

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

CAROL COLLOTON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is the 5th of July 2011 in an interview with Carol Colloton. It's being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Carol—you go by Carol; I take it—start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

COLLOTON: I was born in 1937 in Newark, New Jersey; the third of three girls.

Q: 1937. Okay. Let's talk a little about your parents. On your father's side, where did they come from?

COLLOTON: His parents emigrated from Ireland in their late teens or early twenties and met here in the U.S. My father was the youngest of eight children.

Q: Did they come over around '48 or later?

COLLOTON: No, apparently they both survived the potato blight; my grandfather emigrated in 1872 and my grandmother in 1880. They both came with a couple of siblings settled here in Orange, New Jersey which was mostly Irish immigrants at that time. My grandmother said this was the best country in the world, and New Jersey was the best state; although I don't think she ever visited any other states except New York, where one of her sisters lived. My grandfather had been a whaler in Ireland, and here in New Jersey worked as a hatter, a common occupation of the Irish.

Q: What was your father doing?

COLLOTON: My father and a couple of his brothers worked in an A&P (Atlantic & Pacific). They were mostly small corner markets, nothing like the huge super markets we have now. The store my father worked in was closing as A&P began consolidating into larger stores. He bought it and kept it open with a couple of local young men he hired to help out.

During World War II my father was drafted by the Navy. It was toward the end of the war when they started drafting somewhat older married men; he was 36 and had three children. He never got to go overseas, but was posted in New Jersey and New York the whole time. He was about to ship out when my mother learned there was an exception made for those over a certain age with children, and she insisted he get off the ship. I

think he really wanted to go. When he came back from the war the day of the small corner grocery store was almost over, or they were owned by newer immigrants who competed with the larger super markets by staying open evenings and Sundays, living in the back of the store, and charging more than the larger stores. At that time stores were generally not open evenings or Sundays. He then worked for one of the large bread companies, Taystee Bread, in Newark selling wholesale and delivering to the stores.

Q: I remember a little A&P. I lived in Annapolis as a kid, and it was one of those, one-man operation. He obviously had other people, but not many. In downtown Annapolis there were no drug stores or grocery stores. You had to go out in your car to shop.

COLLTON: My father loved it; being his own boss, getting to know all the neighbors, selling to them on the books. And we always had food during the depression. He also provided food to a couple of his brothers—one a plumber, the other a steamfitter who were not getting much work.

Q: On your mother's side. Where did she come from, her parents come from?

COLLTON: Her grandparents came from the Schwarzwald (Black Forest) area of Germany. I visited once and saw a lot of people who resembled my mother. My maternal grandmother's older sister was born in Germany; my Tante Minnie, as we called her, but my grandmother was the first to be born in the U.S. They spoke German at home when my mother was growing up, although she forgot most of it with the exception of a few choice phrases she would often bark at us such as, Kommen Sie hier (come here), macht schnell (hurry up), and dumbkopf.

Q: Did you grow up in New Jersey?

COLLTON: Yes, in Newark; in the same neighborhood that my mother grew up in. They lived in an all-German area of Newark. Although my mother was born in Newark, her birth certificate was in German. Her father worked in a brewery, of which we had several in Newark. I went to the same grammar school and high school as my mother, and actually had a couple of the same grammar school teachers as she. It was quite old-fashioned. They taught us the minuet in gym class, and the girls had to make our graduation dresses (all the same style and color) in sewing class, the idea being that the poorer kids wouldn't feel bad if their parents couldn't afford to buy them new dresses. Of course many of us had our parents buy us a different dress for the after-graduation parties.

Q: What was Newark like?

COLLTON: Newark is the largest city in the state. Most residents were first or second generation Americans and the sections of the city as well as the towns around it were populated by different nationalities. I grew up just a couple of blocks from where my mother was raised. When I was young we still had a German beer hall, German church, movie theatre, restaurant, and bakery in the neighborhood. There was a large Italian

neighborhood nearby, and also Ukrainian, Jewish, and Polish sections. At the time Newark had a small African-American population. Our grammar school was all white and our high school had a smattering of blacks. Between the black neighborhood and the down town shopping area there was a row of apartment buildings in which working class Jews lived. Something I have never heard mentioned during the controversial school bussing for integration was that the Jewish children were bussed by the city up to our grammar school. It was just accepted that they couldn't go to the black school in their neighborhood.

Newark was actually a nice city. We had good parks, libraries, museums, and a theatre, and concert hall. Part of its problem was it was too close to New York City; a sort of bedroom community. Also we had burlesque, and after New York City outlawed burlesque, New Yorkers would come to Newark for the shows and spend money on hotels and restaurants. Then Newark outlawed burlesque and there was no reason for New Yorkers to come across the river to Newark. With the advent of the automobile, second and third generation northern Europeans had begun moving to the suburbs around Newark which was becoming dominated by newer Italian immigrants. Corruption mafia-style was a controlling force in the city government and many officials ended up in jail.

Newark was a big draw with a lot of industry in and around it including Westinghouse, General Electric, Sylvania, several large insurance companies, and several breweries, and bread bakeries. Following WWII when the black soldiers returned home to the still strictly segregated south they couldn't vote, get jobs, etc., they moved north in large numbers in what was dubbed the Second Great Migration of African Americans. This was accompanied by white flight to newly built tacky suburbs around the city. Newark went from around 15% to around 85% black over a 15 year period. Then with the riots after Martin Luther King was killed, sections of Newark were burned down. My mother (my father had died by then), was still living in Newark. She didn't drive and liked the convenience of busses on most corners and stores within walking distance. The apartments on the avenues were occupied by blacks and the one-family houses on the side streets were still all white. Her street was the border between Newark and the next town of Irvington that had refused to allow any blacks in. The National Guard was called out and stationed at a checkpoint on her corner checking all cars going in or out of the city. Her neighbors stood along the curbs cheering their arrival like they were a liberation force. She had heard gunshots in the night. The next day when she was going out, her neighbor asked her where she was going, when she said, "To the store," he responded, "There is no store." My uncle drove in to rescue her and take her to his house in the suburbs. She finally felt compelled to move and sold the house for next to nothing. As she didn't drive, she became dependent on my sister to drive her places.

There is still a Portuguese area and one Italian neighborhood left in Newark. The Italians, many of them large extended families, banded together and resisted real estate efforts at what was called block-busting, i.e. offering one family an inflated price for their house and moving in a black family with the result that the rest would sell at debased prices. The city still has burnt out houses and a lot of empty weed-filled lots. It suffered the problems of a lot of the older northern industrial cities. Some of them like Baltimore have

managed to develop their inner cities, but not Newark. I have driven through it a couple of times. Our one-family house must have had four families living in it, the fence was half knocked down and my mother's garden was pounded down dirt. The next time I went through the area it was a parking lot. I then saw in the local paper the lot was up for sale for \$200.

Q: What sort of education did your mother get?

COLLTON: She graduated high school, and became a secretary at Westinghouse in Bloomfield, N.J. where one of my sisters and I also worked for a while.

Q: How did your mother and father meet?

COLLTON: At a rooming house at the Jersey shore in their early twenties where they had both gone with friends for the weekend.

Q: What was your church? Were you Catholic?

COLLTON: Yes.

Q: How Catholic would you say your family was?

COLLTON: My father was Catholic, my mother had been raised Lutheran but switched to Protestant, as that church was closer. They were married in an office at the Catholic Church as mixed marriages couldn't be performed in the church at that time. I know my mother resented that. She signed a paper that she would raise us Catholic and she did. But there were conflicts. We went to church with my father every Sunday. My mother only went to her church occasionally. I once accompanied her to an Easter sunrise service at her church, and then went to church later with my father, but he was upset as he considered it a sin to go to a Protestant service. One contentious issue was birth control; she was not having more children. Occasionally, probably to placate my father, she would say she would have loved to have had more children but we couldn't afford it. My father would respond that God provides, to which her response was God provides for those who look after themselves. Also she would not agree to our going to Catholic school, saying it was better that we mixed with other children in the public school. The conflict was more in the open when I married a divorced Protestant in my mother's church. My father said I might as well just go live with him as I wouldn't really be married. Then he stopped speaking to me. His sister wouldn't come to the wedding. Then, when my father died, the priest wouldn't agree to my father having a funeral service in the church unless my mother agreed to sell two of the four plots they had bought in a non-denominational cemetery. She did so, and there was a church service, but the priest refused to go to the cemetery. My mother no longer contained herself, and all the resentment she had had against the Catholic Church through the years poured out to me as she then assumed that if I was no longer a practicing Catholic, I must be Protestant.

Q: Politically where did your family fall?

COLLTON: My father was a loyal union man (Teamster) and a Democrat. We never knew about my mother. Citing the secret ballot she wouldn't tell us. Although, my father said if he knew she was voting for the other candidate, they would cancel out each other's vote, and they could just stay home.

Q: Schooling. Where did you go to school?

COLLTON: Public neighborhood schools in Newark.

Q: Elementary school, how did you find it?

COLLTON: In retrospect not very good. I didn't know till I went to college that neither my grammar nor high school was very good. I had to do a lot of catch-up. As I say, I had some of the same teachers my mother had, so it was a lot of old-fashioned rote memorization. Until I got to college I didn't know how fascinating history could be. My mother insisted we take the secretarial program in high school, and we were segregated from the College Prep students for the other subjects such as history and English. I didn't meet any of those students until I performed in the senior play in my last year of high school.

Q: Were there any subjects that you were particularly interested in?

COLLTON: I liked to read, so English was my favorite subject; both grammar and literature.

Q: Was there a pretty good library there?

COLLTON: Yes, Newark had a good library system. My mother took us to the library every Saturday, and I'd get three or four books and devour them.

Q: Did you get over to New York City at all?

COLLTON: Not too often. We'd go to Radio City Music Hall for a movie and show at Christmas time. We also had a tradition the night after our high school graduation we'd go to the Rainbow Room for dinner. At that time you could drink in New York at age 18, while the legal age in New Jersey was 21. So occasionally we would pile into someone's beat up old car and go to Staten Island to drink. Not wise and certainly our parents didn't know we were doing that. Fortunately, we survived. It was my dream growing up to move across the river, and I finally did, but that was much later.

Q: Did you play in the streets or what?

COLLTON: Yes, we seemed to have much more freedom than children these days. The streets were our playground where we played ball, hopscotch, skated, and rode bikes. We also had public pools, tennis courts, and good parks. There were weekly concerts and

dances in the neighborhood park in the summer. I think the influence of the European immigrants along the eastern U.S. resulted in a lot of free public events. I have met people from the U.S. heartland who said only those whose parents belonged to private country clubs had pools or tennis courts.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

COLLTON: West Side High, also a neighborhood public high school that my mother had attended.

Q: How was it?

COLLTON: I was in the secretarial program, so I didn't really get much out of it other than to learn shorthand and how to type, both of which were helpful in taking notes and typing papers in college. I had one U.S. history course where we mostly memorized dates, and one English course. My older sister followed the college prep program, but my mother insisted she also take shorthand and typing so she could get a job. We didn't have school counselors encouraging us toward college. I had the impression one had to be a genius and a millionaire to go to college. So, when I graduated high school I got a secretarial job in a small insurance company. I had a close friend from high school (she's still a good friend), and together we decided working was boring and it would be a lark to go to college. My oldest sister encouraged me and told me I could go to college. Then having the support of my friend helped.

Because I had had no college prep courses, the only college that accepted me was Newark Teachers College and Fairleigh Dickenson University (FDU). The Teachers College had no campus, just one building with lockers; it looked like a high school, so we rejected that. FDU accepted me with the proviso that I make up the college prep courses. So I went to college full-time days and high school nights for two years where I took Spanish Math, history, and science. I had no idea what I wanted to study in college, and at the time four more years of school seemed like an eternity, so my friend and I enrolled in a two-year program in Hotel and Restaurant Management from which I got an Associate of Arts degree. That was similar to my high school in that we had one really good American Literature Professor. The rest of the courses were hotel accounting, foods, hotel management. One course comprised working in the cafeteria for which we not only didn't get paid, but we had to pay tuition for the privilege of making sandwiches and doing dishes. After that I went back to being a secretary at Westinghouse where my mother and sister worked. Once again, I was bored with the job, so I took a couple of courses in Modern drama and English literature at Rutgers night school as a non-matriculated student. Then I decided to matriculate. I first majoring in English, then I took a history course and discovered it was much more than memorizing dates so I switched to a history major. As I was introduced to new subjects, like sociology and finally political science I switched again, ending up with a degree in Political Science. This time I worked full-time days and attended college nights. I had received one year's credit from FDU. And by going to school in the summers, I finally graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in five years at age 27. As you can see I didn't have much direction.

