work, you do your best to sort it out at post. At times, you have to call on the regional psychiatrist or other specialists.

This, of course, is very important at overseas posts. Of course, this isn't relevant in Washington. People sort out their personal problems with their local doctors, counselors, ministers, whatever. While I knew we had to address these issues and not let them fester, I also always kept in mind that issues like wife swapping, non-traditional sexual behavior and other behavioral issues rarely reach the screens of managers in Washington. As long as it doesn't affect the employee's work, I would do my best not to let the rumor mongers run wild with their stories. At the same time, when you are overseas, you have to be careful that errant behavior is not used to blackmail officers. This is a reality that must be taken into account. This is why every time news came to me about someone, I immediately went to see them and have a come to Moses conversation. If I was convinced they were telling the truth, whatever the reality, I would do my best to protect them. If not, I would make it clear that I reserved the right to take action to protect the interests of our mission. This was delicate stuff, to be sure. And it was not uncommon in Tel Aviv.

Q: People, particularly when you've got husband/wife issues and all and these are probably the

most delicate things of dealing with and all of a sudden someone is coming from the outside saying stop that. They can take off like a sky rocket.

LAROCCO: We had one case involving spouse swapping among three families. All had kids. The long knives were out in all directions. We had several agencies in that case bringing in their OIGs because of allegations made directly to Washington by the aggrieved parties. Once it involved the OIG, my own role was limited, but still important. Some of my most sensitive conversations via secure telephone calls were made to the OIGs.

Despite the high personal stakes for all, or maybe because of these high stakes, I found this work among my most important. State had invested a lot in these people, and I felt it was my responsibility to find ways to get back on the right course. And then there were the children. In the end, I believe we succeeded in the majority of cases of resolving these issues to the benefit of the families as well as the mission. But it required the highest levels of tact, sensitivity and firmness.

Q: I have served in different posts and I found when I served in Saigon an awful lot of people who went there to get of a marital situation or something like that.

Was there any particular reason why people would go to Tel Aviv for either fun or extracurricular activities or something? Or did it just sort of happen?

LAROCCO: In the case of Tel Aviv, I felt people were not coming to escape. They were seekers, whether it was a good job, a religious experience, a nice climate, a fascinating country. I don't recall anyone going there to escape something else, except perhaps those Europeanists who were choosing Tel Aviv as a "hardship assignment" to escape being sent to Nouakchott or some other notable hardship post.

Much to my disappointment, we had few Arab specialists. I truly felt it was important that those stationed in the Arab World get the Israeli perspective as well.

I had spent time in Israel, as I related earlier, on a kibbutz, so Israel was not new to me. I knew exactly what to expect. But that earlier experience was not a professional experience, it wasn't dealing with both Arabs and Israelis on some very tough issues. In Tel Aviv as DCM, I was responsible for Gaza. I went there often and had many contacts and friends there. Debating Israelis in the morning and Gazans in the afternoon sharpened one's talking points like few other experiences.

Again, this was a very difficult assignment for a lot of Foreign Service officers. I tried to get more NEA people into it because I wanted them to learn about Israel. Also we needed people who knew the Arab side of things as the peace talks progressed and we became more involved in the important work of bringing Palestinians and Israelis together. For the six months that Ed and I were the front office, we had this unprecedented situation of Djerejian and I, Djerejian as ambassador and I as DCM, both of us advanced Arabic speakers and neither of us Hebrew speakers. That's never happened before and never happened since. I must say in all honesty that our experiences in the Arab world made us very popular with Israelis who wanted to know more

about Syria, which Ed had great knowledge of, or the Gulf or Egypt, which I was familiar with.

In the end, I absolutely loved managing, no matter how long the day and evening was, no matter how frustrating or challenging the issue was. Speaking in military terms, I felt I owned the embassy. I had ownership; I was responsible for the conduct and performance of the mission.

In this regard, among the countless experiences I had, one of the most memorable for me was during a Clinton visit to Tel Aviv. He was speaking at a large gathering, and the White House advance, which I knew well, arranged for my wife and kids to be positioned back stage for a photo with the President. He walked off the stage, accompanied by then Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, whom I knew well, and an advance man steered them in our family's direction, with a White House photographer ready to snap some photos. Peres turned the President and asked if he could join the photo. He added that the President should know that I was the person who made all this work. I was truly proud to hear those words, and that photo is one of best keepsakes on my wall.

Shimon Peres and the power of the word

Peres was one of the giants of this period, whose life parallels that of Israel itself. He was a semi-tragic figure, never quite able to translate his unparalleled visions into political leadership that could make these happen. That was for Rabin during the period I was there. But Peres was ubiquitous, whose strength as an articulator of policies and programs was needed by Rabin, the leader willing to take risks for peace and able to translate that willingness to action.

Peres was a master wordsmith. His sound bites were unforgettable. They sometimes had nuggets of wisdom, but most of the time were just plain fun. I loved his line when he was addressing a group in Scandinavia: I bring you greetings from the chosen people to the frozen people. He could disarm a foreign audience like no Israeli since Abba Eban. Aaron Miller, on the peace team, kept a file of Peresisms. He would reel some off to lighten things up at times.

One evening, I was hanging around the Knesset, which was not uncommon for me, and I happened to notice Peres sitting in his office alone. I walked in, which was totally permissible at the Knesset in those days, sat in front of him and said: Clinton is coming. Do you have a good sound bite I can suggest he use? He scratched his head, rejected a few lines, and then said: I have one. How about "Let's turn the promised land into the land of promise?" That was vintage Peres.

The Knesset to me was democracy in action, but so much richer than our own Congress. After all, Israel is a parliamentary system, and the Prime Minister, as leader of the majority party, is totally in the mix 24/7. The Knesset cafeteria in those days was a wonderful place for us to hop from table to table, talking with factional leaders and their supporters who were debating this or that issue. There was never a question of denying us from the embassy access. I can recall on a number of occasions welcomed into party meetings as if I were one of them.

Netanyahu's view of the prerequisites for peace

When I was Chargé, I had access to both parties. When I was DCM, I mostly dealt with the

opposition party, in this case the Likud. To be honest, they were not treated well by Washington, especially the peace team. They were shunned because they simply would not embrace the peace process and were looking for every opportunity to thwart progress.

But these were formidable political actors, strong leaders, sharp minds and representative in many ways of a majority of Israelis. The coalition supporting Rabin had the votes in the Knesset, but I never felt they had the hearts and minds of the majority of Israelis.

I recall one day going to see Netanyahu. He was alone in his office, and I was alone. He was fuming over his treatment by the peace team during the visits of our senior leaders, when he would be kept waiting or wouldn't get meetings till late at night. I made no comment, simply listening to him vent.

I turned to the peace process, and he launched into a monologue about how misguided it was. At one point I asked him directly: will you ever support peace with the Palestinians, and if so on what terms? I will never forget his response. First, Israel must be economically secure. We are not now. We are a struggling economy, stifled by the powerful labor union Histadrut, miserable financial and tax policies and total lack of competitiveness with the international market. We must not make peace until we can stand on our own, with a vibrant economy that is the real guarantee of economic security.

The second condition, he continued, is population. I feel we must have a Jewish population of perhaps 8 million before we can be secure as a state with a Palestinian state side by side with us. That is a sufficient population to enshrine our identity and our majority.

Third, we must have a presence in the Jordan Valley. That is our most vulnerable border. We can never abandon that area.

Netanyahu pulled out a map that showed a Swiss cheese like Palestinian state, with settlements or outposts breaking up much of the contiguity of a Palestinian state, particularly on the west bank. I never got the impression he had an emotional attachment to the settlements; in his view, they were strategic.

Netanyahu's clout, as far as the U.S. was concerned, was at its lowest ebb at the time, so his views were considered irrelevant. What he thought didn't matter to analysts in Washington. So much has happened in the past twenty years since that conversation, including the peace treaty with Jordan, so I have no idea where Netanyahu's red lines are now. But Israel has certainly achieved one of his objectives: an economic vibrancy and sustainability that is a marvel of the modern day. And he was instrumental in making that happen.

The embassy and the peace process

I arrived in Tel Aviv just a short time before the Oslo Agreement was announced. We had the Jordanian peace agreement. We had constant high level visitors working on so many aspects of the peace process all the time. We had the peace team itself seemingly there every other week. Secretary Christopher came 22 times. It was non-stop action from my arrival till my departure,

the day Netanyahu was inaugurated as prime minister. It was a fascinating historic set of bookends, framing arguably the most vibrant and successful era of peace talks in the region.

I note this because while we at the embassy were not directly involved in the talks themselves, playing instead a support role, we did provide what I thought (and our senior visitors acknowledged) was an important substantive role. Before each senior level visit, we did extensive consultation within the embassy and fanned out to a wide array of contacts to put together a “scene setter,” focusing on key domestic issues, personalities and trends that we felt should be taken into account by the visitor as he or she prepared their own points for use in meetings.

In the case of Warren Christopher, he personally related to me how he looked forward to these pieces. He noted, on arrival from Damascus one time, that he was so impressed with our scene setter that he had put it on his lap and read key parts of its to the Syrian President, Hafez Al-Assad, so he would understand the many pushes and pulls on Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel. Understanding the many complexities of the Israeli scene is simply hard to gauge reading The Jerusalem Post (the only English language daily newspaper those days).