Once I went to Rutgers I actually became engaged in my studies and was an A student. Through all of this, my parents opposed my going to college. My father's view was that education was wasted on girls as they were just going to get married and have children.

Q: Oh, boy. Was it typical for the time that you would as a woman go to secretarial school?

COLLTON: That was my mother's feeling. She was a secretary which she was proud of. Many of her school mates had never finished high school. My father had dropped out of eighth grade when a teacher in the catholic school hit him in the ear with a ruler. His mother tried to get him to go back, but he refused. I had a number of friends who quit school at age 14. In my family, we knew we were expected to finish high school, but that was it. When I was growing up, the cultural pattern in working class Newark was you graduated high school, the boys got jobs in Westinghouse and similar places as draftsmen, and went to Newark College of Engineering evenings, and the girls worked in the same places as secretaries. Then they paired off, got married, the women worked until they got pregnant and then stayed home. Both of my sister's followed that pattern. Somehow I knew that wasn't for me. But it did take me quite a while to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. One of the engineers I worked with once asked me what my goal in life was. I thought that was quite funny. I had no concept of having a goal.

Q: Did you feel you were rebelling in a way?

COLLTON: I guess. My one sister commented once that I went out of my way to be different. When I finally got to New York, I found out that I was not different at all. There was not the same pressure to conform.

After college I got my first non-secretarial job as a social worker for the Welfare Department in Harlem. I was astounded that many of those welfare parents encouraged their children to go to college. I think my father was somewhat threatened by not having had an education. He also said, "A little education is a dangerous thing," I guess from his point of view he was right, as I gave up religion and had more radical political views.

Q: While you were in high school did the outside world influence you at all or were you aware of international affairs.

COLLTON: I was not very aware of what was going on politically either nationally or internationally. We rarely had political discussions at the dinner table. If occasionally we would get in a discussion with my father, my mother would remark that it was a waste of time as we couldn't change anything and we should find something useful to do, like clean up our rooms. I recall a friend and I happened by a civil rights protest outside of the Newark Woolworths protesting the refusal of its southern stores to serve African-Americans at the lunch counters. We thought it was not right, but had no strong feelings about it. As we were watching, a policeman shoved me. Being personally offended, I grabbed a sign and join the protesters. That was my introduction to political activism.

Q: That must have been quite a load for you to be going to college at night and sometimes catching up at the high school and working.

COLLTON: My job didn't take that much out of me, so I did most of my homework during the day at work. It didn't seem that much of a burden. I enjoyed it.

Q: You were of a generation that was beginning to change the world with regard, women's opportunities.

COLLTON: They were starting to open up, but they hadn't opened up that much. There was still a lot of discrimination even when I came into the State Department.

Q: I'm sure. When did you graduate from Rutgers?

COLLTON: I graduated high school in 1955 and graduated from Rutgers in 1964.

Q: Rutgers being the state college.

COLLTON: That is its designation, but it's not fully supported by the state. New Jersey is ranked among the states spending the least on education. It was one of the nine colonial colleges founded in 1766 as Queen's College, renamed Rutgers in 1825 after a wealthy NYC landowner and philanthropist. For most of its existence it was a private liberal arts college admitting only men. It gained university status in 1924 and evolved into a coeducational public university and was designated as The State University of New Jersey in 1945. Tuition when I attended was \$13.50 a credit (\$40 for a three-credit course). It now costs \$13,683 tuition for a student who does not live on campus and over \$25,000 for a student on campus.

Q: While you were at Rutgers did you get involved in any of the movements that were going on? This is just about when civil rights, free speech, and the Vietnam protests and all that were just beginning. Also the feminist movement. All were beginning to flower, and you were there just in time. Where did you go to grad school?

COLLTON: I didn't become involved until grad. school at McGill in Montreal. Previously, working days, and going to school nights didn't allow much time for that.

Q: This is interesting. In the first place why McGill?

COLLTON: Although I had become a serious student and was very interested in history and political science, I was still not very directed. I went to Mont Tremblant north of Montreal for a ski week and fell in love with skiing. So naturally I applied to McGill Grad School.

Q: That's a good reason!

COLLTON: That's when I got involved in anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and was very active in the feminist movement. Canada was somewhat behind events in the U.S., so although I missed participating in such events in the U.S., and despite being somewhat older, I made up for it and got involved there.

Q: I was going to say, Canada wasn't in the war.

COLLTON: But they were complicit. That was our pitch that they stop Canadian complicity.

Q: Ahhh. It makes it a little somewhat removed. Were you also feeling by that time the arrival of deserters from the draft?

COLLTON: Yes we did have some American students at McGill avoiding the draft. We had a sit-in at the University and there were demonstrations outside the U.S. Embassy one of which turned violent when some demonstrators threw stones. A couple of my friends were slightly injured by the Mounties and arrested. Most of the Americans settled in Toronto probably because of the language. They were like many immigrant groups in clinging to their cultures. For many years you had aging American hippies in tie-dyed clothes, and constituting a distinct community in Toronto.

Q: How did your family feel about your heading off to McGill?

COLLTON: My father had died by this time. My mother thought it was strange and remarked that, "Some people work for a living, whereas I seemed to be a professional student." She did many years later say she was proud of me and was her ideal of a young woman.

Q: McGill wasn't too expensive in those days.

COLLTON: That's true. And the application process was simple; a short form and a transcript. Also, they seldom gave out A's in Canada. I had finally become a serious student at Rutgers, and got straight A's in my major, so they might have thought they were getting a genius. They even gave me some scholarship money.

Q: Did you find that there was a strong anti-American element in the teaching? This is the height of the anti-Americanism in Canada.

COLLTON: Yes. There does seem to be an understandable national inferiority complex living so close to the most powerful country in the world. Pertaining to the university scene, a Master's degree is a very respectable terminal degree in Canada. They've gone to school for 13 years when they graduate high school and a Master's degree takes two years for which they have to do a thesis. Then with American PhDs going north, Canadians found they often couldn't compete, and had to come down here for work. Then the American professors, especially in the social sciences, would teach about American issues instead of focusing on Canadian issues. So there was resentment. When

I first went to Canada and kept hearing talk about the English-French conflict, I thought it was unimportant compared to our racial problems. But the longer I was there I realized it was a major problem in that the French had a land base of Quebec with which they could secede. A lot of the activism going on in Canada involved the French-English divide and the separatist movement in Quebec.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who became Prime Minister while I was there, was the right person at the right time. Fully bilingual with a French father and an English mother, he could bridge the divide. He played a major role in keeping the country united.

After graduating from McGill, I worked for the New Democratic Party which had a social democratic orientation. Some of its members were not happy with having an American working for the party. One professor, who was a member of our party, headed a Committee for the Canadianization of Canadian Universities. If I answered the phone when this man called our office, he would hang up. He wrote letters to the editor of the national paper about me holding a job that should have been held by a Canadian. Canadian nationalism showed itself in a lot of ways—big and small. It was considered scandalous when Prime Minister Trudeau escorted Barbra Streisand to a Canadian national day ball. Another petty example was when I once remarked on how cold it was, it elicited the response, “You know it gets cold in the U.S., too.”

The party had a youth wing that was quite vocal in its anti-American attitude. I was at a meeting once when someone voiced the view that the only good Yank was a dead Yank. I was often asked when I was going to become a Canadian. I actually stayed there after McGill because I was dating a British fellow student.

Q: I've been told by some that the major definition that the Canadians come to is that they weren't Americans. That seemed to be the thing. You might say that that kept the country together.

COLLTON: Could be. Loyalty or patriotism was often more to the province than to the country as a whole. The population is spread widely across the country, but most are living within the southern 100 miles of the border. At this time the country was largely rural. Most the people I met were first generation off the farm.

Q: You got a degree in what? Sociology?

COLLTON: No, political science specializing in International Organizations and developing countries.

Q: How was political science taught at that time in McGill because political science has become terribly quantitative.

COLLTON: The professors I had at McGill were fully into the quantitative approach, whereas until then I had been oblivious to it. I first heard of Rutgers Professor James Rosenau, a quantitative type, when a McGill professor found out I had attended Rutgers

and mentioned him reverently. There were two schools of thought at Rutgers when I went there, and they didn't communicate with each other. The traditional school was represented by my mentor Professor Abraham Yeselson, and he never mentioned Rosenau. At McGill we were devising litmus test types of models for evaluating countries' behavior such as listing the types of decisions made and then assigning numbers for various factors such as economic, political or social that might influence those decisions. Not surprisingly we would come up with the brilliant results that economic factors had the most impact on economic decisions. Then there was always the residual category where you dumped all your traditional analysis. We had an evening seminar that was to last two hours. Well into our third hour, the professor was so excited with the model he declared we were making a breakthrough, to which I mumbled, I was about to have a breakdown.

Q: I find if I pick up a book about a study of governments in it, and I see a lot of figures, I just put it away.

COLLTON: Me too. The Political Science Journal now looks like a physics book with all its formulas.

Q: Were you going after a PhD?

COLLTON: No, I stopped with the Master's.

Q: What were you pointed towards?

COLLTON: International organizations and developing areas. I'm probably one of the few people who actually worked on what they studied; I spent a lot of time during my Foreign Service career working with the United Nations and spent eight years in Africa.

Q: From the Canadian point of view how would you say the Canadians or at least McGill felt toward the UN?

COLLTON: Favorably. Certainly more favorably than we do now. We were a major force in creating the United Nations. At the start we were big supporters as we dominated it, even to the extent of determining what was on the agenda. We became increasingly negative after decolonization and the increasing membership of smaller newly-independent countries. We lost control and often found ourselves being out-voted.

Q: Did you get at least a warped world view by viewing the United States from the Canadian perspective using the Canadian newspapers and professors and all. Did you see the United States in a different way than you had?

COLLTON: I wouldn't say warped, but probably a more balanced view. I think living overseas does give you somewhat of a different perspective. You realize that while the U.S. is a major factor in the world, there are different perspectives when one looks at

things from other countries' viewpoints that often see themselves as the center of the universe. We're often unaware of how our actions affect other countries.

Q: By the time you graduated, this would be about 1966 or so?

COLLTON: 1968; I graduated Rutgers in '64, worked for two years at the welfare department in New York, and then went to McGill from 1966 to 1968.

Q: Then what?

COLLTON: Then I was hired by the New Democratic Party (NDP), the third party in the Canadian Parliament. One of my fellow students at McGill became the Executive Director of the NDP and he hired me. The parliamentary system is very different from our system. Cabinet members have the government departments as their staff. The only staff for the other members, including government party back-benchers and the opposition, was half of a secretary. Then Trudeau decided the opposition could have some staff, and our party of 26 members got three researchers, and I was one of those three. I was the only professional woman in the whole Canadian parliament except for one woman, Grace McGinnis, who was a founding member of our party. Her father had had the seat from British Columbia until he died and her husband got the seat. Then when he died she finally was elected to the seat.

Q: Where did the New Democratic Party stand in the political spectrum?

COLLTON: They were social democrats formed from a melding of two smaller parties; a populist agricultural party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) from the western prairie provinces, and the labor movement in Ontario. The party remained strong in Ontario and the mid-west having controlled the provincial governments for many years in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Pierre Trudeau had originally been a member of the NDP but realized he would never get elected in Quebec, so he switched to the Liberal party.

Q: What sort of work were you doing?

COLLTON: We assisted our members in all aspects of their work. We helped them with committee work, parliamentary debate, interviews with the press, responding to constituents, and devising questions for the daily parliamentary question period. In the parliamentary system, the party out of power, does not govern, but acts more like a pressure group. It can introduce bills but these rarely are considered.

Q: How did being one, a woman and two, being American fit with having this job?

COLLTON: The younger wing of the party was somewhat radical and generally opposed having an American in the job, even though some of them were my friends. The senior members didn't feel that way, although some didn't quite know how to deal with a woman. The Deputy of the party, David Lewis, would never argue with me if he disagreed with something I said, he'd just ignore it, and if he did agree, he had a

patronizing attitude such as, “oh, the little girl had a good idea.” Tommy Douglas, the head of the party, was more even-handed. I don’t know if you’ve heard of him. He was the premier of Saskatchewan for 17 years before he became the national leader of the party. His daughter married Donald Sutherland.

Q: An American film star.