I said, thank you very much sir. I appreciate that. We’ve got a great team in our political section that puts these things together and I will pass this along to them. I was particularly referring to the principal pen of these pieces, Andrew Steinfeld, one of the best contact officers and drafters I encountered in my career. He had served his first tour in Kuwait under my supervision, and now we were back together in Tel Aviv. His wit, intellect and ability to disarm Israeli interlocutors made him an invaluable member of our team. When I conveyed Christopher’s words to Andrew and other members of our team, it was a powerful shot in the arm that you get in the Foreign Service that is so important. That gave them even more incentive to go out and really beat the bushes so we could put together a scene setter that really showed what the currents were going on in Israel at the time.

Someday, I hope a historian of that period gets access to these scene setters via the Freedom of Information Act. I think these messages conveyed better than any other documents or media reports the lay of the land politically at the time when the march toward peace was uncharacteristically successful.

Q: When you were there, what were the currents that were going on?

LAROCCO: Rabin was challenged by Netanyahu, challenged by the settlers. Politics is always, always the national sport in Israel. These guys have to have ice in their veins, the thickest of skins, the quickest minds and the skills of a Machiavelli to navigate the tortuous waters of Israeli politics. The long knives are lurking around every corner. Among all the politicians of that period, Rabin was the master. He could turn lemons into lemonade at the blink of an eye. I was able to spend a great deal of time with him, time I will always cherish.

Yitzhak Rabin and a leaked reporting message about him

One story about him, although I have many. When I was Chargé, I wrote in a long message

about Rabin going into a period of deep depression after there had been a string of terrorist attacks which left many innocent people dead. Those bent on destroying the peace process were out in force. The political pressures on him were only one element that weighed him down. He clearly had some grave doubts whether the path he had chosen could succeed. Arafat had proven to be an untrustworthy, corrupt and unwieldy peace partner.

When Rabin was in Tel Aviv at the Defense Ministry, which was quite often since he lived nearby, and where as Defense Minister he was clearly most comfortable, I would hang out in his outer office. I was allowed to, and this provided me an opportunity to talk to so many Israeli leaders, military and civilian. No one seemed to mind that I was there. I was part of the furniture. One could feel the depression that spread outwardly from Rabin's office at that time. So I wrote a long message about this, concluding with a recommendation that a presidential visit may be the best way to break out of this impasse.

The cable was leaked to The Washington Post. I got a call from the NEA front office and they said, just stay calm. We are going to stand by you. I must confess that I was nervous, not from what might happen to me, but more a sense of betrayal by my Israeli interlocutors.

Days passed. I got a call from Rabin's office, from Eitan Haber. "Jeem...Jeem...Jeem," he said, "What did you do? The old man is so disappointed in you." I truly felt rotten.

Two more very long days passed, and I received another call from Haber. He said that the old man wants to see me. I gulped. Every Thursday, Rabin would move down to the defense ministry in Tel Aviv, so it was just a short ride over to The Kiriya, as it was called. I first went to the office of his director, Eitan Haber, who shuffled his papers and did not break into his usual grin. I had grown such admiration for Haber, and now I felt like he was leading me to slaughter. We sat there in silence. The phone on his desk finally rang after seemingly an eternity, and he said let's go.

We go in there. It is just Rabin and Haber and Rabin is at his desk. Rabin has his reading glasses on, which never either fit him or his image. He could never look studied or professorial. He always looked most natural to me in his shirtless t-shirt that he wore on hot evenings during the summer, a cigarette in one hand, a drink in another. He was a man from an earlier Israel, a working class Israel neither accustomed to nor comfortable with any wealth or show of wealth, but the right man for the challenges and opportunities of this time period.

I sit down in front of him, and once again there was an eternity of silence, with both Rabin and Haber bearing glum and gloomy expressions. All of a sudden Rabin and Haber look at each other, bursting into laughter. I am startled, looking around me. Did something funny just happen that I missed? Finally, Rabin looks at me and says, Jim, did you really think I gave more than a passing thought to your leaked message? If so, you really don't know what it's like to be prime minister of Israel. I have arrows shot at my heart, my back, my head, everywhere all day and night long. I would never survive or get anything done if I was affected by this. It goes with the job.

Eitan and I thought you should suffer a bit, feel what it's like. If nothing else, we got a good

laugh out of it at your expense, but also with you learning something. We get plenty of arrows from your country as well, and your masters in Washington all too often think they are always doing us favors when in fact they can also make our jobs more difficult. I know they think we can do the same. None of this is out of the ordinary. It is the ordinary, the usual. It's business. We wouldn't have done this if we didn't like you, he said with that awkward but disarming Rabin half smile that he could never hold for more than an uncomfortable moment.

I said, Sir, that was a cruel joke.

He said, "Okay, I understand that but it was a lot of fun for us and you made an old man smile for a few days. I don't get that often enough."

Rabin and Tom Lantos

Another favorite Rabin story of mine related to one of our VIP visitors, for which he had so many, and for which I have enough stories to amuse my grandchildren for decades.

In this case, the larger than life Tom Lantos was the main character. This was not the first time I was "control officer" for an official visit by Tom. The previous one was in Beijing, and it was a remarkable story as well. I will never forget the luncheon I attended with Ambassador Lord, Tom and his wife, Rose, and senior Chinese officials, who were the hosts. The topic of Tibet came up, and the Chinese, as they always did, talked about civilizing these backward people. Tom countered strongly but politely regarding Chinese treatment of the Tibetans, but the Chinese would not back off their party line. Finally, Rose exploded, delivering an emotional tirade against Chinese extermination of the Tibetan culture. To be sure, this left a deep impression on the Chinese, and if they had not understood the importance of this issue to Americans before this, they did then.

Tom was truly a passionate defender of rights and freedoms. A refugee from Hungary, he had never forgotten what he had gone through and what other people were enduring throughout the world. He was an old world gentleman, dapper, erect in his stance, polite to the point of disarming even his roughest interlocutors, and a liberal in the classic meaning of that word, not the political one. Freedoms and rights, and protection of those freedoms and rights, were emblazoned deep in his soul.

But...he at times would come out with some of the most unexpected comments. I escorted Tom in to see Rabin. It was a small gathering, just Tom and me, Rabin and his aide. Rabin had just returned from a trip to Oman to see the Sultan, an unprecedented visit that seemed to auger a thaw in Israel's longstanding isolation in the region. This topic came up in the conversation, and Tom commented out of the blue that it seemed to him there was a natural affinity between gay Arab leaders and Jews. I stopped taking notes. Rabin turned bright crimson, as anyone who dealt with Rabin would recognize when he suddenly was switched on. He turned to look at Tom, and in his inimitable style simply said "Ohhhhhhh?" in an elongated rising, highly accented tone. I honestly don't recall anything else from that conversation, but I can never forget that comment.

Rabin and the fruits of peace

Another memorable moment for me with Rabin occurred when I was the Charge, Secretary of Defense Perry was visiting, and I hosted Perry for a dinner at the ambassador's residence. I was not living there, but we used it for this special event. Prime Minister Rabin was there, and his mood had turned dark. There had been some devastating Palestinian terrorist attacks and many had died. The peace process with the Palestinians was under severe attack by opponents.

In my welcoming remarks to the dinner guests, I told the story that I related earlier in this oral history about bringing our baby daughter to Israel for medical treatment in 1990. I noted that we were the first to drive from Cairo to Jerusalem following the signing of the Camp David Peace Treaty. I said that this taught me what exactly peace is all about: ordinary families, mothers and fathers and children and babies able to live normal lives, sleeping without fear, moving about freely. Without peace, my daughter would not have received the wonderful treatment in Israel that saved her from surgery. When I sat down, Rabin grabbed my hand, noting that he was deeply, deeply touched. And as he was leaving the dinner, took me aside saying how as a grandfather himself, he understood exactly what I was saying. He said that he would never forget this story as he tried to make peace a reality for future generations of Israelis.

In 1995, Rabin invited me to attend his birthday party in his office with his staff. As the only non-Israeli, I indeed felt very special. You can see that photo up there on the wall, with the personal words he wrote to me. This was his last birthday party. He was assassinated later that year. I will always cherish that photo.

The Clinton administration and Israel

Q: I interviewed a long time ago Jim Dobbins. I got the feeling from him that he was sort of repeating the regular line, the sort of older line, that you can't give as much to other countries and this resonated particularly within the American Jewish political, AIPAC and all that how dare you challenge the fact that we can get any money we want or something like that.

You had the feeling that the Clinton administration was new and it didn't, it was very worried from its Jewish slant and Jim was gotten out of there in a hell of a hurry.

Did you get any feel for the Clinton administration and the Jewish side of our relations with Israel?

LAROCCO: I believe that the Clinton administration came into office feeling that some serious repair work needed to be done in our relations with Israel. Trust was always there, but this trust needed to be cemented. Without that trust, peace had no chance.

Q: On the settlements, I think.

LAROCCO: There were a variety of issues, including the settlements. The issue of conditionality to the loan guarantees was still a lingering issue of trust for some. When Clinton came in, there was the belief that they needed to restore an element of trust with the Israelis because that trust had been broken; at least that was my understanding of their assessment of Bush and Baker

policy. It wasn't that long after Clinton became President that the Oslo agreement was announced. Again, it was reached without us. The two sides had taken a very bold step for peace, so it was a golden opportunity to build trust, rewarding not just the Israelis, but also the Palestinians. It was an extremely active time.

At that time, the Israelis were of two minds; they truly wanted to stand on their own, to be self-sufficient, and to wean themselves of our economic assistance. They felt they would never be competitive in the international market until they had to sink or swim economically. They also felt that eliminating economic assistance would bring them status as a developed country and in fact remove some of the frictions in our relationship.

At the same time, they believed that they would always need our military assistance, especially technical assistance and access to our best technology and most modern weaponry. Rabin and his top defense officer, David Ivry, were unequivocal about this.

So our whole aid approach was changing even as the amount of our assistance grew. Keep in mind that our aid program with Israel was already long standing by this time. Kissinger's Sinai disengagement pact negotiated twenty years earlier began our annual multi-billion dollar aid packages to Israel. That was bumped up more with the Camp David Peace Treaty.

The Oslo Agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, summer 1993

Q: Today is the 28th of February, 2013 with Jim Larocco. I would like to talk about your impressions of the peace negotiations. This Oslo thing, did we know that it was simmering?

LAROCCO: Keep in mind that I transferred during the summer from the Far East. I had no current knowledge on what was happening in Israel. But...I must say, during that summer, neither I nor the Charge was made aware of any progress in talks that we all knew were ongoing in Oslo. From our understanding, the talks were solely exploratory, unofficial and with no participation by third countries, other than the Norwegians. There have always been unofficial talks, often called "Track II talks", to distinguish them from official talks, called Track I. Few of the Track II talks ever resulted in breakthroughs. Why should this be any different?

The Oslo talks involved well known individuals on both sides. They were dedicated to finding peace, but there was complete deniability to anything they said or pledged. They were empowered to a point, but no further. The seniority of the people on the Palestinian side was higher than the seniority of the Israeli side, which is normal because again for the Israelis they needed a greater degree of deniability, while the Palestinians needed a much higher degree of credibility to be taken seriously.

The time was ripe for a breakthrough. Arafat was essentially trapped in Tunis with few prospects for breaking out of his treadmill there. Rabin was ready to take risks for peace. As Ed Djerejian used to say, "the biology is right." By this he meant that old leaders who have been through hard times have not only all the history in mind, the options in mind, the risk in mind, but also have the credibility of their people. They also are into legacy, and if they are to take the plunge, this would be it. That was partly a factor in the case of Rabin and Arafat. This was also the case

between Rabin and Hafez Al-Assad, and I am convinced to this day that peace between Israel and Syria had a realistic chance in those days of success until Rabin was assassinated.

So the agreement was pulled together by August of 1993 and brought to Rabin and Arafat for approval. They both agreed. Both sides knew that they needed a guarantor, and arbiter of sorts, someone to turn to, someone to implement, someone to blame. The U.S. was the only country capable of playing that role. That led directly to the famous handshakes on the White House lawn, awkward and difficult as they were.

Q: Since this agreement essentially was done elsewhere, in a bureaucracy you get something like this, quite often you get an awful lot of dog in the manger sort of response. Your agreement and I didn't have a hand in it so it won't work and I am not going to play ball or did you find a great sigh of relief, thank God we got something going?

LAROCCO: Relief, yes, but only briefly. There was no time except for a brief high five. There was so much work to do, and the peace team and all our bureaucracy swung into overdrive. Keep in mind this was a big change from Bush 41 to Clinton. We hadn't had a Democratic White House for a long time. You had 12 years since the time of Jimmy Carter. This was truly a whole new team that had come in. There were a handful of Carterites, but it was Clinton's team that dominated. From Tony Lake and Martin Indyk at the White House to Dennis Ross, Aaron Miller and Dan Kurtzer, it was an unprecedented team of powerful minds with enough energy to power a small city, maybe a large one. They were tireless, never short of ideas and determined to make this work.

They also clearly understood that they had to play all those roles I just noted. It was a long list of tasks. And there must be more. Dennis, as I recall, was so foresighted in understanding the Israeli need, and I would even call it craving, for some kind of recognition in the region. The launch of the multilateral track involving Arms Control, Refugees, Economic Development and Cooperation, Water and the Environment was truly far sighted. I always believed that having agreements on paper is necessary, but until you can translate those agreements into on the ground work, people-to-people, government-to-government, institution-to-institution, nothing will endure. In this case, neither Camp David nor Oslo had a real built-in mechanism to do this. I will talk about this later.

At the same time, Oslo was simply a framework agreement. The meat had to be put on the bones, there was still a lot of equities to trample on and a lot of risks that both Rabin and Arafat had to take to make this thing happen. Only through U.S. leadership would this be possible.

The White House had everyone's back. And President Clinton always made that clear. That was truly important not only to the peace team, but to Rabin and Arafat as well. The peace team proved determined and tireless. I give them an enormous amount of credit for the success that was achieved. Clearly, the Oslo Agreement was full of holes and was more a vision and a framework than a real process. In the short run, it was problematic but successful. The long run is another story, still being played out. But one thing is clear: Oslo failed in achieving the kind of peace it promised.

I will never forget the occasion when Rabin informed Bill Brown and me that Oslo had succeeded. We were in his office on a Thursday evening, only he and Haber were there, the lights were dim, he was in his t-shirt, drink and cigarette in hand, and we were just shooting the breeze. At one point, he lectured us on the Camp David Treaty, how he had memorized it, how it was in fact a blueprint for a comprehensive peace, how little of it was implemented and how tragic this was. It should never be forgotten. Rabin was at his passionate best, more reflecting to himself than lecturing to us.

He then told us that agreement was reached in Oslo, and the Israeli ambassador in Washington would be informing the White House shortly. All our lives would now change forever. There would be much work to do.

Rabin was sincerely a man of peace and who came to this via his personal experiences with war. He was an Israeli patriot of the highest order. He was willing to take risks, but never if that would jeopardize the security of his country. Peace in his mind was precisely designed to enhance security in the long run. To him, it was not an option; it was the only answer.

He told us that we shouldn't think of this just as an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. He told us it was what should have happened after Camp David, but never did. These talks must be accompanied by efforts with Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. There would never be the peace and security the region needed without Israel being at peace with all its neighbors.

I remember that evening so vividly. He would sit there drinking his glass of scotch and smoking these horrible cigarettes, wearing an ill-fitting, old fashioned tee-shirts, the sleeveless type tee-shirt that were so common in ethnic Chicago when I grew up.

From that moment onward, I had so much respect for that man because he really did believe in it as a strategic choice for the future of Israel that was necessary and that was worth devoting the rest of his life to achieving. He really wanted it to happen and suffered tremendously every step of the way in trying to achieve that goal. He paid for it with his life.

Again, I give the peace team and President Clinton himself enormous credit for all the hard work that was done at this time. We at the embassy just facilitated visits back and forth and communications, in addition to our constant stream of reporting on the domestic political and economic situation in Israel. Otherwise, it was really the work of these guys that translated this agreement into a reality which, among other things, brought the return of Arafat, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and a degree of self governance that was a radical change for the Palestinian people.

It seems hard to believe now, but the expectations and hopes of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were sky high. In a poll, nearly 90 percent of Palestinians saw a brighter future ahead, and a similar percentage repudiated the use of terrorism as a legitimate form of resistance.

I say this in contrast to what I experienced in a recent visit to Jerusalem. I was at Al-Quds University in Abu Dis conducting a seminar with faculty and students. Near the end of the seminar, a young Palestinian student asked the following question: Mr. Ambassador, you have

been around the peace process for more than 30 years. Will this all the same 30 years from now? I was devastated by this question. In the 90s, the Palestinians could taste peace, and they wanted it immediately. Their primary criticism was the slow pace of translating peace on paper to peace on the ground. With this question, there was a total absence of urgency conveyed by this young man. It wasn't all about Peace, Now. It was about Peace Someday, perhaps never. I took my time before replying, and did my best to convey hope. It was not easy, and the young man was clearly not convinced. Nor was anyone else in the audience. They had accepted the status quo, and I found that deeply troubling.

The peace team

Q: The team of Miller, Ross, Indyk and all, these are people who are, they were all Jewish and they were all sort of part of the you might say the established pro Israeli group in Washington. I may be wrong on this but did you have the feeling they were really sincere and trying to give the Palestinians self-rule?

LAROCCO: Their sincerity, their commitment to peace was without question. This was not a game; this was the real thing. The members of the peace team had a commitment to peace in their soul that I must confess I never had. I was a professional diplomat, sworn to uphold our policy, and I considered the peace process as essential to regional security and conflict prevention. But I was not going to live or die based on the vagaries of the peace process or lack thereof. I believed that U.S. interests could be sustained without a comprehensive peace, and that belief has been borne out through history. I never joined those who cried loudly that this was the last opportunity for peace, and woe be to the world if this round failed. I hear the same thing regarding Kerry's latest peace efforts. I just don't buy it. I do believe it is essential to keep trying, to build hope, but at the end of the day, the parties themselves must be the true crafters of an agreement and be willing not just to sell it to their people, but to carry it out and be vigilant in enforcing the terms.

Let's be frank: FSOs are at times derided for our lack of enthusiasm regarding certain policies. The reality is that we are left with sweeping up the residue of broken dreams, dashed hopes and poor policies all too often. It fosters not only a natural skepticism, but also the very necessary careful thought to what we may have to do if and when things go wrong. Political types who come on board with every new administration have all kinds of dreams, many of which will either never be realized or will fail. Someone has to be ready on deck to prevent things from going overboard. If Kerry's efforts fail, it will be FSOs who must deal with the aftermath on the ground. I know those out there now are keeping this in the back of their minds. The same applied to Libya, and applies to Afghanistan and Iran.

When it comes to foreign policies, it's all too often our career FSOs who are left holding the bag after political leaders move on to something else, our military withdraws or any number of policies or programs goes sour. When Oslo was successful, we didn't cheer; we started planning our role. When Oslo ran into trouble, as it often did, we started planning how to staunch the flow of blood. In all cases, it is natural for us to plan for "the day after."