COLLTON: Actually he is a Canadian, although he has starred in American TV shows and Hollywood films. His daughter had gotten involved with the humanitarian program such as the school lunch program of the Black Panthers in California. She was arrested one night, and one of the arresting officers charged in and said, “Her father’s the head of the Communist party in Canada.” The party wanted to make a big political case out of it, but Tommy Douglas decided to get the best lawyer he could to get her off.

He was a very principled person. I was grateful to have had the opportunity to work with him. Some party members thought the party should soft-pedal our political stance in order to increase the membership. His view was, “Why get elected if we’re indistinguishable from the Liberal party?” The NDP was at the forefront of a lot of positions that the government finally adopted. When he was premier of Saskatchewan the government set up a provincial single-payer government medical plan. The American Medical Association (AMA) apparently didn’t want such a system anywhere in North America, and they worked hard to defeat it. They failed, but in the next election they again took up their campaign against the NDP, and Tommy was defeated. However, later, the federal government adopted a government-wide system of universal coverage. Also, as in the US, the Canadian government interned Japanese-Canadians during World War II. The UNDP was the only party to oppose it at the time it was happening. The other parties only apologized later.

Q: How long were you doing this?

COLLTON: For around three years.

Q: Did you keep an eye on the political developments in the United States?

COLLTON: Not in great detail, but it’s hard not to know what’s going on in the United States; the whole world follows events here.

Q: How did you feel about the Vietnam War?

COLLTON: I totally opposed it and marched against it. I had a couple of professors at Rutgers who were opposed to it. I guess they influenced me.

Q: Were you keeping your American citizenship?

COLLTON: Definitely! Canadians often asked when I was going to become a Canadian citizen, but I never considered changing my citizenship. I had been dating a British man

who lived there which was part of the reason I stayed. When we separated, I moved back to the States. Also, I think I told them I couldn't take the winters, which in fact was true. I like to ski, but my feeling is you can visit winter, you don't have to live in it.

Q: You came back?

COLLTON: I came back at the end of 1971.

Q: Nixon was president, his first term. What were you pointed towards? Where did you get a job?

COLLTON: Well, I thought with my experience in Parliament, I would look for a job in Congress. First I was told I'd have to start as a Secretary and work my way up. Then I met a Congressional committee staffer who was interested in hiring me but wanted to try me out first so he told me to get a job in the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress, and then he would request to borrow me. I did that, but the CRS refused to release me.

Q: How long were you in the Library of Congress?

COLLTON: Just a year. The section I was in was Government and General Research. Basically it was looking up trivia in response to requests from congressmen. We never had any direct contact with the members of Congress. Requests would come in quadruplicate for things such as how many members were boy scouts. It wasn't anywhere near as interesting as my work in Canada.

Q: I take it you wanted out.

COLLTON: Yes. I left and got a job working on a project with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) on citizen participation in HEW programs. The grant ended at about the same time that I became pregnant. Nobody would hire me when I told them I was pregnant. Even a women's organization that was clearly interested until I told them I was pregnant.

Q: Solidarity.

COLLTON: Right! Then I applied with a lobbyist for the handicapped. He was blind so I decided not to tell him. Maybe his secretary told him as I didn't get hired there either. So I got a real estate license and was showing run-down so-called fixer-upper houses on Capitol Hill which had begun gentrifying. The night before I gave birth, I was crawling in a window to show a house whose door was nailed shut. I never did sell a house, but I did manage to rent one. I wasn't a high-pressure sales person. Buying a house can be intimidating, and often people need someone to twist their arm a bit. I would let them think it over, and they'd end up buying the house I had shown them a couple of times from a more aggressive salesperson.

Then I had the baby, and worked part-time for another women's organization, Women's Lobby. Then back to school again at the University of Maryland School of Social Work for a Master's in Social Work. I decided I didn't just want to do research or teach, but that with a practical social science degree I could also be involved in an active program as well as in the theoretical aspects.

Finally, the Department of State. I had become very interested in foreign affairs and international relations and every so often I'd inquire as to when the next Foreign Service exam was scheduled. Invariably I would have just missed it, and I'd get involved in something else. Until 1972 women had had to resign from the Foreign Service when they got married, so there were hardly any women at the mid or top levels. In 1975, shortly before entering the University of Maryland I learned of a relatively new program devised to increase the number of women and minorities at the mid-level of the Foreign Service. The goal was to hire ten women a year at the mid-level who had comparable education and work experience to officers at that level; a goal that I understand was never met. The process included presentation of qualifications and work experience, oral and essay exams, and an interview.

Q: This was when?

COLLTON: That was in 1976. I was three-quarters of the way through the MSW program and a year and a half after applying at the State Department when I was contacted to come in for an interview and an oral exam. I then dropped out of the MSW program, with the proviso that I would be allowed to return later.

Q: I take it you took an oral exam. Do you remember any of the questions?

COLLTON: Someone advised me to read the Economist as the questions cover a broad range of issues. I found it helpful. One comment of the panel was that they were impressed with my knowledge of economics, of which I have little. One question in particular I do remember was, "You're in the embassy. You're told to lay off a number of people. After doing so, you are told you must lay off one more; the choice being between an older long-term employee who was no longer working at top capacity or a young dynamic relatively new hire. Which one do you fire?" Whichever one you choose, the follow-up question raises objections to your decision. I assumed the object was to see if you could make a decision and stick with it, which I did.

Another one was, "You're getting ready for work, and you hear on the radio that a hotel where a lot of Americans stay has burned down. What do you do?" Never having worked in an embassy nor being familiar with consular work I was not sure what my role should be. My thought was, if it's on the radio, it's generally known, so the fire department must be there. What should I do? With a little nudging from the examiner I realized the embassy had a welfare role vis-à-vis the Americans. Having worked previously for the Welfare Department in New York I knew how to respond, but at first hadn't realized it was a function of the Embassy. Another question was, "What books have you read

lately?" I'm a voracious reader, but, maybe due to nervousness, I couldn't think of the name of a book. But, I passed.

Q: Those questions are familiar to me because '75, '76 I used to give the oral exams. We'd ask people, "What book would you recommend to some foreigner?" Of course everybody said, "Huckleberry Finn," or Gone with the Wind. I said, "But that book's racist, you know?" Some just collapsed on that one. Whatever you had to do just to see how a person would stand up under a challenge. Some could really handle it, and others couldn't. It was an interesting process.

Q: You were hired when?

COLLTON: I was hired in 1976. An indication of the attitude of some of the Foreign Service Officers toward women was when I received a call shortly before Christmas to come in for the oral exam on Christmas Eve. I said I would be away and would have to schedule it for after Christmas. The response was, "Well, I'll just note that you aren't interested in employment at this time. I then received a lecture on how the caller's wife stayed at home with the children. As familiar as I was with the attitude displayed by this response, I was still shocked. I called back and got someone else and scheduled the oral for a more convenient time.

Q: What rank did you come in at?

COLLTON: The old five, now I believe a three.

Q: Did you go through basic training, A100?

COLLTON: No, it became clear that the program made no effort to integrate those who entered the Foreign Service through the mid-level entry. We received no training such as the A-100 course. Many of the women hired through the program left after one or two assignments.

Q: What assignment did you get?

I surprisingly was assigned to the Political Cone, as previously women were generally put in the Consular or Administrative cones. My first assignment was to the staff of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO which comprised a hundred-member body representing leading people from the fields of education, science, and culture including members of the U.S. Congress and the national media. The National Academy of Science and the American Science Association were represented on the Board and were major supporters of UNESCO. So it was quite a high-powered body with around eight of us providing the staffing. Very interesting job but certainly not, as they say, career-enhancing. I staffed the Education and Human Rights Committees. Our offices were in an annex across the street from the Department. We had a budget from the Department, and could also raise funds through our members from non-governmental sources. So we had a fair amount of autonomy, but it was essentially a domestic job. We were relating

domestic interests to the programs of UNESCO. It was an interesting and fulfilling position, but essentially not in the mainstream Foreign Service.

Q: What was UNESCO doing? What was the American interest in UNESCO?

COLLTON: UNESCO was the first specialized agency created at the same time as the United Nations, and it was not a developmental agency addressing the needs of the Third World, as are many of the other UN specialized agencies. It could do that, but it was more focused on furthering collaboration at the leading edge of science, culture, and education. UNESCO also provided project money to member countries, including the developed countries.

I had a three-year posting, and extended for a fourth year as I had informally been promised a job in the US Mission to UNESCO in Paris which would open up the next year. When I came up for reassignment, a young officer whose father was a large financial supporter of President Carter was given the job, and my Personnel Counselor congratulated me on my assignment to Zaire. Apparently politics are a factor even at the mid-level. However, the Bureau of International Organizations had some misgivings and promised me any other job in the Bureau except Paris. So I worked on breaking my Zaire assignment and was given a post in the mission to the UN in Vienna, dealing mostly with the UN Industrial Organization (UNIDO), and the UN social agencies.

Q: In the first place you covered UNESCO from the Department.

COLLTON: Yes, and while I was working on UNESCO, the US pulled out for a number of reasons: a) we were not pleased with the performance of the Director General from Senegal, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow; b) the third-world countries promoting statist policies such as a New International Economic and Communications Order, and the New International Information Order calling for government control of the media; and c) perhaps more importantly, a UNESCO vote endorsing a UN resolution equating Zionism with racism. Also UNESCO programs were carried out on a regional basis, and Israel was not included in the Middle East region and our proposal that they work with the Western European program was rejected by the membership.

Q: From your perspective—your group's perspective—here in Washington, what was the problem with M'Bow?

COLLTON: He was sympathetic to the non-aligned movement and its values, and perceived as antagonist to the U.S. I recall an occasion when the Executive Board passed a resolution to which he responded that he would refuse to implement it. Another time, during a meeting with a delegation of Americans, he accused them of being racists.

It was still somewhat surprising that we did pull out given the strong support for the organization among leading US organizations that worked closely with UNESCO. However, the media, because of the New International Information Order, and the American Jewish organizations were intent on getting us out. The head of the U.S.

National Commission was Sarah Goddard-Power whose husband owned a number of eastern European ethnic newspapers and was running for congress from Detroit. A group supporting our getting out of UNESCO formed an informal and euphemistically called Committee for an Effective UNESCO, whose sole objective was to get the U.S. to withdraw from UNESCO. The group pushed for membership on the Commission. Sarah opposed them until they threatened to go to Detroit and campaign against her husband. She then did an about face and brought them into the organization, where they worked from the inside to get the U.S. to withdraw from UNESCO which it did in 1984.

We did return to the organization in 2003, but now are not paying our dues because of the Middle East situation whereby the membership of UNESCO voted to bring Palestine in as a member.

Q: By pulling out that would mean you wouldn't have had a place in Paris anyway.

COLLTON: This was in 1980 and we didn't pull out until 1984, so I would have had four years. Also, after we did pull out, we maintained one post in Paris for an observer to report to Washington as to whether UNESCO was meeting our requirements for our reentry. We did remain active in some UNESCO programs, such as the Man in the Biosphere and contributed extra-budgetary funds directly to that program, but as non-members of the organization as a whole, we were not contributing to general overhead costs.

Q: Let's go to Vienna. For four years you were...

COLLTON: In the mission covering UNIDO and the social agencies such as women's issues, handicapped, youth, and aging.

Q: What was our delegation doing there?

COLLTON: Typically the job in the mission to the UN entails reporting to the Department on the positions of other countries' and the Secretariat, representing and coordinating our policies with the other delegations, preparing position papers on the agenda items discussed at the conferences, and reporting back to Washington on decisions made. Once I did get a bilateral posting, I realized how much more interesting multilateral work was as in the multilateral posts you were actually doing the negotiating and there were so many actors, not just one country.

Q: Was the Cold War manifesting itself?

COLLTON: Yes, very much so. That's where the political aspects came in. The delegations are organized in informal groupings: the WEOG (Western Europe and others including the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel), the G77 comprising the Third World Group, and, the USSR and its satellites. Once the wall fell and Russia was no longer an active cohesive group, which happened while I was in Vienna, the U.S. began pushing a strong private enterprise agenda with no one to push back. The third-

world countries were not happy as their modus operandi and been to play the east and west off against each other.

Q: I would think some of these policies of a sort of social side would be universal rather than Cold War.

COLLTON: Yes, but the differences were fought out along Cold War divisions. The youth issue was a favorite program pushed by Eastern Europe. Romania represented by the son of Ceausescu headed the initiative with a clear statist approach to indoctrinate youth, so we opposed the program.

Many of the social issues were not advanced by the UN programs as the countries were in such different situations. Another interesting example was the women's issue. We weren't really talking about the same thing. The Russian delegation would report that women had total equality in their country, then a Third World country would proudly announce that they had just instituted a Mother's Day. The U.S., under pressure from domestic women's groups could not say everything was wonderful in America, but would report on the struggle of American women for equal pay and equal rights. In a way it was counterproductive, but perhaps it led to some changes in some countries.

Q: How did you find the American delegation? It was obviously changing, but were you a program member? Who would attend the meetings?

COLLTON: Depending on the subject we would get program people from the government and the private sector knowledgeable of the substantive issues, but who were not familiar with the UN and its procedures. We in the mission followed specific issues as they were covered within the organizations as well as provided the expertise on UN procedures, and knowledge of the positions of the other countries delegations.

Q: Did you have the feeling that anything was happening or accomplished?

COLLTON: Slowly, but very slowly. The UN is one forum for achieving change. The handicapped is a good example whereby the UN contributed to progress. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been successfully used by American NGOs to raise awareness, educate people, and lobby for measures to assist the handicapped. Thus today public places such as buses, buildings and sidewalk ramps that accommodate wheel chairs are common place in the U.S.

Q: What were you specifically doing?

COLLTON: Going to meetings, pushing U.S. policies, writing U.S. position papers, negotiating with other delegations and with the UN secretariat, and reporting back to Washington.

Q: It really does sound very political, isn't it?

COLLTON: Yes, it is very political. The UN jobs were all listed as Economics Cone, although my work was all essentially political. Our mission had three people covering the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which received a lot more attention in Washington than our issues. There were two of us, the Deputy to the ambassador and myself, covering the social agencies and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The Deputy handled all the budget discussions, as I'm not a numbers person, and I handled the political and substantive side.

Q: Did you have any feel in a way for the Foreign Service, or were you sort of out in left field.

COLLTON: I was definitely out in left field. As I say I enjoyed the work a lot, but I still hadn't even been in an embassy, and didn't know what a Political Officer did. Our Mission was across town from the Embassy, and we spent a lot of time at the UN. I stayed eight years in Austria because I worked four years for the mission, and then I went and worked for the UN on secondment for four years. In those four years I got glowing evaluations because I was writing them for my Algerian boss to sign. I sent them to the Department, but didn't find out until five years later, after I had returned and worked a year in the Department, that they had never made it into my personnel folder. The whole idea of the US program to second people to the UN staff was to develop people who would have an understanding of how the UN worked from the inside. When I returned to the Department after eight years in Vienna I again was assigned to the International Organizations Bureau covering the UN Development Program (UNDP) an organization based in New York. However, the Department didn't seem interested in using my experience, as I was told I could not get promoted unless I did a political cone job. My personnel counselor suggested that I switch to the econ cone as I was not competitive with other political officers. Another Personnel Officer told me I should switch to the Admin. Cone, since women are good at details. However, every political post I bid on I was told I couldn't have it at the mid-level as I hadn't previously served in one. I finally wrote to the Director General of the Foreign Service and told him I would refuse to take another non-political post. He wrote back that he couldn't interfere in the process, but then I was assigned as Political Officer in Nouakchott, Mauritania at a grade lower than my grade, (a post I had shortly before been told I couldn't have).

Q: We had plenty of women in the consular business, but I was struck with how many women were working on United Nations affairs.

COLLTON: Also in the Population and Refugee Bureau, neither of which is known for fast-track promotions.

Q: This seemed to be getting good work done while being peripheral to the mainstream Foreign Service. Some women became high ranking and extremely proficient in this very complicated area.

COLLTON: An effort finally began to be made to find women who could become ambassadors. Previously women were assigned to the Admin and Consular Cones, and

most Ambassadors came from the Political Cone that constituted the elite of the Foreign Service. A few women were given ambassadorships from the less prestigious cones, and comments were made that they weren't qualified. Always the case when one tries to right previous inequality. But they had to start somewhere.

Q: You switched over to the embassy in Vienna?

COLLTON: Not the Embassy, but to the mission to the UN. We had our own Ambassador and separate offices from the Embassy. There were three U.S. Ambassadors in Vienna: to Austria, to the UN, and to SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks).

Q: How did you find Vienna?

COLLTON: I loved it. I was there eight years. My daughter went from second to ninth grade in the American School which was a great experience, and I didn't want to move around that much with her. Kids don't need a new country and culture every two years.

Q: It's very hard for kids.

COLLTON: It can be. This was very good for my daughter as she had the foreign experience and also some continuity. She still goes back to Vienna where she has friends. I found a lot of the kids who had moved every two years had a skewed idea of America (McDonalds), but didn't really know it. And, instead of benefiting from living in a foreign country were often negative about the countries they were living in.

Q: Did you run across any of our ambassadors at the embassy in Vienna, the embassy to Austria We tended to send political appointees who were not very distinguished.

COLLTON: Yes. We had some infamous ones while I was there. There was Helene von Damm, President Reagan's long-time secretary and then his Director for Presidential Personnel before being named Ambassador to Austria. She was considered scandalous by many when she divorced her third husband while she was in Vienna and married the owner of the Sacher Hotel famous for its Sacher Tortes (or cakes). There were awful puns going around about Madam Sacher Tart, and she finally was withdrawn. We also had Felix Bloch as Deputy Chief of Mission who was the highest ranking Foreign Service Officer ever to be charged with espionage. Although he was never convicted, he did lose his job and pension. Incidentally, or maybe not, both von Damm and Bloch had been born in Austria. Many people have thought it's not a good idea to send people supposed to be representing the U.S. to their own home country.

Q: Did you know he was spying?

COLLTON: I didn't know it at the time. I didn't find him very personable.

Q: How was he?

COLLTON: I gather he was bitter because Austrians he had gone to school with had high-ranking positions in their government, and he had never even made ambassador.

Q: That's what I've heard. Did you get any feel for Austrian politics?

COLLTON: Some, but not a whole lot. I was taught French as preparation for the posting as it is a UN working language. I had studied German many years previously in college, but that was only reading and writing, not speaking. I became proficient in casual conversation useful for shopping, and restaurants in German, but not much more.

Q: Particularly in that period I think we were concerned that there seemed to be still a residual Nazi sentiment in Austria.

COLLTON: There have been such charges made. Certainly Ronald Lauder, our Ambassador to Austria 1986-1987 made such claims after he returned to the U.S.

Q: You would have a changing delegation all the time, wouldn't you?

COLLTON: Yes, Foreign Service people come and go, and, depending on the subject matter, you have a great variety of people on the different delegations representing us at conferences.

Q: I would think these changing delegations of people coming from outside, you know, public figures who would be brought in would give it a little different mix, but sometimes they wouldn't be too familiar with the venue.

COLLTON: It was often a problem. We had one woman who was married to someone important in Washington and headed our delegation to a women's conference. We tried to coach her, but she somehow just didn't get it. She was like a Lucille Ball character. For example we whispered to her to say, "The delegate is out of order," and she instead said, "The chairman is out of order!" She was not very effective.

But sometimes we'd have excellent representatives. On the handicapped we had a man who came from NIH. He was blind, and very effective in mingling and negotiating.

Q: The handicapped issue would seem to be a pretty uncontroversial issue. Was there progress there?

COLLTON: As I said, the international attention can give impetus to some local and national programs and vice versa. Certainly that was the case in the U.S.

The one agency we really supported in Vienna was the IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency. However we walked out of that one because of the UN condemnation of Israel. We always had to deal with the Israeli issue. The UN is so polarized that the political issues pop up in practically every forum. Countries that have no interest in an

issue just use it to further their political agendas. The U.S. delegation's mantra was, "This is not the appropriate forum for that issue."

Q: Vienna was a place where Soviet Jews were coming and landing and then sorting themselves out, some to Israel, some to the States.

COLLTON: Yes, Austria was a transit point for Soviet Jews while they were processed for placement mainly to Israel or the U.S. That was an interesting situation in which the American Jewish community was conflicted between supporting the Israeli position whereby Israel did not consider them refugees but as Israeli citizens and wanted them all to settle in Israel, and supporting the individual rights of those who preferred to settle in the U.S.

Q: Did the Zionism as racism vote come up often?

COLLTON: It wasn't always with that wording, but certainly resolutions condemning Israel surfaced often. The U.S. very often voted alone or with Israel and maybe one or two other small countries that relied on U.S. aid. In UNESCO we and Britain pulled out partly because of such resolutions. Israel never pulled out. They wanted to maintain the international recognition.

Q: I would think, for a good number of countries, an assignment to the UN was a good place to pay off political debts.

COLLTON: That's very true.

Q: Did you get a feel for the UN staff?

COLLTON: It took me awhile, but once I worked inside the UN secretariat, I got to know it well from inside and out. It is highly politicized, and in most countries, because they are smaller and they know their people who are on staff, work very closely with them. The Europeans give money to a designated program and name one of their nationals to head that program. They therefore exercise a lot of control. The U.S. acts similarly on a large scale in supporting specific programs and agencies, but we tended to act more with a broad brush and not get involved in detailed intervention. As a mid-level UN staff member, once the U.S. Mission personnel were reassigned, I had little or no contact with our mission.

I was offered a higher position on the women's program and had a hard time getting in to see the U.S. Ambassador to get the support of my country required for that level position.

The U.S. didn't favor UNIDO at all. This was the only integral UN department that was ever later established as a specialized agency. We supported that change as, although we couldn't withdraw from a UN department, once it was a specialized agency we could. This was said explicitly when the legislation was sent to Congress. If the Third World countries had paid more attention to what was being said in Washington, they wouldn't

have pushed the change to specialized agency status. We spoke like we supported the industrial development of the Third World, but whenever UNIDO began addressing any specific industry, that industry's representatives in the U.S. pressured Congress to withdraw from the program. The pharmaceutical industry was a case in point; it seemed our pharmaceutical industry didn't want the developing countries to even make an aspirin. Our position seemed to be that not every country can industrialize.

Q: I think pharmaceuticals get very political because there's so much pressure from the poor countries saying, "These are life saving things, you can't make a profit off that. You should let us have the formula on them."

COLLTON: True, but we of course favored the protection of patents.

UNIDO was headed by an Algerian, Dr. Abd-El Rahman Khane, and we did not have a close relationship with him. We would try to influence him and push him in certain directions, and his response was, "You don't need my help. I'm here to help the Third World." He rarely accepted social/diplomatic engagements. He was an extremely principled man, but we didn't seem to share his principles. Once UNIDO became a specialized agency there was an election to the new post of Director General.

We supported the Philippine Ambassador, Domingo Siazon, a corrupt and ineffective person. He had wanted to be head of the IAEA, an agency we strongly supported. We told him he could not have the IAEA post, but we'd give him UNIDO. We actually changed the procedural rules half way through the voting for the UNIDO Director General election in order to elect him.

During the years I worked in the UNIDO secretariat, I would come home in the summer and go by the State Department for a briefing/debriefing. After Ambassador Siazon had been in the post for a couple of years, those responsible for putting him in as the head of the organization exclaimed to me what a terrible person he was. My response was, "I don't want to hear it because that's why you put him there. You thought you could influence him but now you can't because he's prostituting himself to everybody."

I got somewhat disillusioned with the UN and even our participation in it because I think we could do more than just focus on a couple of organizations. We could have made the other organizations more effective also. When Dr. Khane had earlier approached us to cut back on our share of the dues to UNIDO, since we could cripple the organization by withholding our dues, our response was, no, we wanted to continue being responsible for the third of the budget that we had stopped paying.

Q: You went back to Washington on trips. What was your impression of the State Department Bureau of International Organization?

COLLTON: It had a lot of good people trying to be effective. I think overall we could do a better job in the UN, but again I think we're treating it the same way as everyone

else does; we pursue our bilateral policies through it, so it's not really as effective as it could be.

We keep pushing for zero-based budgeting and asking what has the UN done for us lately, and don't tell us it wiped out smallpox.

I had a professor of International Relations at Rutgers University, Abraham Yeselson, who wrote an excellent book on the UN. He started out as a big supporter of the UN. He was a Zionist, and the UN had created Israel. Then when the UN started passing resolutions against Israel, he received a contract from one of the major publishing companies in New York to write a book critical of the UN stance on Israel. When he started his research, he was still pro-UN, but opposed to recent anti-Israeli actions. However, as an intellectually honest person, the more research he did the more he came around to the thinking that the UN in fact was not an effective organization. One often hears the truism, "if the UN didn't exist, we'd have to create it." He came around to the position that the UN was not furthering peace, the *raison d'être* for its creation, but that it was worse than ineffectual and was actually contributing to conflict. As an example, he posited that, "If you go to the UN and you call an Israeli a Nazi, you're not furthering peace but waging war by other means."