To be sure, there were some who felt the peace team leaned too far in favor of the Israelis. If one

kept in mind that it was essential to keep the trust of the Israelis every step of the way, these might have viewed the peace process and how it was carried out differently. This was tough going, to be sure, and the peace team was tireless. Rabin was prepared to take historic risks, and it is was essential to stand with him, support him and make clear to one and all that we would do our best to minimize those risks. History will judge what mistakes were made, and peace team members like Dennis, Martin and Dan have already provided their views on what went right and what went wrong. But I believe that in those years, 1993-1996, they gave it their best shot, and I will always admire them for that. At the end of the day, as James Baker used to say, we can't want peace more than the parties themselves. Ultimately, no matter what we did, the substance of the peace was in their hands, not ours.

Arafat in Gaza, 1994

Q: I am not sure about the timing but here in Washington, just watching the daily news, it seemed like there was a calculated Israeli campaign to weaken whatever you want to call it security forces of the Palestinians.

LAROCCO: Again, keep in mind that before Oslo, the West Bank and Gaza were under Israeli control to the extent of a civil administration running Palestinian affairs. There was no such thing as a real Palestinian security force.

A key task in the preparation for Arafat returning to the Territories, as they were called, was preparing for the Palestinians to take over their own security.

The embassy in Tel Aviv, in those days, was responsible for Gaza and the consulate in Jerusalem was responsible for what we did with and in the West Bank. Arafat originally located in Gaza, and one of the tasks I had to do was to help coordinate the supply of equipment to the new security forces. There was surplus equipment in Europe, so my first thought is this would be easy. Wrong. The equipment had to be transferred from the control of European Command in Europe to Central Command in Egypt, and then brought overland to Gaza. I never did get an explanation of the economics or politics of why it didn't come directly from Europe to Israel, then to Gaza, which would have been much quicker and cleaner. Just one military command to work with: EUCCOM. Coordinating between two military commands was like working with two empires. It required much more diplomacy than I ever imagined. The experience we had coordinating between two rivals – the Palestinians and Israelis – came in handy. In the end, it was done, and just in the nick of time

Q: And you are talking about stuff.

LAROCCO: Talking about stuff and moving that stuff. It was like being in the TV Show "Mash," and many of us felt like Radar bargaining for trucks and other equipment. There was fortunately several weeks to work this out, and I recall much arriving the day Arafat arrived in 1994. I was down there quite a bit in Gaza and coordinating with the initial designated commander of the Palestinian security forces, Nasser Yusuf, who I just communicated with yesterday. He's in Jordan now.

Everything looked good. Nasser struck me as a pretty decent guy with the respect of his men. His forces, however, were in Jordan, and they never came to Gaza.

What we didn't anticipate was that Arafat was going to govern the same way he had governed in the refugee camps: divide and rule. Within a month, he had created so many different security organizations that everyone was confused. Instead of what had seemed to be a unified command under Nasser Yusuf, within a month Yusuf was virtually neutered. His authority had vanished. Arafat cronies were brought in to run separate security organizations. We needed a program to identify all the players, who played what position, who was back up. Arafat played each off the other, at times favoring one, then shifting to another. It was how he kept order in Beirut refugee camps, and he simply used that same template in the Territories. You can imagine how difficult this was for the Israelis, for us and for other donors.

Arafat's employment scheme was to place as many men as possible in the security forces, especially the police. As I recall, the numbers swelled to over 50,000. But how to pay for them? I remember clearly the priority Washington put on helping Arafat in this regard. When the time came to transfer money to them, the route was the embassy. I refused to support this program. I received several angry phone calls from Washington telling me to make it happen. I was reminded that I did not have the authority to stop this. I reminded them that my name or someone else's at the embassy had to be on the transfers. I would not authorize this.

In one of these calls, which involved a member of the peace team, I explained that I had no intention of going to jail. There was absolutely no accountability for these funds, and we had already seen one check provided by a donor nation taken within minutes to a money changer and end up in Europe. No accountability, no funds transfer.

The transfer of funds was delayed as Washington scrambled to put together a program of accountability, turning this over to a private accounting firm, Coopers and Lybrand, as I recall. Arafat hated this, seeing "his money" watched so carefully. In the end, he was pleased when we bowed out and turned over the willing Norwegians the burden of paying for Palestinian security forces. Several years later, a Norwegian official audit revealed that tens of millions of dollars could not be accounted for. The Norwegian foreign minister, one of the legends of the peace process, Tarye Larsen, was discredited. It was sad, but predictable. I can only imagine if we had looked the other way as he did how many Americans might have gone to jail.

Another factor that caused enormous strain within the Territories was that Arafat and his cronies had not lived there for decades. They were outsiders, and this parachuted in ruling class was deeply resented as local authorities, who had never left Gaza or the West Bank, were pushed aside. Not only did they resent being cut out, but they witnessed and suffered through enormous waste, fraud and mismanagement clearly condoned if not demanded by Arafat and his cronies. He quickly set up monopolies of key products and services, drawing even greater wealth to him and those in his favor, most of whom were returned refugees. It was deeply corrosive, and all of us knew it.

I remember one time when I was with a member of Congress and we were sitting with Rabin. The member of Congress said, "How can you work with this guy? He is just totally

untrustworthy, totally corrupt”, speaking of Arafat. Rabin looked at him and said, “My friend, you don’t make peace with your friends. You make peace with your enemies. You can’t choose those enemies and their leaders. I have to deal with what I have to deal with. Is he corrupt? Is he this, is he that? I have to deal with what I have to deal with, but peace is more important.”

I thought that was a great answer. Discussion shifted immediately to a new topic.

AID and the Palestinians post-Oslo

Just like in my days in Cairo in the aftermath of Camp David, there was a rush in the aftermath of Oslo to do aid projects in Gaza and the West Bank. This was at times just as painful as those days in Cairo, as the push for projects often conflicted with either the absorption capacity, the need or the priority.

For example, Washington wanted to build high-rise buildings in Gaza. They were high visibility, Washington argued, so let’s move on it. They will be a visible symbol to all that America cares. To many of us who knew the situation, this was terribly misguided, but it was not unethical. There is a big difference. I did oppose that decision but did not take a firm stand the way I did regarding the transfer of money for the police. In the end, it was not a symbol that America cared. Instead it was a symbol of American support for Arafat’s cronyism. There was never a transparent process on who would occupy the apartments, and we got what we should have expected: Arafat picked them, and they were cronies. Common people felt betrayed.

Our misguided AID program was corrected through the tough leadership and hard work of NEA DAS Toni Verstandig. I had enormous respect for how hard she studied the needs of the common Gazans and reshaped the AID program to fit those needs. She listened when I described the sorry state of our AID program and flew out to see for herself.

I took her down to a city north of Gaza City and said, “Look at this lake.”

She said, “Lake? This is a cesspool. These kids are all playing around it. It is getting into their water and they are all getting sick. Let’s drain this lake and put in a new water system.” And we did. It was an enormous success. We would tease Toni by calling the cesspool “Lake Verstandig.” After it was drained and the entire water system upgraded, the incidence of disease went from high to nothing, and the people in the community were truly grateful for what we had done. ”

Q: I remember talking to a water expert at FSI that came by. He was saying that what the Israelis were doing, I am not sure of the time. This was when the Israelis were dominating in Gaza all the sweet water was going practically in one direction.

LAROCCO: Gaza and the West Bank have always suffered from water shortages. So has Israel. This is an issue that requires constant attention. Always has, always will.

In those days back in the 90s, AID, in my opinion, correctly focused to a great extent on the water issue in terms of water distribution, water purity, cleaning up the water waste. I thought

that was an unbelievable winner. We got enormous credit for really changing their lives because they could see that their kids were healthier, they could see that the water was better for both for drinking and washing. It was a real success.

Again, on the security side, what Arafat did with the security forces at the time was impossible to undo, impossible to reorient.

Q: Were they disciplined? It sounds like they wouldn't be a disciplined group.

LAROCCO: They were very disciplined in carrying out Arafat's priorities.

As for our assistance, regardless of the project, we ended up never transferring money directly to the Palestinian Authority. There simply was not sufficient accountability. Arafat continually groused about this, but we had no choice. Our laws were clear and we would abide by them with no exceptions. So money went through a variety of institutions, contractors, suppliers, whatever. They got the money; they produced the product or service. We always had full accountability, even if the project was a poorly done or the end result, as in the housing project in Gaza, was a disappointment.

Q: What was your opinion impression of the sanctity of NGOs dealing with the area? Were they involved in diverting money or were NGOs pretty good?

LAROCCO: We dealt only with NGOs with a proven track record that we could trust. Once again, we allowed no wiggle room.

Always the U.S. government has had a tenuous relationship with NGOs. I have explained this to people by noting that NGOs are values based, mission-oriented. They have values and they will follow them no matter what. They don't have to compromise. They are there to help children or to advance women's rights or whatever. That is their basis for existing. That's how they raise funds. They are values-based organizations so they see no need to compromise on political issues or interests.

When you are there not only promoting your values but your interests, there will be times when you have to compromise. Governments do this every day. It causes frictions with NGOs who view any government with suspicion. There were indeed times when we had a difficult relationship admittedly with some NGOs.

What happened, and this is not unusual in developing countries, because there was limited capacity to use our funds and difficulties with accountability, the pipeline of appropriated but not obligated funds built up enormously with the Palestinians. Money was not spent that was obligated or appropriated or authorized for the Palestinians. In the rush to demonstrate our support for the peace, all kinds of money, significant money was pledged, not just by us, but by many countries. Remember, this is a small population in tiny areas. Gaza is about the size of Washington, D.C.; finding feasible projects was not easy. They just didn't have the capacity. They didn't have the institutions to work through and the accountability issue made it difficult to actually go forward with a lot of projects.