He wrote a book on it, *The UN: A Dangerous Place*. The publishers never really pushed it because they weren't ready to dump the UN at this point, they just wanted to criticize it. He was ready to say it wasn't an effective organization at all, and he had examples. If, for example, Israel and Syria wanted to come to an agreement on something, unlike in a court of law, you don't open the case up to people who have no standing but are pursuing other agendas. Well, in the UN issues are open to the whole world, and countries with no stake in the issue bring in extraneous issues. Yeselson came around to the point of view that the UN by its very makeup, could not act as a forum for peace.

He was next working on a book on human rights in the UN. Human rights, as defined in the international setting, is the responsibility of governments; and the UN is full of human rights abusers. Yeselson testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and based on his premise, they asked him, whether the US should resign from the UN. His response was "That's your political decision, but you need to be aware of the nature of the organization you're working with." He no longer considered it a peace-keeping organization, nor one capable of furthering human rights.

I argued with him that some of the international and national organizations working with and through the UN could have some limited role in furthering certain objectives, and slowly make some inroads. The U.S. approach of attacking the UN as if it should work on an efficient business model is totally inappropriate. You have to work in many languages and with various objectives that unlike a business do not have a bottom line of profit-making.

Q: I would imagine that Congress would be a major problem for anyone dealing with the UN because it's a handy whipping boy.

COLLTON: Yes, it's very popular to attack it. I think we could work more constructively with it. The U.S. focuses on some programs, and the one I worked for wasn't one of them. I was in a UN post previously held by a Frenchman. So when the French delegation proposed cutting certain programs and positions, including mine, the U.S. agreed, without even knowing that it was a position held by an American. I visited a number of U.S. corporations interested in working with UNIDO, but they did not want to go through Washington. Other governments work more closely with their businesses.

Q: When did you go to Nouakchott, the capital of Mauritania?

COLLTON: I was in Vienna from 1980 to 1988, returned to the Department of State for five years, and then went to Nouakchott in 1993.

Q: What was the situation there?

COLLTON: When I arrived the mission had been drastically reduced as, during the first Iraq War when Iraq had attacked Kuwait, the Mauritanian government sided with the Iraqis. The U.S. then rediscovered slavery in Mauritania, which we had previously declared ended, and pulled out our AID and USIA missions.

Q: How did slavery manifest itself?

COLLTON: It's much more of a caste or feudal system than slavery. It was certainly racial. Nobody knows the origin of the Arabic-speaking black former slave caste; they're called Haratine which is a word for freedmen. It is now lost in history as to whether they were an indigenous ethnic group that was there when the Moors, a mixture of Arabs and Berbers, moved south to the area, and enslaved them, or if they were a people captured in wars with other countries and brought there. However, they have been Arabized, they're Muslim, they speak Hassaniya, a Mauritanian dialect of Arabic, their names are Arabic and there has been a some inter-marriage. So, many Moors are of mixed racial background.

There were cultural norms and practices observed regarding the relations between the Haratine and the White Moors. The Haratine were a lower caste belonging to the same tribes. They were not sold, or families separated. Many felt pride in belonging to an important family, and to this day will go back to the family for formalities such as seeking approval of a marriage, and making demands for livestock and other goods. These were a nomadic people with not much wealth—distinctions were more a case of social status. You'd have a chief who owned all the camels and goats, and the young children of the tribe and the slaves would herd them. Everyone had one outfit and one pair of sandals, so they lived similarly but one had power.

Slavery has been outlawed several times in Mauritania; in 1981, and then in 2007 it was made a criminal offense, but it seems no cases have ever been brought under this legislation. What largely exists today are the vestiges of slavery. You have similar

situations all over Africa whereby poor relatives might live with and work for a better off part of the family as they have little choice.

I know one man who had been born and raised in the desert with his extended family including their slaves. He was educated in France during the 60's and been somewhat radicalized by the activities there. When he returned to Mauritania as a professor of sociology, his former slaves wanted to return to work for him as his slaves. He instead searched for jobs for them with local non-governmental and international agencies. One, he opposed slavery, and two, he said he'd be supporting their whole families, get very little work from them, and would not be able to fire them. He said he'd rather hire somebody and pay him. Some of them were quite disturbed and felt he was deserting them. It is a complex situation. His parents and the older former slaves are now being supported by him and his brothers. They are no longer working; just older people living together. Some people insist they be freed. Freed to go where? They have very limited choices.

We, in the embassy, were charged by Washington to look into the slavery issue, and I'd occasionally get a call from someone, saying, "I understand you're interested in slavery, well I have a case for you." In one case, the person related the story of a former slave who had died and his former master had arrived to claim the former slave's goat. The children of the former slave refused to relinquish it. When I asked if the former slaveholder was going to take the case to court, I was told he couldn't as it was illegal, and that the children were not going to relinquish the goat. So my next question was, "so where is the slavery?" The response was, "It's a mentality." Agreed, there is an attitude, but chattel slavery, no.

In order to deal with the issue, one has to know whether its juridical slavery or it's a hangover or attitude. Our feeling was it no longer existed, but vestiges can still be seen. Also, some slave owners left some of their slaves on farmland while they moved around as nomads with their animals. They would then go by the farmers and take some of their crops and give them some meat from their herds. This practice continues informally in some cases as a reciprocal relationship, but is no longer sanctioned in law.

When the French colonized Mauritania and went to the nomadic families to tell them to send their children to school, the family would often send their slaves instead. So, you now have situations whereby some of the former slaves are well-educated, and the former owners are illiterate. People still may refer to them as slaves. I've had Mauritians say to me, "That member of Parliament is a slave." Well, he's not a slave; he's of the slave caste.

In the 1970s, Mauritania experienced severe droughts and the nomadic economy has practically died. They all moved to the city, and that further eroded the slavery and feudal way of life.

One former slave was sent by the government to the Soviet Union where he studied to be an engineer. On his return he was hired by the government. Subsequently the government fired him because of corruption. He had previously publicly stated that slavery in Mauritania had ended. Now he has started an organization, called SOS Esclaves whose objective is to end slavery. He has traveled to the U.S. raising money, ostensibly to free slaves, but in fact it's a scam and the money goes in his pocket.

It's a complex issue and, like many others, highly politicized. If you look at the U.S. human rights reports prior to 1990, they reported slavery had essentially ended in Mauritania. Then when the Mauritanian government supported Iraq in its 1990 attack on Kuwait, our reports again reported the existence of slavery. When Mauritania responded to the urging of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1999, we again reported the end of slavery.

Q: You were in Mauritania for how long?

COLLTON: I was posted there twice; first as Political Officer from 1993 to 1995, then after a posting in East Africa I returned to Mauritania as Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) from 1998 to 2001.

Q: Let's take Mauritania. Who was the ambassador when you first arrived?

COLLTON: When I first arrived I worked with Gordon Brown.

Q: Yes, I've interviewed Gordon. It's often used as a place where you send an Arabic-speaking Foreign Service officer as ambassador who's going to be moving on.

COLLTON: He had been in Tunisia where he learned Arabic, then was DCM in Kenya before being named ambassador to Mauritania. Our mission to Mauritania has always been headed by career diplomats.

Q: Outside of this slavery issue, were there any other issues at that time?

COLLTON: Our concern was mainly human rights, some humanitarian and refugee issues, and some smuggling of drugs through Mauritania. Now there's talk that there is some Al-Qaeda activity there, so we provide some anti-terrorism assistance.

Q: How about our involvement in Iraq? Did that come up at all, or is that too far away?

COLLTON: Yes, too far away. Mauritanian, is an Islamic country, but is not really involved with the Middle East conflict. There are three ethnic groups in the south of the country who are Moslem, but not Arabic. That's why it could recognize Israel without eliciting a lot of protest from its population.

We also have the Western Sahara issue which has never been resolved.

Q: The whole Polisario business.

COLLTON: There are camps in the southwest corner of Algeria on the border with Mauritania. When the Spanish relinquished the Sahara in 1976, Morocco claimed the northern two-thirds of the territory, and Mauritania the southern third.

Q: The Spanish Sahara.

COLLTON: The Algerians helped to create and to support the Polisario that was fighting to control the former Spanish Sahara as an independent country. Mauritania couldn't sustain the military effort. The population was not supportive of the war, and finally in 1979 there was a coup d'état in Mauritania, and the new government relinquished its claim to the southern part of the Spanish Sahara. At that point, Morocco claimed the whole of it. Gradually over the years, the Polisario has been weakened, and has been unable to sustain the fighting. Refugees continue to languish in camps in the Tindouf region of Algeria, and although there has been no legal or international recognition of the territory's integration into Morocco, it is increasingly becoming a *de facto* part of that country. The Saharans are ethnically and culturally related to the Moors in Mauritania as are southern Moroccans. As an example of the artificial drawing of African borders, I once asked my Moroccan colleague on what basis Morocco claimed all of the former Spanish Sahara when it had previously only claimed the northern part. His response was, "All of Mauritania is Morocco."

Mauritania is a very large country with long unpopulated border regions that the government can't defend. Most of the population lives in the capital city and other smaller towns in the interior of the country. Mauritania did not exist as a political entity until 1960 when the French withdrew and seven separate countries were recognized. After decolonization, the previous capital of French West Africa, Dakar, became the capital of Senegal. Mauritania then selected Nouakchott, a small fishing village on the coast roughly halfway between the northern and southern borders, as its capital. There is little sense of national identity among the Mauritians. The Arabized Moors in the north, including the former slaves, identify with their individual tribes, and the three southern black groups in the south with their ethnic group of Wolof, Pulaar, or Soninke, which have been divided by the new national borders of Senegal and Mali.

Q: Did Mali play any role there?

COLLTON: Mali has its own issues including divisions between the Black southern groups and the Tuaregs in the north. Conflict heated up in the early nineties and the Tuaregs fled to northeastern Mauritania where refugee camps were established. Previously in 1989 during the conflict between the Moors and the southern black groups in Mauritania many people in the south of the country, whom the government stated were not Mauritanian, fled or were expelled to Senegal and Mali. Mali absorbed them.

On the southern border with Senegal during the 1989 conflict, both Mauritania and Senegal expelled each others citizens as well as some of their own. Senegal expelled

white Moor shop keepers from Dakar, many of whom had lived in Senegal for generations and didn't speak the Mauritania Arabic dialect. It became quite nasty with killings on both sides. The Government of Mauritania proudly refused international refugee assistance declaring the Moors were Mauritanian citizens and they would welcome them. They located them on the land that the southerners had vacated. Of course as urban shopkeepers they did not know how to work the land. Senegal kept those arriving from Mauritania in UN-supported refugee camps right on the border. Mauritania was condemned for having expelled its own citizens, while Senegal was looked upon positively by the international community for providing sanctuary for the refugees.

Many of the Mauritanian refugees have resettled in Senegal or have returned informally to Mauritania. I visited the camps in 1993, and they were mainly empty. Still the UN undertook a resettlement program providing a repatriation package to those returning. Many, who had already returned to Mauritania, returned to the camps in order to receive the package. This whole conflict arose largely from the artificial borders. The Senegal River was never a dividing line, but more of a connecting thoroughfare with the people who lived on both sides being from the same families and clans. The people didn't identify with either nationality. There is still continuing conflict about land rights along the river, particularly as the drought has led the camel-herding nomads to migrate south to the river area.

Q: How was the desertification when you were there?

COLLTON: The desert is expanding constantly. The Nomads with their camels have migrated further and further south, and the desert goes right to the river. Farmers now need irrigation plans to continue planting. The nomads' camels are destructive to the land. That was in fact a main cause for the conflict between the different groups in Mauritania and the conflict between Senegal and Mauritania. "The farmers and the herders can't be friends."

Q: How were women treated there?

COLLTON: Usually very well. Mauritania, a Muslim country, is unique in that regard.

Q: The desert tribes are really quite different, aren't they?

COLLTON: They really are. The white Moor women will not tolerate polygamy which is practiced much more among the southern black groups. They've been likened to—I don't know if you've heard the expression—Jewish American Princesses. They sit and pour tea take pride in their gold bracelets, don't do much work, and won't tolerate a second wife. Traditionally there were slaves to do the work. They have a practice called *gavage* whereby young girls are force fed to make them pleasingly fat and therefore marriageable.