It reminded me of the aftermath of the Camp David Treaty when I was in Egypt. I recall once the AID Director there, at the start of the meeting saying, “Gentlemen, we have to find ways to spend \$3 million per day.” I was stunned, but this was a correct statement if we were to spend the money appropriated. I would have chuckled if it wasn’t so tragic a situation. Feasibility study after feasibility study had the same conclusion: this or that project simply wasn’t feasible. Washington howled that things weren’t happening. But how could they, if the economy couldn’t absorb this shower of new funding. The flipside of this was Egyptian grousing that we promised so much and produced very little. I was always happy I never worked for AID. They were an easy target.

Q: This introduction of massive assistance I would think the embassy would be spending a significant amount of time checking on things.

LAROCCO: Yeah, we did.

I will never forget Dani Pletka, a staffer on the Foreign Relations Committee, who informed us she was coming to Tel Aviv to review our AID program. She came out, expressing deep skepticism about our program. She was sure she would find grounds to conclude there was fraud.

I said, “Fine. Why don’t you start out spending time going over our books? I would like to know if you see any thing. I’ve got our top accountant at AID, he will open all the books and answer any questions you have.”

She did that and came back to me two days later and said she was impressed with our solid accountability. “I can’t find anything in this.”

I said, “That’s because it is not there. We are clean.” But, I added, the fact that we are clean does not in any way mean that we are spending the money wisely. That’s a different story. Having solid accountability is different than spending the money efficiently or effectively, serving our interests, Palestinian development and humanitarian needs and the peace process itself. If you have any advice to improve our AID programs, we would welcome it.

She took the time to go to Gaza and I admired this. She was dead serious in investigating on behalf of the Congress and the taxpayers. When she came back, she acknowledged the difficulties of finding the best uses of funds or even finding any uses. The Palestinian aid program would always be problematic, but it was a politically-motivated program, and would endure.

Q: I remember going back to the 1950s when I was in Dhahran and we were looking at the influence of Palestinians in Saudi Arabia and it was tremendous because these were the educated people. Coming back to your time, logic would say that the education had fallen off, going down, the technical expertise. How was it?

LAROCCO: No, it was a shock the first time I went down to Gaza. 95% literacy. I went to the Jabaliya refugee camp where at that time 70,000 people were crammed into an area less than the

size of Foggy Bottom. I visited homes that were so small, only dirt floors and 12 to a room. But all the kids were going to school and everybody was literate in that entire community. This was something I never forget. The Palestinian commitment to education was unparalleled in my experience.

Q: How did you find the schools? Were they getting a hate Israel indoctrination through the school system or not?

LAROCCO: I didn't go into the schools so I can't answer that question. I know there have been a lot of allegations back and forth on that. I haven't ever really looked into it. I just have to be honest with you about that. That was not something I went into, nor was I ever asked to.

Q: What about Iranians?

LAROCCO: Even at that time, whenever we received a threat assessment from the Israelis, and that was often, the Iranians were at or near the top of the list of enemies. I recall standing near Peres at a press conference in Jerusalem when he announced that the Iranians were 3 to 5 years away from a nuclear weapon. That was 1994.

But we were so absorbed in the peace process that Iran got scant discussion. You can talk about other times but at that time, '93 to '96 when I was there, Iran was on the screen but in small letters. Keep in mind that as the Oslo Agreement was being moved onto the next stage, Oslo II in 1995, at the same time negotiations were going on in a very, very serious and significant way with Syria and with Jordan.

Rabin, Christopher and peace with Syria

We in the embassy thought that an agreement with Syria was going to happen in 1994. We thought it would be reached as soon as August of 1994, or about a year after the Palestinian agreement. It seemed that all the pieces were there. I recall standing on the tarmac with Peres when Christopher's plane departed, returning the peace team to Washington after shuttling between Jerusalem and Damascus. He was nearly in tears. "One more shuttle might have done it," he sighed. "Why didn't he stay and get it done?"

I recall raising this in one of our evening get-togethers with Rabin in his Tel Aviv office one Thursday night. He dismissed the likelihood of a peace agreement with Assad. I was startled and asked why. He said the following: Warren Christopher is no James Baker. He recalled that Baker was persistent, tough and in charge. He would have a book on his lap, always open. Rabin said this was unnerving. If the discussion reached a point where Baker felt he could come to closure, he would slam the book shut. This, Rabin said, made him (Rabin) feel like he was no longer talking with James Baker; instead, he was speaking to the Secretary of State of the most powerful country in the world. With this in mind, it was hard to say no to Baker, and it was also easy to go to other Israelis and blame "the Americans." Rabin said if this was Baker's treatment of Israelis, they knew that Baker would do the same with other Arab leaders. And they knew that these leaders would react the same: acquiesce and blame "those Americans."

Rabin said that unlike Baker, Christopher accepted no as an answer. It was too easy. And if he could say no, so could Assad...so could Arafat...so could any other leader in the region. Peace will never come with Christopher, Rabin concluded. And it didn't.

Peace with Syria didn't happen in August 1994, as we hoped and even expected, but King Hussein of Jordan was ready. Some Israelis speculated that Hussein was deeply concerned that Syria would get all the attention of a peace agreement, and Jordan would get the scraps and scant attention following Syria. Whatever the reason, peace talks moved swiftly between the Israelis and Jordanians. A peace agreement was reached and signed with great fanfare on the Jordan-Israeli border at the Wadi Araba.

It was a heady time, with hopes and expectations still riding high. Peace seemed to be spreading rapidly, and the multilateral talks seemed headed to bringing the region closer together. I must say, and I think I have said this already, that I truly felt these multilateral talks were an inspired concept, bringing Arabs and Israelis together, underwritten by the U.S., Europe and others and pointing toward the day of significant benefits throughout the region from a comprehensive peace.

Attention shifted after the Jordan agreement back to Syria. Rounds of talk again brought the parties close, but it was clear that the assassination of Rabin set things back. Even with the assassination, there was a commitment to continue by all parties, with the view that the expected ascendancy of Peres to the prime ministership in elections in the spring of 1996, an agreement would be finalized. Keep in mind that in the latter months of 1995 following the assassination of Rabin, Peres held a 25 point lead in the polls over Netanyahu. His victory seemed certain, but that lead melted away month by month.

I left Israel the day Netanyahu was inaugurated prime minister in 1996.

Terrorism in Israel, 1994-95

Q: How did the embassy and you receive the news of Rabin's assassination?

LAROCCO: Before I directly answer this question, it's important that I take some time to describe the situation in Israel and the territories building up, at least in my view, to Rabin's assassination.

It wasn't long after the Oslo Agreement that those who opposed this agreement, on either side, Palestinian or Israeli, took up their pens, their microphones or their weapons to sabotage it. In the streets of Jerusalem, in particular, but also in Tel Aviv, odious posters of Rabin began appearing more and more. Rallies against Rabin, Peres and the peace process became increasingly large and vocal. I recall seeing in a suburb of Tel Aviv a march by Israelis opposed to the peace process with several men carrying a casket with Rabin's name on it.

Terrorism came to Tel Aviv in 1994, not far from the embassy, and this wasn't the only time terrorists struck in our area. Just a few months before the Rabin assassination, and shortly after Martin Indyk arrived as ambassador, an attack on nearby Dizengoff Street took place with some

of our staff in the area. It occurred around lunch time, as I recall.

There were many other attacks throughout Israel, and of course there was Israel settler attack near Hebron that I recall killed something like 29 Palestinians. Baruch Goldstein was the perpetrator.

I believe I related earlier in the discussion the dinner I hosted for visiting Secretary Perry with Rabin present. This was at a time when the peace process itself seemed in jeopardy because of the increased terrorism. Rabin went into a funk for several weeks. When he came out of it, I happened to be accompanying a Congressional visitor for a call on him. The visitor pressed Rabin on why he doesn't press the pause button on the peace process until the situation calms down. Rabin responded that this is precisely what the terrorists want. They want Rabin to be reactive, to act as if he's terrorized by them. Rabin then said words that have been repeated by others, but which I will never forget: I intend to take on the terrorism as if there is no peace, and to work for peace as if there is no terrorism. These were powerful words, sending clear messages to all parties who had a stake in the success or failure of the peace talks.

I also remember the pressure we felt from the Israelis against our travel advisories. Now let me be clear: this is not unique to the Israelis. Any countries that take in significant revenues from tourism chafe at our travel advisories. I recall the day after a stricter one came out from the State Department, I was at reception attended by the Mayor of Tel Aviv, Ronni Milo, and in his unprepared remarks, and he talked about how safe Tel Aviv was, and then singled me out and the American Embassy for misleading foreign guests who were thinking about visiting Israel. I was stunned by being singled out this way in front of other diplomats and the media. Ironically, the very next there was a terrorist strike in downtown Tel Aviv. We never heard another complaint from the Mayor's office, and over time, the Israelis learned to live with our travel advisories, as all countries do.

Ambassador Martin Indyk and the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin

As for the evening Rabin was assassinated, I was at home. Martin Indyk called me and said, "Rabin has been shot. Please come over to the house. We need to talk to the White House. There will be other things to do." I went over to the residence; Martin said he must go to the hospital to see Rabin and his wife Leah, telling me to stay on the line with White House. Rabin died before I saw Martin again.

I had a pit in my stomach. The week before, Martin and I went over to Rabin's residence to consult on talks related to Oslo II. Peres was phoning in from the talks during the conversation. Why I went with Martin I don't recall. Martin normally took the political counselor with him.