A friend who had been educated in France and had returned to Mauritania half jokingly said the reason the Maurs tend not to practice polygamy is, "We're Nomads, and it's too

difficult to lug more than one of these huge women around from place to place.” The practice has almost disappeared as the population has begun to realize that obesity is unhealthy. Also, the young men who have traveled to the capital and to Europe are no longer attracted to the rural fat and illiterate women.

COLLTON: The political dynamics in Mali are the reverse of that in Mauritania in that the southern black groups hold political power, and when conflict broke out between the government and the Tuaregs, the latter moved to refugee camps in north eastern Mauritania. Slavery clearly still exists among the Tuaregs. They were quite distinct racially, in their dress, and they were doing all the work, while the overweight Tuareg women sat drinking tea. I asked the UN people how they distributed food in the camps. He said they let them self-define, so in effect they gave it to the heads of families who then distributed it to their families which included their slaves. I didn't know why the international community was even giving them food since they moved across the border with their tents, animals, and slaves and didn't need aid. In fact the UN was buying animals from the refugees and then slaughtering them and distributing them to the refugees. In this case the legitimate UN role should have been to ensure that they could seek refuge in Mauritania, but they didn't need economic aid. I reported this obvious practice of slavery to Washington, but at the time the U.S. had a favorable opinion of Mali as a democracy, and didn't seem to want to know about it.

Q: I think this probably is a good place to stop. We can pick this up next time. You're going to Uganda, aren't you?

COLLTON: Yes, I served in Uganda as refugee coordinator for central Africa. The post was created after the Rwandan genocide.

Q: We'll talk about that the next time, and then we'll come back to Mauritania. We're going to hear an awful lot about Mauritania here!

COLLTON: And one not many people know much about. Even Foreign Service Officers often confuse it with Mauritius.

Q: Today is the 13th of July, 2011 with Carol Colloton. You're off to Uganda. When did you go to Uganda?

COLLTON: In 1995 following the genocide in Rwanda. The Department established a new post of Regional Refugee Coordinator, and since our embassy in Rwanda was closed down, I was posted to Uganda, but spent most of my time in Rwanda, Burundi and the neighboring countries of Tanzania and Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) where the refugee camps were located.

Q: Some people won't be familiar with this. Could you explain what happened and why you were sent there? What had happened in Rwanda?

COLLTON: There was a conflict that led to a genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi. A lot of people call it an ethnic or tribal conflict, but in fact the people of Rwanda and Burundi do not have tribes or tribal loyalties like other countries in Africa. They are of the same religion, speak the same language, have similar last names, and there was quite a bit of intermarriage in the past. The division is between Tutsis and Hutus. It is believed that the Tutsis migrated from Ethiopia many years ago and that the Hutus were the indigenous population. The Tutsis were herders and the Hutus were agriculturists. The breakdown in both Rwanda and Burundi is around 10 percent Tutsis and 90 percent Hutus. Under Belgian colonialism, the Tutsis comprising an urban and more educated elite were selected for administrative tasks. When the Belgians left in 1962, the reins of power were handed over to the Tutsis. There are some distinctions racially in that the Tutsis come from a Nilotic people, somewhat taller, lighter skinned, with aquiline features. The Hutus, a Bantu people are shorter and darker. The two countries of Rwanda and Burundi are land-locked with limited natural resources. The land has been cultivated by hand with hoes and shovels on small family farms. Also land holdings were divided each generation among all the sons in the family. As land holdings got smaller and smaller, tensions built up. With encouragement from the Hutu dominated government that conducted a campaign of dehumanizing the Tutsis labeling them cockroaches and calling for their extermination. Then in April of 1994, as the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi were flying home from having concluded a cease fire accord, their plane was shot down as it was landing in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, and the killing began. Twenty percent of the total population of Rwanda and 70% of the Tutsis living in the country were killed over a 100 day period.

This took place in the context of a civil war that had been going on since 1990 between the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the Hutu led government. The Tutsis who had been living as refugees in neighboring countries for a generation fought their way back to Rwanda, and stopped the killings and formed a new government under President Kagame.

Q: That's about the time you arrived.

COLLTON: No, this had already transpired. Now the Hutus were in refugee camps surrounding the country, the new government took over a shell of a country. The previous Hutu-dominated government took all weapons, equipment, planes and other vehicles, government records, etc.

It was then that the State Department decided that they needed a new Refugee Bureau post to oversee and report on the situation

Q: Was anything happening in Uganda or was it relatively quiet?

COLLTON: Uganda was relatively quiet except in the north of the country where the Lord's Resistance Army was still active. President Museveni has never been able to totally pacify the north of the country.

Q: This was a nasty little religious group.

COLLTON: Sort of religious. It was hard to know what they believed in. It was started by a woman, Alice Lakwena, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Her fighters spread shea nut oil on themselves as they believed it would protect them from the government's bullets. Alice later fled to Kenya, and her nephew, Joseph Kony took over. Their *modus operandi* was to create chaos and thereby prevent the government from operating in the region.

Q: What was your job?

COLLTON: The State Department contributes a fair amount of money to the UN High Commission for Refugees, as well as directly funding some non-governmental organizations who work in the refugee camps and who try to assist the refugees to either resettle back in their countries of origin, in the country of first asylum or if neither of those are possible, to resettle them in a third country. My responsibility was to coordinate with other bilateral and international donors, report on political, economic, and social trends affecting the refugees, to oversee how our aid was being spent, and to assess the situation and possibilities for resettlement,. I advised the UN in the field of U.S. positions and reported back to Washington with recommendations.

Q: Wasn't there a problem that many of the Hutus who had left Burundi and Rwanda had gone to parts of the Congo or Zaire.

COLLTON: Yes, there were large camps in Zaire and Tanzania. Previously the Tutsis had been in those countries, now they returned and the Hutus replaced them in exile. The neighboring governments were getting upset with the ebb and flow of refugees to their countries. Furthermore, as throughout Africa, the artificial borders drawn by the European colonizers meant that the borders divided ethnic groups at the same time they included within the same borders people hostile to each other. The Rwandans in Uganda and Zaire were related to residents of those countries who lived along the border. The central governments were uneasy with the possibility of unrest among their own related people.

Q: These were not just refugees, these were genocidaires.

COLLTON: Yes. There's a stricture against situating refugee camps within a certain distance from international borders in order to prevent them being used for staging grounds to attack the country they had just left. But it is often not observed. You had such large numbers of people crossing the borders, and once they had crossed the border to safety, exhausted and hungry, they just stopped. The international agencies, under pressure to meet the overwhelming needs to set up living conditions for such large numbers of people, set up camps where the refugees had stopped, most often close to the border.

The new government in Rwanda insisted everyone could safely return home, but the former government, then in exile and some of them in the camps, pressed people to stay,

telling them they would be killed if they returned and that they would return together victorious and retake the government. I visited one camp that was clearly dominated by the former military.

Q: How were you treated, say you go to a camp that was controlled by the Hutu militia or whatever you want to call them. These were the people who perpetrated the genocide.

COLLTON: Well, you had the semblance of control by the UN, but it was obvious that in certain camps, it was the previous government and military that was in control. They had brought all their military vehicles and other equipment with them when they fled. They were friendly to us, and would try to convince us that they were the victims.

Q: It must have been quite a dilemma, wasn't it? There were genuine civilian refugees intermixed with people who had committed genocide, and here you are in the middle of this thing. Were you and your colleagues able to come to some reasonable distribution or funds or assistance?

COLLTON: We were supplying food based on the numbers of people there. A lot of the people who were there were innocent, although many civilians egged on by the government and militias had participated in the killing. A further incentive for them to remain in the camps despite the current Tutsi led government in Rwanda urging them all to return home.

The horrifying thing about this genocide was it was average people, incited by the Interahamwe, a Hutu para-military force, to kill all Tutsis and moderate Hutus including their friends, neighbors and even their own family members. It was very difficult. Some refugees trickled back, but they were afraid they might be killed either by the new Tutsi government in Rwanda or even by the militias in the camps if they tried to leave.

Q: From your point of view was this strictly a matter of getting out and seeing what the situation was, estimating how many people there were then going back to Uganda and reporting back through this channel up to the state department?

COLLTON: Yes. I reported on the humanitarian needs and political developments. Later, after the refugees were settled in the camps, there was a case of Ugandan and Rwandan military attacking one of the Hutu militia-controlled camps. At first there were barricades preventing our entering. When we did get in the camp it had been destroyed and as we drove around the area, we picked up a couple of children who had been wandering in the woods for days with no food or shelter.

Q: Why were the Ugandans killing people?

COLLTON: The arrival of large numbers of new refugees caused tensions between the new refugees in that part of Zaire and the local population. President Museveni's ethnic group in that area of Zaire and in the southwest of Uganda is populated by people related to the Rwandans (again the borders dividing people). President Kagame had been in the

Uganda military, so there was collaboration between the new Rwandan government and the Ugandan government. And they were opposed to the use of the camp as a military base for attacks on both Uganda and Rwanda. The Ugandan Interior Minister once asked me what I would think if Uganda took over that part of the Congo and integrated it into Uganda or had part of it to go to Rwanda? “We’d do it peacefully, of course,” he said.

At the same time you had no functioning government in Zaire; President Mobutu was dying of cancer and hiding out on his estate in his home town of Gbadolite on the border with the Central African Republic. The Ugandan and Rwandan governments located an old revolutionary, Kabila, to be their straw man and to move in and take over that part of eastern Zaire. The country had been so depleted by corruption and mismanagement that, contrary to the limited designs of Rwanda and Uganda, Kabila’s forces just marched across the country to the capital of Kinshasa, marauding as they went, with the national military, that hadn’t been paid in years, fleeing. You and I probably could have taken over the country! There was little fighting; it just collapsed and Kabila took over the presidency.

Q: How long were you there?

COLLTON: Three years.

Q: I would have thought this would be a very difficult job. Not just the work but the mental stress of having to observe all the misery.

COLLTON: True, a lot of mental stress, and quite dangerous. Three incidents stand out in which the danger was brought home to me. I had scheduled a trip to visit a camp in the interior of the Central African Republic (I covered central Africa, although most of my time was spent on the Rwandan situation). When the U.S. government shut down in 1995-96, Washington advised that I postpone the trip as it wasn’t considered to be essential at that time. The German embassy decided to take the plane I had chartered in my stead. The plane crashed and all on board were killed.

On another occasion, a couple of us were planning to visit a refugee camp in Zaire. The person with me from Washington wanted to go to church, so we told the other two from an NGO to go on ahead and we’d meet them at the camp. Their car went over a land mine, and the woman almost died and did lose both of her legs. We would have been in that car that day if my colleague hadn’t wanted to go to church. It was almost enough to make me get religion.

My third brush with danger took place on a seemingly calm sunny Sunday afternoon. I was walking down the street in the Rwandan town of Gisenyi, just across the border from the Zairian town of Goma, with a U.S. Senate Staff Aide of Senator Kennedy who was on an information-gathering mission. Suddenly bullets were flying everywhere. We ran and hid behind some trees. My companion lamented, “If my wife hears about this she’ll kill me,” to which I remarked, “That just might be redundant.”

Anyway when things calmed down, we hesitatingly left our hiding place. Soldiers were everywhere, and when we inquired what had just transpired were told it was just some soldier's kid who had gotten his hands on his father's gun. It was clear that the government of Rwanda, did not want word to get out that things were not quite so tranquil. After the attacks on some of the camps, the refugees had started streaming back again in large numbers. Everyone, including the international community, insisted they could be peacefully resettled back in their villages and live together with the people who had killed their friends and families.

Q: Were you going into Rwanda and seeing how this reverse flow was working?

COLLTON: Yes, that was part of my responsibilities. The government was trying very hard to integrate people and get the economy going again. It is not easy since most of the population lives in small villages, and everyone knows those who killed their family members. There have been efforts at truth commissions and also some of the notorious leaders of the genocide have been tried in internationally established tribunals in the Tanzanian city of Arusha. There were also some Rwandan trials and public beheadings of some of the leaders of the genocide.

Q: It's been some time. What is the situation now?

COLLTON: While I was there I saw some big changes. The capital city of Kigali was almost totally empty when I first arrived there. You could stand right in the center of town and not see one car. Then the only cars were the large four-wheel drive vans of the international non-governmental organizations. The government began to feel it was losing control and that the NGOs were running the country. So they started registering some NGOs and expelling others. There's a phenomenon whereby when there is a disaster somewhere in the world all the NGOs race there in order to establish their presence so they can use that as a way of raising money from governments and individuals. It does get out of hand with every organization paying for overhead, vans, and other equipment.