In any case, the meeting broke up, and for some reason, I took longer than Martin to get out the door, trailing him by a minute or so. As I was at the door, Rabin came up to me, grasped both of my hands in his, looked me in the eye and said "goodbye, Jim." At the time, I was spooked. This had never happened before. Rabin was short on ceremony, and courtesies were not his forte. That evening, I related this event to my wife, saying I couldn't get this out of my mind. I never saw Rabin again. He was dead within the week.

The Rabin funeral was only a few days after his assassination. In all honesty, despite the massive number of senior-level U.S. visitors, including Presidents, Secretaries of State, so many members of congress, governors, mayors, etc., it all went smoothly. There was no advance from the White House and State. We were seasoned handlers of VIPs, so they simply had to put themselves in our hands. No second guessing, no redundancy, just get it done. I must add that all the VIP visitors understood our limitations and helped each other. There were some particularly poignant moments as younger congressmen helped older ones climbed Mount Herzl together for the ceremony. The love and respect for Rabin was deeply felt.

This was the busiest time of my life. I don't think I got more than three hours sleep per night for over a year. I loved it. It was exhilarating. I would remind people in Tel Aviv the attention we get from Washington is unequalled anywhere at any other post in the world.

Special section: Carving the world among military combatant commands: a disservice to our vital national security interests

Q: Let's go back to our military relationship with Israel crossed lines of European Command and Central Command. You might explain what we you are talking about.

LAROCCO: This is a good time to go through this complex and important issue.

I think there is a popular misconception that while our civilian departments are like islands floating in a highly bureaucratic and faceless sea, our military is a seamless machine free of bureaucracy, free of stove pipes. It is a team working together to protect America with an efficiency and effectiveness unparalleled in military history.

First, let me be clear: I join so many American citizens thanking God every day for our military and the men and women who put their lives on the line every day so we can enjoy the quiet miracle of normal life. Few people in the history of humankind have enjoyed what I have enjoyed throughout my life. It isn't a miracle; it is constant vigilance, hard work, technological superiority and commitment from our political leadership across the generations and party lines to do all that is necessary to keep us safe.

But...I cannot avoid the conclusion that I know so many books and articles describe in great detail: our military is a highly segmented, stove-piped, disjointed, massively redundant and bloated structure that makes civilian equivalents look like models of structure and efficiency.

There is so much to focus on, but let me deal solely with what used to be called the CINCs and are now referred to as the Combatant Commands, and specifically the regional commands. Each of these is an empire unto itself, dividing the world with artificial lines and crossing them only rarely.

In the case of Israel, despite being located geographically in the Middle East, it comes under European Command (EUCOM). To its north (Lebanon and Syria), east (Jordan and Iraq), south (Egypt and Saudi Arabia), all come under the jurisdiction of Central Command. To show that

Israel is not alone in this curious line drawing, Egypt, one of the leaders in Africa, is not in AFRICOM, but rather lies in CENTCOM. In fact, it is the only country in Africa that is not in AFRICOM.

My first encounter with these empires, their lines and the separateness came with the supply of surplus military equipment, which was so abundant in Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union, to the Palestinians arriving in Gaza from Tunis following the Oslo agreement. The equipment had to be transferred from Europe, under EUCOM, to Alexandria in Egypt, under CENTCOM, to Gaza, which was theoretically under EUCOM, but which had heretofore had zero contact with EUCOM except via the Israelis. It was a nightmare making sure CENTCOM and EUCOM worked together in the transference of the equipment.

Let's be clear: Israel was in EUCOM for political reasons. Our military, with the fall of the Soviet Union, "pivoted" away from Europe to focus increasingly on the Middle East. Our military posted tens of thousands of forces at dozens of facilities throughout the Arab world. And this is in peace time. Those states, in those days, and others in CENTCOM, like Afghanistan and Pakistan, wanted no contact with Israel, and the very functioning of CENTCOM was predicated on a total, complete absence of any contact whatsoever with Israel and Israelis. It was such a huge redline, with no exceptions, that as an American, I found totally un-American and contrary to our vital interests.

I recall raising this directly with the Commander in Chief of CENTCOM more than ten years later, and he was unequivocal: no contact with Israel. I countered strongly that my own experience, serving in the Arab World as well as Israel, demonstrated to me how vital it was for any Americans understanding our own interests as well as those of the region, that we maintain strong contacts with both sides. This argument fell on deaf ears.

Only with the ascendance of General David Petraeus as combatant commander of CENTCOM did this start to change. I give him great credit for this.

But the dysfunctionality of the artificial lines goes on to this day. I will provide a few of many examples. When I was Director General of the MFO, our mandate was monitoring the security annex of the Camp David Treaty. Our beat was Israel and Egypt. Since all the American troops were stationed in Cairo, they fell under CENTCOM, which did a superb job ensuring they had all they needed in terms of support.

When terrorism struck for the first time in Sinai, in 2004, I went to CENTCOM for force protection upgrades. They responded immediately, and I was truly grateful for that. But when it came to receiving vital information about events and trends, I kept being told that the exigencies of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq precluded their paying much attention to the Sinai. In fact, they paid almost no attention, which was probably not expected under the circumstances.

Since I was stationed in Rome, and the EUCOM HQ was in Stuttgart, I decided to go there and see what they had, asking as well if they could pay attention to us and pass timely information. They didn't have two wars to fight. I was immediately told that I could not even talk to EUCOM about the MFO without a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between CENTCOM and

EUCOM allowing this. I was stunned at this level of segmentation and bureaucracy. I eventually got that MOU, but it wasn't easy.

I later inquired whether, in the case of an emergency in the Sinai involving mass casualties, we could call on one command or the other for immediate support. This did not go over well with either. They simply would not commit to provide for our emergency relief in a timely manner. When I followed the news on EUCOM's reluctance to support emergency needs in Benghazi, I was not surprised.

One particularly vivid example of dysfunctionality: Despite the so-called pivot to Asia and focus in that huge sea expanse on our Navy assets, anti-piracy has its best manifestation in the CTF-151 that falls under NAVCENT in Bahrain. Many countries, including China, participate in this task force that for years has focused on counter piracy emanating primarily from Somalia.

I recall chatting at a conference with a U.S. Navy commander working with that task force. I commented to him that I was surprised to see so many pirates working near the shores of Sri Lanka and southwest India. He laughed, saying the pirates knew exactly where the lines between CENTCOM and PACOM extended through the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. They would slip into PACOM waters and watch from a distance as the task force stayed on the CENTCOM side of the line. I shook my head in disbelief. Lines in the ocean? How absurd can you get?

Just think of the implications of these lines. PACOM extends from the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean to the border of Pakistan and India. New Delhi is as far from PACOM HQ in Honolulu as it is from CENTCOM HQ in Tampa. Of course, it is much closer to the CENTCOM forward HQ in Qatar.

How much can PACOM really pay attention to India, and how well can it grasp the situation if it doesn't have Afghanistan and Pakistan within its scope, knowing their leaders? The flipside of this applies to CENTCOM. How can they get their arms around the AfPak issue without consulting closely with India? I raise the question here: has any CENTCOM commander ever been to New Delhi? I am not aware that any has. No PACOM commander would allow it. If I am correct, this is a gross disservice to our vital strategic interests.

I don't even want to get started on AFRICOM. Originally, it was referred to derisively and dismissively as "AID with guns." Now it has morphed into an important kinetic command as violent extremism has spread from the Mediterranean all the way to the Horn of Africa. But how can you deal with Libya (in AFRICOM) without dealing with Egypt (in CENTCOM)? Or the Horn of Africa, without dealing with the other side of the Red Sea, which is CENTCOM? The JTF in Djibouti is supposed to square this circle, but keep in mind that AFRICOM must depend so much on both EUCOM and CENTCOM assets. It remains an orphan, and a weak one at that.

Now overlay all these Combatant Command (COCOM) artificial lines over the lines at State and DOD, which don't coincide either. It is a bureaucratic nightmare begging for someone to fix, but the iron rice bowls have been hammered so thick that every attempt has been aborted. I keep hoping that if nothing else will force a serious review and remake, it will be the demands of budget cutting. There is so much duplication of effort costing taxpayers not just billions, but tens

of billions of dollars every year that can be saved. Every year. That piles up fast.

At the same time, eliminating this duplication and stove-piping will save millions of man hours not just in actual work, but in contacts between officers all the way up the chain. And our top policy makers and appropriators will not have to try to sort out the naturally competing demands of each commander.

Israel, 1993-1996 (continued)

The list of what might be improved goes on and on, but I cannot conclude this section without saying that I suspect our bizarre military segmentation wonderfully confuses our enemies. At the same time, however, it confuses our friends. We cannot afford that, especially at a time where the level of distrust in America's role in the world, or lack thereof, has risen to a level not seen since the post-Vietnam era.

Embassy relations with the Consulate General in Jerusalem

Q: How did you find relations between the embassy and our consulate general in Jerusalem?

LAROCCO: There was long established rivalry, competition, grudge...whatever one might call it that I knew about, but never expected to be as difficult as it was. In many respects, it was much worse than the Islamabad-New Delhi rivalry, probably because the Arab-Israeli divide was felt much more deeply and emotionally in Washington and throughout U.S. politics. To be sure, those in the consulate, dealing 24/7 with the Palestinians, were engulfed in non-stop complaints from the Palestinians about their status, treatment by the Israeli and lack of U.S. understanding or regard for their plight. The ConGens documenting of all this was outstanding, and they repeatedly garnered awards for reporting and analysis. We never received any, even though I felt our reporting and analysis was as good as or better than the ConGen's. But...I also recognized that Washington did not have the degree of longstanding direct connections with the Palestinians that they had with so many Israelis, so they often ignored our messages while hanging on every word of the ConGen's.

To be frank, the ConGen felt like they were a bit of an orphan in the scheme of State Department bureaucracy, and they were. They were (along with Hong Kong) an independent post in terms of their substantive work, a freestanding consulate without an embassy. But, administratively, their funding came through us. You can only imagine how deeply their resentment of this was. In addition, their beat was the West Bank and Palestinian Jerusalem. We had Israeli Jerusalem and Gaza.

Since the Israelis were in charge of all the territories before Oslo and even after Oslo controlled all border crossings and security, all complaints conveyed to the ConGen had to be sent to us for handling. The ConGen was not allowed to deal directly with the Israelis. There were days when I would get a raft of calls from ConGen officers which required me to call my Israeli contacts to resolve a difficult situation. And that included stopping our ConGen officials from going places they had been cleared by the Israelis to go.

This dependency on me, controlling their funds and solving many of their daily operational problems, put me in a special spot. I thought I was giving them a fair shake, but I know they resented me (and especially my power) deeply.

When Ed Djerejian came on board as ambassador, he was coming to us from the job of Assistant Secretary of NEA. In this capacity, he had overseen the process of picking the Consul General in Jerusalem. He selected a good friend, Ed Abington. The expectations were high that the problems between our two posts would disappear because of their friendship. No such luck. That's when I realized that it was indeed institutional.

It only got worse when Martin Indyk became ambassador. The suspicion and distrust between him and Abington was profound. I worked closely with the Deputy Consul General to ensure that there was no breakdown in funding streams or handling Palestinian and ConGen operational problems, and while once I believe this worked well, my guess is that ConGen officials at the time, like John Barger, Maura Connelly and Paul Sutphin might respectfully disagree.

But the troubles at the senior level of contacts, reporting, analysis, handling VIP visitors, and other issues that were the purview of Martin and Ed bounced back to the point they were at when I arrived in Tel Aviv. I must admit that navigating between serving my ambassador faithfully and resolving differences with Jerusalem added to my gray hairs.

One of my fondest memories in the Foreign Service, however, was related to this personal and institutional rivalry. On my second to last day of service in Tel Aviv, a young, brilliant officer in the embassy who handled the Palestinian economic account and had bridged as well as anyone the divide between the embassy and ConGen, wrote a script for a drama aimed to drive me totally up the wall. This officer was Jeff Feltman.

He knew I would be preoccupied with the many administrative chores I had to do before leaving post, so his timing was perfect. He had Martin and Ed and many other of the officers in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv participate in this three-act play, which was carried out over a period of hours. The two office managers in our front office were also in on the script, as was the ambassador's special assistant, so this was a complex and complicated ruse played on me.

I was faced with a barrage of phone calls all presenting me with intractable problems, from a political officer whose vehicle broke down at a border crossing to the ambassador driving unannounced for a meeting with Arafat.

The script was so perfectly acted out that at the point where it seemed our two posts were about to go to war, I was left speechless with everyone screaming at me as phones were ringing off the hook. I finally got Ed Abington on the line who delivered a devastating indictment of Martin and then Martin, a person not inclined to hyperbole, ranting against Ed. I was speechless. It just so happened that at that very moment I had \$13000 in cash in my hand from the sale of my car. I was desperate to get this outta my hands and to the embassy cashier to arrange a wire transfer to my bank account.

With Ed on one line demanding action by me, Martin on the other demanding action by me, I

was speechless and frozen in place, something quite uncommon for me. After a very long pause, Martin said, Jim, this was all a joke. To be honest, and I recall that moment vividly, I didn't believe it. The play acting and script were that good. Then Ed jumped in and said calm down Jim; Martin is here with me and not headed anywhere. I remained dumbstruck for what seemed like a very long time, but when I noticed our two office managers practically falling off their chairs laughing and our special assistant smiling broadly, I finally came back to reality. I had been punked, big time. And masterfully.

I cherish that script in my scrapbook. Among other things, it demonstrated the genius of Jeff Feltman, who the department wisely pushed up the ranks to the top quicker than anyone of his generation.

But did the relationship between the two posts get any better after I left? Not really. It was indeed institutionally ingrained.

Years later, under Condi Rice, the ConGen finally was given its administrative independence and Gaza responsibility as well. That has provided the ConGen with important sustenance. But I imagine the substantive rivalry endures.

Q: Basically the consul general in Jerusalem is ambassador to a hostile power.

LAROCCO: He's a representative to a non-state authority. It's a bit like AIT in the sense that he or she represents U.S. interests to an authority that is not recognized as having sovereign status. The U.S. has always aspired to be an honest broker to the two, and while many will argue this is not possible because of deeply rooted special relationship with Israel and Israelis, the Palestinians to this day recognize that we are the only power that can get them what they aspire to. It's a unique set of circumstances, and while there are some unwritten, recognized rules of the game, there is still a good deal of ad hoc-ery in how we carry out these relations.

Rahm Emmanuel predicts Netanyahu victory over Peres

Q: Was it '96 you left?

LAROCCO: '96 I left. I left the day Netanyahu was inaugurated as Prime Minister.

A few months before that, in the run up to the Israeli elections, we still believed Peres would win, even by as much as 8 points. Keep in mind that following Rabin's death, he held a 25 point lead in the polls. As the months wore on, that lead eroded slowly but steadily day after day.

I recall that Washington, favoring Peres strongly, sent a young Democratic political guru by the name of Rahm Emmanuel to provide an independent assessment. The visit was totally unpublicized and I accompanied him on a number of calls. I remember clearly that just before his departure, I asked him for his thoughts on the election. Peres will lose, he said. I was startled. Why? I asked. He said that Peres leaned too far for Jewish Israeli votes and had been portraying a hard line that both the Israeli Arabs and those in the center were uncomfortable with. He's trying too hard, Emmanuel noted, to capture the center right. It won't work. He forecast that

Peres would likely lose by a narrow margin, perhaps 2 percent or less.

Peres lost by 2 percent of the vote. I remember that Martin held a country team meeting the day before the election. He went around the table asking for our guesses. We were completely split. Martin himself felt that Peres would win, perhaps by an even larger margin than the 2 percent many Israeli pundits were forecasting. Martin, I and others stayed up all night following the vote. Peres held a strong lead in the early results, but that lead kept narrowing. After midnight, it had vanished, and Netanyahu's margin was clearly insurmountable.

Peres once again was a tragic figure, and when Martin and I called on him a few days later, he was all alone in his dimly lit office. He blamed the Arabs for their low turnout. He had lost by about 29,000 votes, as I recall, and that could have easily been overcome if more Israeli-Arabs had come to the polls. Rahm Emmanuel called it correctly two months before the election.

A special tribute to the late Ron Brown, Secretary of Commerce

While I have countless stories to tell about those three eventful years in Israel, there is one that I wish to relate because I am sure it has never been revealed. As I have noted, we received literally thousands of American VIPs during those three years. Among them, while I was Charge, was the Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown. I knew nothing about him, and was bracing for a prima donna based on his obnoxious advance team.

Brown arrived with a full agenda of commercial work, but just before his arrival, there was a terrorist bombing that left a number of young Israeli soldiers dead. Ron said he would like to visit one of the families, if possible. I contacted the Prime Minister's office, expecting a no answer in view of the sensitivities, but instead they offered a family down south not far from the western border with Gaza. Ron immediately agreed. I recall the ride down there with him as most enjoyable. I could feel immediately that he had a way of empathizing and sympathizing that made anyone he was with feel special, like you were the only person in his universe.

We arrived at the modest home, and were escorted in the living room. We sat on a couch, across from the mother and father of the young soldier who had died. Ron stayed quiet, they stayed quiet, and the silence was so discomfiting. Who would break the ice? And how? Ron did, and so touchingly. He noticed a scrap book on a nearby table. He asked if he could look at it. Rather than just take it, he pulled a chair between the mother and father and went through it page by page, picture by picture. The feeling in the room was like nothing I had ever experienced. His connection with these grieving parents was profound and intimate.

At one point, he pointed to a photo of the young man with a young lady. The mother said this was her son's fiancée. They were to be married in three weeks. It turned out that the young lady was also in the house, and she came out to meet with Ron. Once again, there was an instant rapport. It was so hard not to become overwhelmed with emotion, feeling the scarring pain these parents and this young lady were enduring. Terrorism at that moment seemed like the devil incarnate to me.

Ron and I went on to Jerusalem for meetings that day. We said nothing in the car on the ride

there. Our emotions were too high.

Late that evening, after meetings concluded and a formal dinner had concluded, Ron asked if I would take him to the Western Wall to pray. I told him we cannot take VIP visitors there; it's off limits because of the high political sensitivities. It was simply too volatile. He just stared at me for a while, and I simply couldn't say no to him. OK, I will take you there, but we must do this as inconspicuously as possible. No photos, no talk, just go to the wall, say your prayer and we will go back to the hotel. He agreed.

We went to the wall plaza and I showed him where to go and what to do. I gave him a kipa to wear. I always carried one with me. He quietly walked to the wall, prayed for a while and then headed back to where I was standing. As we chatted for a minute, a man came up to us dressed in religious garb. He said he thought he recognized Ron from photos in the newspaper the previous day. Ron acknowledged who he was. The man grasped Ron's hands and said: so many VIPs from countries come here for the photo opportunity. I know what they are doing, and I detest them. They do not respect what this means to us. You came to pray. Just to pray. I admire you for this gesture, and being the only here to see and recognize your act, convey the sincerest thanks of all my brethren. I will pray for you all the years of my life. Ron simply bowed in respect.