The government has made a lot of progress, but the underlying problems remain. The population now is as large if not even larger than before the genocide. There was an effort among the Tutsis, who previously tended to be two-child families, to produce a baby a year to replace all those killed. And also the Hutus in the camps, with the medical care provided, had increased their population. In addition, the previous practice of dividing the family plot among all the sons of the family has been changed to divide it among all the children. The country is small and land-locked and there are limited natural resources. Although there is plenty of lebensraum in western Tanzania and eastern Congo, the national borders prevent the population from spreading into those areas.

Q: It's not like they can move into electronics...

COLLTON: Or even trade. It is essentially an agricultural population of very small land holdings. Over the years there have been other incidents of mass killings. This past time

it was Hutus against Tutsis. In previous conflicts the Tutsis have killed Hutus, but as they are the majority, the targets were the Hutu elites, in many cases meaning those who were literate. If one wipes out all potential leaders one can conceivably control the population. If one mentions the genocide to a Hutu he might respond with, "Which genocide are you talking about?" Although there are some good people there trying through reconciliation measures to promote reconciliation, one gets the sense that the country is a powder keg waiting to blow up again. It's difficult given the objective realities of dense population, and little resources.

Q: Were you able to develop a staff of Rwandans who were helping you with this.

COLLTON: I had no staff other than half of a secretary in the Ugandan Embassy and my driver. We were supporting the UN effort and funding some NGOs, but we didn't have people on the ground. Other countries, such as the French and the Belgian former colonial power were very engaged. The EU was also involved in providing aid and resettlement assistance back in Rwanda. I had around twenty counterparts from the EU living there, whereas, I would do a two-week trip visiting the camps, the UN representatives, government people, NGO staff, representatives of other donor countries, and the Rwandan villages. As I developed relationships, I could get a pretty good idea of what was going on.

Q: Again, I'm trying to get an idea of what your responsibilities were; was it in the distribution side of things.

COLLTON: No, the World Food Program (WFP) distributed food, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided funding and coordination among the donors – international and national. There were compounds of non-governmental organizations and foreign aid workers trying to work with the refugees and to facilitate resettlement back into their home country, which seemed to be everyone's idea of the best solution. There were some two million refugees, most in Zaire, but also around 530,000 in Tanzania, and another 190,000 in Burundi. There was no country in a position to take them in. From 2005 to the present, the U.S. resettled 1,491 Rwandan refugees. In order to decide which ones to resettle, we came up with certain criteria such as women at risk that often comprised a grandmother and small children, as the parents had been killed. Another category was mixed Hutu-Tutsi families. The government in Kigali opposed that as they insisted that all of them could return home safely.

Q: Let me get this clear in my mind. You had all these EU people there, and UN people. You were the sole U.S. government representative.

COLLTON: That's right, the only one whose sole responsibility was refugees. The small Embassy staffs in the area might do some reporting on the issue, but generally they left it to me. We are by far the major contributor to the WFP and the UNHCR, but we only had one person on the ground from our government reporting on how our money was being spent, the possibilities of refugees returning home, the politics of the situation, meeting with Washington delegations coming out to see things first-hand, etc.

Q: Was your job more or less to inform our government, the state department, because they would have votes, and they would be dealing with these other entities who were giving relief, but you were the state eyes on the ground...

COLLTON: Exactly, eyes and ears.

Q: ...as opposed to other people who were involved with international organizations.

COLLTON: Right.

Q: What was your impression of the international effort there?

COLLTON: At the beginning of a crisis the situation is quite chaotic, with people arriving without food or shelter, many of them sick and having lost family members during a hasty and disorganized exodus. The UN and the NGOs arrive and have to establish a place for they themselves to live as well as provide accommodations for the huge influx of people. It's tents and high protein biscuits to start with. I was very impressed with the logistical ability of the UN people. There were some really experienced and effective people.

Q: I remember at the time hearing somebody saying when this first happened I think it was the Canadian military came to help, but then there was the problem that the military is used to bringing in rations. But the problem is with military rations is that it's highly portable, and it's very good for troops, and that you want to make sure that you give a big bag of rice, something that's not so portable so they can't be broken down for military use as opposed to feeding people. Was this an issue at all?

COLLTON: Yes. Right at the start when people were just arriving they distributed high protein biscuits, and that would be about all they had to eat until they could get them settled and establish a distribution system. Once established, the camps become like small towns. Schools, health clinics and adult activities are set up. Refugees might set up small businesses, trading and selling rice to maybe buy fresh vegetable or meat from neighboring villages. There was even a small informal restaurant in one camp. Once established some of the local people, often of the same ethnic group, would try to register at the camps since their kids didn't have as much to eat and weren't going to school. One of the Ugandans who worked in the US embassy asked me how he could become a refugee. Government officials would ask us, "Why are you only providing for the refugees. What about our people?" The UN's response is, "It's really your country's responsibility to deal with your people." It does, however, cause tension to have the refugees living so much better than their own citizens, and the UN has in a small way gotten involved in providing some services for people living near the camps such as letting them use the medical facilities. Some international organizations are looking into services for the internally displaced. However, in the first chaotic days of establishing camps, people are suffering and some dying of disease and starvation.

Q: What about the Uganda government? In the first place we had an embassy in Uganda.

COLLTON: Yes, that's where I was based, as we had closed down our embassy in Rwanda. After it reopened, the Ambassador in Rwanda wanted me to move there, and the Ambassador in Zaire didn't like me going into his country and reporting without his input, so he wanted me to fly first to Kinshasa, and then fly over 900 miles to the camps in the east of the country. I did it only once. But I stayed in Uganda, which was much more convenient (a day's trip to the camps).

Q: How much support did you get from the embassy?

COLLTON: Ambassador Michael Southwick and the DCM were very supportive, and since refugees were a major issue for the region, they often included me in meetings with government officials, but they let me do my job without interfering. I was like a specialized agency with my own car and driver, and my own budget. When there was the U.S. government shutdown I was considered essential, and still had a budget.

Q: I take it you have a lot of Americans, public figures, all coming down to be escorted around.

COLLTON: At the beginning of a crisis, yes. Also the media. A CNN reporter came after the camps were established and things had calmed down a bit. There were no killings or riots. So after one day she left, reportedly saying, "Refugees are boring." That's the type of in-depth reporting we get.

Q: How about your bosses back in Washington. Did they come down often?

COLLTON: I stayed in close touch with the office in the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). The desk officer came out a couple of times, and traveled with me. I worked for a month in the refugee bureau before I went to the field, so I had some idea of who I would be reporting to what type of information they wanted.

Q: Would you say that we were suffering from a guilt complex, the American government? I think eventually President Clinton went there and apologized. Did you get involved in the pressure on Clinton to make an apology for the genocide.

COLLTON: Yes, he planned a trip to several counties in East and Central Africa probably to escape the Lewinsky scandal. Unfortunately, our media followed him and hounded him about the Lewinsky scandal paying little attention to the issues he was trying to address in Africa.

We in the embassy along with other embassies in the region had insisted on including Rwanda from the start. Despite this urging from many fronts, the advance team did not include Rwanda on his schedule, reportedly because of security concerns. Once the trip got under way, and those traveling with the President realized what a mistake it would be to visit the neighboring countries and not Rwanda considering the recent events there, a

last minute change of plans to include a stopover at the airport of around three and a half hours was fit into the schedule. The Rwandan government had a memorial to the victims of the killings at the airport, and Clinton descended from the plane and met with government officials and ordinary citizens who had survived the genocide and lost family members. He made a short conciliatory speech of regret that the international community had not responded to the situation.

Q: I recall Pru Bushnell, the desk officer for Kenya at the time, (later the ambassador to Kenya, talking about trying to get the US and the international community to intervene. I think we had been traumatized by our involvement in Somalia, and took the attitude that we shouldn't get involved between tribes in Africa.

COLLTON: And the feeling that we can't run the whole world. We also had no apparent economic or national interest in Rwanda. However, as a major supporter of international human rights and as a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, many believe the international community and certainly the U.S. could have and should have stepped in to stop it.

Q: What did this do to you dealing with this? Did you come away with a feeling of...

COLLTON: Hopelessness. That part of the world is still not peaceful. A major cause is over-population in small countries that are land-locked with limited natural resources. We may see similar events in the future. The women of both groups have had more children to replace those lost. Even the Tutsis, who had been middle class, urban, two-child families, have increased the sizes of their families.

Romeo Dallaire, the Canadian in charge of UNAMIR, the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, reported urgently to the UN that there was going to be a genocide, and if he were given the authority he could prevent it. However, his instructions were that he could do nothing unless he or his small team was personally shot at. Their hands were tied as far as protecting the Rwandans from being slaughtered. Everyone knew it was coming. The Rwandan Hutu government used public radio to call for the extermination of the Tutsis who it labeled "cockroaches." Dallaire suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Subsequently he has written a book on the situation. Our ambassador in Rwanda who had been raised there with missionary parents was devastated by the situation. Everyone who knew the country said the Rwandans were such a peaceful people and that it couldn't happen there. Well, it happened.

There was an American woman, Rosalyn Carr, who had married a Brit and lived in Zaire. When they separated, she moved to Rwanda just outside of Kigali where she had a farm on which she grew flowers and sold them to hotels. She was in her 80s. After the genocide, she opened an orphanage and took in children – Hutu and Tutsi; some so traumatized, they didn't speak.

She related a story to me about the period of the genocide whereby a young Tutsi woman who worked for her was fleeing from young local Hutu men. She had a baby on her back and said to Rosalyn, "Please take my baby." Rosalyn hesitated for a moment, and the woman ran off in a panic. An overseer who worked with Rosalyn told her, "Don't worry, no Rwandan would ever kill a woman with a baby on her back." Rosalyn had known the young men since they had been small boys. She said to them, "If you want to kill someone, kill me, I'm an old woman." Their response was, "Oh no Ms. Carr, we wouldn't do that." But they did run after the young woman and killed her and her baby.

Q: Was AIDS in the mix at the time?

COLLTON: Yes, it was very high in that area. Uganda had among the highest rates in the world. When President Museveni realized his military was being decimated by the disease, he undertook a large scale program of public education—TV ads, billboards promoting abstinence and the use of condoms. It seems there is a high rate of promiscuity at the same time there is a puritanical attitude of not discussing sex. The campaign did begin to have the effect of decreasing the numbers of new cases. I was in a refugee camp of Sudanese in northern Uganda on International AIDS Prevention Day, and watched some skits put on by the refugees to dramatize the dangers of AIDs. One of them featured a young man who was feeling sick and went to a witch doctor for a cure. Getting a psychological lift from that, he immediately picked up another woman for sex. The audience was laughing as it apparently rang true for them.

Q: There seemed to be a sense of denial particularly in South Africa,.

COLLTON: Yes there were rumors that the west, particularly the U.S., had created the virus as a genocidal plot against them. This was augmented by a Soviet Union misinformation campaign. Also Africans are dying of other things like malaria and malnutrition at a very young age, and since AIDS has a longer incubation period, they at first didn't take it as seriously. President Mbeki of South African at first downplayed the seriousness of the situation. He later changed his stance.

Q: It sort of shocked the western world because they thought that here South Africa was going to be the shining star of African development.

COLLTON: I traveled to South Africa as a guest of a friend who worked for the Motion Picture Association of America that was co-hosting with the South African government its annual meeting with international counterparts. South Africa hoped to get some positive coverage for its country as an opportune country for investment. The world's media was there, including top people from the U.S. such as Barbara Walters. President Mbeki addressed the meeting and was trying to back pedal on his previous statements on HIV/AIDS and to address business opportunities in the country. However, all the U.S. media cared about was his previous statements on AIDs (catchy reporting). As hard as it is to get any positive reporting (bad news is good news) it's particularly difficult in the case of Africa.

Q: Anyway, about three years after the genocide because you were there shortly after, where did you go?

COLLTON: I went back to Mauritania. I had been the political officer, and then I returned as Deputy Chief of Mission.

Q: Who was the ambassador in Mauritania?

COLLTON: I worked for four ambassadors in Mauritania.

Q: Good God!

COLLTON: First there was Gordon Brown who was there my first year, and then my second year Dorothy Sampas came, and then I went to Uganda. When I returned Timberlake Foster was Ambassador, and then I finished up with John Limbert, and I'm still good friends with three of them.

Q: I've interviewed John Limbert. He was involved in Iran a long time.

COLLTON: Yes. He had served in the Peace Corps in Iran, married an Iranian woman, joined the Foreign Service and was posted there again during which time he was one of those taken hostage.

Q: We've covered the first part of Mauritania, but when you went back to Mauritania what was the situation then?