My few days with Ron Brown were enough to hit me hard when he died in a plane crash a year or so later. I always remind myself of him when I pass judgment on politicians and leaders whom I really don't know but think I do from media reports. We truly don't know these people from the media. I sincerely believe that Ron would have gone on to do truly great things had he lived. We lost an American treasure.

During one of the many Christopher visits, the team from Washington was assembled at Martin's place for a late night discussion after a day full of meetings. Before they started the session, Martin asked me to stay outside the meeting room. I was a bit miffed, but Martin had an inexplicable twinkle in his eye. About ten minutes later, he emerged with the Secretary and his counselor, Tom Donilon. I was asked by Christopher what I wanted to do for my next assignment. He said you did a good job here. You are up for an ambassadorship. What would you like? Without hesitating, I said, Kuwait. They all laughed. Why do you want to go to Kuwait?

I said that I knew Kuwait, I liked it, it was a key strategic ally, but just as important, it was country where the ambassador does not have to worry about phone calls between Washington and the leaders. Nobody in Washington calls anybody in Kuwait, so I will be the full and complete envoy handling the relationship. I will be extraordinary and plenipotentiary in the original meaning of those words applied to envoys. They laughed. If that's what you want, so be it. Thinking fast on my feet, I noted that it would not be open for another year, so I have another request: I want another year of Arabic. On the one hand, I need some time to decompress after Tel Aviv so I can be with my young family, but I also need to refresh my Arabic and take it to a higher level. Donilon said he would ensure this happened, and it did.

JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN
Co-Chairman, Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group
Washington (1997-1998)

Ambassador Sullivan was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts, Georgetown and Yale Universities. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he served in the Department of State in Washington, D.C. as well as in posts abroad. His foreign posts include Mexico City, Lisbon, Tel Aviv and Havana. Mr. Sullivan served as US Ambassador to Angola from 1998 to 2001 and as Ambassador to Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2004. Ambassador Sullivan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Well the nice thing about it is as career opportunities these things don't get solved.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: Then you are off to the peace and tranquility of the Middle East.

SULLIVAN: Right, exactly.

Q: I can't remember had you served there before?

SULLIVAN: I served four years in Israel in the mid-eighties and so this return to the Middle East was as co-chairman of the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group it was called.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SULLIVAN: From approximately July of 1997 until approximately May of 1998. There had been one prior American co-chair, David Greenlee, who had had it for the first year and technically we ended up swapping jobs. He came back to Haiti to be the Haiti special coordinator, while I went out there and did the co-chairman of this monitoring group.

Q: Okay, what was the status of the Middle East Arab-Israeli situation when you got there in May or June of '97?

SULLIVAN: Okay, when I got there, Netanyahu was prime minister. There were peace American process efforts underway with Dennis Ross, the special negotiator, and we used to meet periodically. When I would be back in Washington I would consult with Dennis and give him a briefing on what we had been doing on our part. His focus, of course, was overwhelmingly the core countries and only occasionally focused on Lebanon but was anxious that the situation not flare up again. The agreement on the monitoring group had actually been reached prior to Netanyahu becoming Prime Minister. The agreement in April of 1996 in the course of what had been called the Grapes of Wrath Operation by the Israeli government into South Lebanon was in retribution for missiles fired into Northern Israel. In the course of the operation, the Israelis had launched shells which wound hitting Palestinian refugees taking shelter in the shadow of a UN

camp in Q-A-N-A and resulted in the death of I believe a hundred people. The Palestinians were from refugee camps nearby and had clustered around the U.N. compound in hopes of avoiding getting hit in what was an ongoing series of battles between Israeli and Lebanese forces, Hezbollah really. The incident created an international furor.

Secretary Christopher had gone out and negotiated an agreement with all sides and that resulted in a ceasefire agreement/understanding in April of '96. The understanding provided for establishing the monitoring group with the participation of the Syrians, the Lebanese and the Israeli's. This Israeli's and the Lebanese were the signatory parties to the agreement but the Syrians were also going to be present in the monitoring group. The French had sort of pushed their way into being co-chair and actually I must say that the French were very careful in choosing their representatives as people who got along with Americans. The French representatives were reasonable diplomats but the French always had a certain interest in protecting the Lebanese government. That said, the French and the US found ways to work together.

Q: Did you deal with both the Arab side and the Israeli side?

SULLIVAN: Yes, and how the process was set up, I think my first trip out I accompanied David Greenlee in his last session. It was virtually weekly but there was always a complaint by one side or the other that the other side had violated the understanding. Most often the Lebanese side would complain that the Israelis had violated the understanding by shelling near a civilian village and the Israelis would occasionally complain as well that there had been a firing that had gone into northern Israel. The actual attacks on the Lebanese side were carried out by Hezbollah. So we would meet virtually every week to deal with the one or several complaints. Often, if there was one complaint, the other side would file its complaint in effect in response. We would have to reach an understanding among all the sides in the course of however long it took. Sometimes it would take as short as ten or twelve hours and sometimes it would take four or five days. It was not predictable and it didn't always correlate to the seriousness of the incident. In some ways, I think the Lebanese were interested in using the mechanism to demonstrate that the Lebanese government and the Lebanese army, that was the lead representative in the room, was taking care of the civilian population in the area and they would sometimes hold on to a point a very long time, even though it was a relatively minor incident that didn't result in any casualties. Some portion of this also reflected Lebanese politics vis-à-vis Hezbollah.

The Israelis, of course, had an overall view that if they fired at a target, it was because they had received fire from that target and that in most cases the villages that were being complained about had long been abandoned and the houses therein were being used as shields by the people firing at them. It was a weekly enterprise, sometimes relatively easily resolved and other times not very easily. Sometimes, we would think that there never would be the required agreement among the parties. In at least one case, the conflict escalated to the degree that there was indeed firing into Israel with several katyushas launched into Israel and had some very substantial action by Israel inside south Lebanon.

At the end of the day, I would conclude that both sides had at that point an interest in maintaining the accord; both of them got something out of it. The Lebanese had at that point

been able to avoid major Israeli operations within south Lebanon for several years, although the Israelis continued to support the south Lebanese army which was their proxy Lebanese force in the region, comprised mostly of Christians. The Israelis could conclude that they had largely avoided katyusha firing into northern Israel. So although both sides complained mightily that the other side was being provocative and not respecting the accord, at the end of the day they wanted to reach some understanding. Our final phrase at the end of every meeting would be that both sides would commit to full respect for the understanding in the future, at least until the next time. Because the agreement of both sides was required in the final statement, only rarely was there clear identification of one side or the other for having violated the understanding in those communiqué's. One might find shading in one or another direction that would indicate that, but not direct sharp language because then both sides would not be able to agree to on a communiqué.

I think it did set the tone when relatively shortly after that when Ehud Barak came to power as the Israeli prime minister, he decided to withdraw all troops withdraw support for the south Lebanese army and end the Israeli effort to maintain a security zone inside South Lebanon. It was perhaps in one sense a conclusion after the experience with the understandings that it wasn't necessary to have proxy forces in the region and that they could accomplish their objectives in other ways. But, the major clash with Hezbollah several years ago demonstrated the risks of not having a proxy South Lebanese army there to protect their interests. The small U.S. and French delegations were based in Cyprus, a neutral location. We would travel to a UNIFIL Headquarters in south Lebanon in a UN facility to have the meetings. But I did travel on two occasions to Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to have discussions with the governments. Of course, predictable things were said, but the most memorable discussion to me was the statement by the Lebanese army Commander that the Lebanese Army was anxious to resume control of all parts of Lebanon and would deploy to the border if the Israelis were to withdraw their support for the south Lebanese army. Despite his words, this remained a question and when Israel withdrew its support for the South Lebanese army, Hezbollah filled behind those positions and the Lebanese National army did not challenge Hezbollah. So this created the conditions for periodic clashes and on one occasion quite a significant conflict in the following years.

So that's about it on that other than to say you know it was an amicable relationship on most of our parts, although the Lebanese and the Syrian representatives virtually never spoke to the Israeli representatives outside the formal meeting room. We all had pretty Spartan quarters with one outer room and one back bedroom for each delegation. So on those sessions that lasted multiple days, our delegation would have to trade off taking naps. The Syrian representative who was a military officer enjoyed his role of most times not into being actively in the acrimony between the Israeli and Lebanese sides, but eventually being the final arbiter on the Lebanese position. He would encourage us to come to him to help resolve any major issues and would take some pride behind the scenes in telling the Lebanese representative to accept the compromise positions that the French and American co-chairmen had put forward.

I'll note another interesting piece of history in view of current developments in Syria. This same Syrian General used to speak to us, the French and American delegations, of Syria's effective suppression of what he described as Muslim fundamentalists in Hama in 1982, a government action reported to have killed some 20,000 residents of Hama. The Syrian General stated that the

Syrian Government's action had helped assure that Syria did not have "the fundamentalist problem" that other Arab governments had.

I should add one other incident during my time in this position. During one of my two trips to Beirut for meetings with the Lebanese government, we traveled to Mount Lebanon to meet with the Prime Minister, the late Rafiq Hariri. His was one of the few Muslim houses on Mount Lebanon and looked down on most of the Christian houses on the mountain. Well in the course of our conversation, one of my team members asked a question that would have required a delicate response regarding Syria. Hariri looked at the phone by his side and said that he would answer the question, but not there. So he walked to the far side of the room with us following and answered the question. Several years later, Hariri was assassinated in a car bombing.

End of reader