COLLTON: Not much had changed really.

Q: Probably not much has changed since...

COLLTON: A lot has changed now, I think. While the president Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya was out of the country at the funeral of Saudi King Fahd in August 2005, he was overthrown by a military coup. There have been some cosmetic changes by the government toward more representative government. The population has grown and continues to move to the capital city. When I was there it was a small sleepy town with two paved roads and no crime. I understand now the city is many times larger, crime has increased, and the growth of radical Moslem groups affecting the region has spread to Mauritania.

Q: This was the Polisario, the refugee camp?

COLLTON: No. That issue continues to simmer, but I think Morocco is more or less in control of the situation. The Polisario camps are still in Algeria, but they have little chance of declaring an independent state. Mauritania, while giving lip service to resolution of the issue is more or less content to see things stay as they are. They don't want an independent Polisario run government on their border, and they don't want

Morocco on their border. The continuation of the stalemated status quo is probably their preference.

Then you had the events of 1986 with rioting and the expulsion by both Senegal and Mauritania of people along the river. That situation has been more or less settled. Most people have either returned home, some have settled in the other country, and both governments have expressed their willingness to repatriate those who left or were expelled. A small group of Mauritians continue to reside in Senegal and make demands for retribution before they will return to Mauritania. They don't seem to be getting much attention.

Q: Did Mauritania have anything like an army or a tribal movement to fight back out against the intrusions of Senegal and other places?

COLLTON: Mauritania has long borders that they can't effectively monitor. They had a camel corps on the Malian border. The military was along the border in the south, but they weren't being attacked by Senegal. They were attacking their own citizens and Senegalese. The two armies didn't come to blows, but there was some of killing of civilians.

Q: Was there anything in Mauritania—we had mentioned this before—that was attractive to the outside world, oil, manganese, what have you?

COLLTON: Fish. They had among the richest fishing waters in the world. We could go down to the dock and just pull in tuna one after the other. The head of the navy was in charge of granting fishing licenses, and he sold them in large numbers to Japan and other countries with all the proceeds going into his pocket. The Japanese contributed to the depletion of the stock. The Germans undertook a small project studying the over-fishing, but I'm not sure it accomplished much,

They do have a small amount of gold. There's an Australian company mining that. They have an iron ore plant in the north of the country that was partially funded and owned by the French, although I believe it's now a private/public consortium. There is subsistence farming along the Senegal River. Dates are grown in the interior, but mainly for local consumption. There has been oil discovered but it's still largely at the exploratory stage.

Q: Where does Mauritania stand? Is it Arab? Is it black? What is it?

COLLTON: It depends on who you talk to. The government was dominated by the white Moors who are a mix of Arab and Berber. They took a census but the census is top secret because they don't want people to know what the real ethnic breakdown is. Mauritania is a buffer between the Arab north and the black south.

Q: A little like Lebanon for decades has never had a good census...

COLLTON: The U.S. has been ethnocentric. We viewed the internal conflicts in Mauritania as black against white and mainly a civil rights issue. In the human rights reports I wrote, Washington insisted on calling the southern black groups “Afro-Mauritanians.” I went to visit a white government minister who asked me, “What am I? Am I not African, and am I not Mauritanian.” Many of the Bidane or whites, are actually of mixed race, so I’d get the question, “Well, what race am I?” I kept trying to explain to the State Department. There were black Moors who had been the slaves of the white Moors and identified with them, and then you had three black ethnic groups in the south. They also had slaves, but we never noticed them since both the masters and slaves were black and of the same ethnicity. In fact there were still southern black slaves held by blacks while slavery among the moors had more or less ended. The leaders among the black southern groups did not associate at all with the black Moors who had been slaves. But Washington insisted it was black against white. It was much more complex than the U.S. wanted to acknowledge.

Q: Did religion play a factor?

COLLTON: No. Mauritania is 100% Muslim. That’s the one unifying thing. There is a Catholic church in Nouakchott for foreigners.

Q: What about over the centuries? Christian missionaries have gone into Muslim areas with very little success.

COLLTON: There are some small American Christian missionary groups who more recently have tried to convert the Mauritanians with little success. World Vision was the largest. There was another small group of two couples and their children from New Jersey who had been there for a few years ostensibly doing development. I received a call from the Minister of the Interior who said he knew this group was proselytizing and if it became known to the public then he would have to ask them to leave. I called the group in and asked them if they were proselytizing, and they said they weren’t. The next day I got a call from one of the group who said he wanted to clarify that his view of proselytizing was the crusades and the use of force, and they were not using force. However, if someone asked him about Christ, since he had the truth, he was compelled to share it.

I asked one of the World Vision people why they were there, since proselytizing is not officially allowed in Mauritania. He said that by living a Christian life the example will influence the Mauritanians.

Q: You left there when?

COLLTON: I left there in 2000, and I had one more year in the Foreign Service before I retired.

Q: Where did you go?

COLLTON: I went to New York to the US Mission to the UN.

Q: Doing what?

COLLTON: I was covering Second Committee issues, the social and economic issues.

Q: I would think going to the UN in New York from Mauritania and Uganda would be a little bit like going into Never Never land.

COLLTON: The reason I had returned to Mauritania had been that at that point I had four more years in the Foreign Service, and while several people advised that it was not going to help my career, my view was I'm retiring, I have friends in Mauritania, and I could be immediately effective. I didn't want to go to another new country and by the time I figure out who was who and could have an influence, I'd be packing up again.

Then, with one more year left, I decided that a year in New York would give me a chance to see if I wanted to retire there. Shortly after I moved to New York the World Trade Center was attacked.

Q: How did the attack affect you?

COLLTON: There was a large UN conference starting that day, and our delegation from the mission and Washington was crossing the street to attend the meeting, when we saw smoke from downtown filling the sky. We then saw the plane hit the World Trade Center on the UN corridor TV monitors. We thought it was an accident, and went into our meeting. When we came out of the meeting and again looked at the TV, we saw the second plane hit. The Mission shut down as did all UN events. In fact, New York was shut down. Delegates couldn't get out of the city. We just sat around in a local restaurant with everyone trying with difficulty to call out as the lines were overloaded. I lived on First Avenue which was wall to wall police. If anything more were to happen near the UN they would have been hard pressed to respond. It was hard to walk to my apartment through the crowds of police. I had to show my ID to pass down the avenue to my apartment.

The UN was quite supportive. Some papers attacked the UN, but the staff took up collections for the victims and their families.

Q: Had you sort of figured out what you wanted to do when you retired?

COLLTON: I decided I didn't want to live in New York.

Q: Did 9/11 have something to do with it?

COLLTON: Could have! And Manhattan has changed. You can't go home again. It wasn't the old New York. There's a K-Mart in Manhattan! If I were to live there I would prefer Brooklyn. It still has neighborhoods with small independent shops and restaurants.

Anyway, I came back to Washington to retire. Washington also has changed and for the better. It had been a sleepy town when I first moved there in the early 70's. Now it has good restaurants, theatre, etc.

Retirement is strange. The freedom from time tables is great, but I realized it was the first time since kindergarten that I didn't have an organizational affiliation. I got involved in different organizations and activities. I had been retired for around six months and was taking courses at American University when I got a call from the State Department's Refugee Bureau to come back to work as a WAE standing for "When Actually Employed."

Q: The WAE which basically means part-time. You can work...

COLLTON: 1,040 hours a year, which is half the normal full-time job of 2,080 hours a year. There is a complicated formula whereby what you earn combined with your pension can't be more than what your final salary had been when you retired. I was filling in for a full-time post, although I stipulated that I would not work on Friday. Still it was full-time from Monday through Thursday.

Q: What were you doing?

COLLTON: I was resettling refugees in this country, so I finally got to travel at home. We funded ten NGOs to settle refugees around the country. My job was to monitor their resettlement and ensure the agencies helping them were fulfilling the requirements.

Q: Who were these refugees?

COLLTON: It changed. They came from different places. At that time we had the Hmong coming from Indo-China, the Sudanese boys who had lost their families in the conflict in that country, some Iraqis, Jews from Russia, and also some Cubans.

Q: I wouldn't think you'd do much with them. They were sort of embraced by the Cuban community.

COLLTON: Well, the thing is, when refugees come in under our program, we don't want to isolate them from their community but we also don't want to put all of the people of one nationality in the same place. So we settle groups of similar refugees around the country. However, the refugees are in touch with each other and compare the different places. We have minimum requirements that the agencies we work through have to provide such as housing, English classes, help with finding a job, et al. Some agencies provide more benefits above that minimum. Whenever I'd visit the Cubans somewhere else in the country, they'd tell me they didn't need to learn English as they were going to move to Miami.

Q: I realize an awful lot of the Hmong ended up in Minnesota, and when you think about the Hmong coming from basically a tropical place and all of a sudden they live in the glacier fields of Minnesota. How were they doing?

COLLTON: Yes, I wondered how they managed. The Africans too. We would visit their apartments, and they would be walking around in bare feet with their light cotton clothes on and the heat blasting. I don't think they went outside a lot in winter.

Q: Are you still doing this?

COLLTON: No. I enjoyed the refugee work, but it was too much like a full-time job. Now I'm in the Admin Bureau declassifying old documents. Now I can come and go as I please. I can work one or two days a week.

Q: Were we doing much before we ended up with three little wars, two big ones and one small one, in Somalia and big ones in Iraq and also Afghanistan. Obviously we've got people from those countries supporting our troops, interpreters and that sort of thing.

COLLTON: Yes, we try to bring those people out. But in most cases with large numbers of refugees (approximately 51 million), the aim is to repatriate people to their own countries if and when things settle down. If that isn't possible then the aim is to have them settled in the first country of asylum. Barring that, if the people are in an insecure situation, we might look for a third country to resettle them.

If UNHCR determines that a particular person can never go home again, and the country of first asylum won't settle them, then they are included in a group to be resettled. We're the major resettling country. Congress passes legislation each year establishing an upper limit usually of 70,000 a year. We might in exceptional cases take more than that. Australia and Canada take some, and a few European countries take small numbers. The resettlement process is a drawn out one, so large numbers of refugees are living for extended periods in refugee camps.

Given the numbers, other than in the case of particular individuals who we deem are in imminent danger, we try to establish categories of people who have priority. When I was involved, one category was "women at risk" that applied to Liberian grandmothers caring for children whose parents had been killed in war or from other causes. Another was the Sudan boys who had fled war in their country and lost contact with their families. A third category was mixed Tutsi-Hutu couples. The Rwandan government was not pleased with that as they maintained all Rwandans were welcome and would be safe if they returned home.

There is a screening process. Homeland Security is involved to ensure we're not bringing in terrorists. There can be some fraud also in that when someone has been accepted for resettlement, they might come up with several additional children they want to attach to their case. Included in our definition of a family, is parents, children and grandparents.

Then, at this end we decide which communities can provide the necessary services. The ten non-governmental organizations the Department works with have centers around the country that work with local churches and other charities to assist with the process. We put a number of the Liberians in Las Vegas. [laughter]. Actually Las Vegas isn't a bad place for refugees as there are jobs in the hotels, and the hotels change their furniture relatively frequently so inexpensive used furniture is available for the refugees. Still it is a big adjustment. We settled one young Bible student in Las Vegas. He was going to save Sin City.

Another group of refugees we brought were Russian Jews. They are not by definition refugees as they were coming from their own country, and Israel objected because they could have automatic citizenship if they moved there. It was a conflict for the Jewish-American community that wanted to support Israel, but also wanted to allow the individuals to choose if they preferred to come to the U.S.

Q: This gets political.

COLLTON: Yes, it gets very political.

Q: The sorting out of the Russian Jews has been a bone of contention between Israel and the United States. Essentially one has the feeling a group comes from what was the Soviet Union and now Russia but comes to either Vienna or Rome or wherever.

COLLTON: Their first stop was in Vienna where we would interview and process those who wanted to come to the U.S.

Q: They kind of let them sort themselves out.

COLLTON: Also, the Russians coming to the U.S. were already being resettled by the American Jewish Services (AJS) and it was done very differently than the other agencies we worked with.

Most of those coming to the U.S. had relatives here, and AJS was charging the relatives a certain amount and relied heavily on them to assist in finding them housing and other services. They did a very nice job of it. Then as most of those who wanted to leave Russia had already done so, some of the Jewish agencies were interested in continuing the work with other groups, but their method would not work with the poorer refugees from other countries who had no relatives living in the U.S.

Q: Carol, you're still working but declassifying government documents now. Maybe this is a good place to stop.

COLLTON: Yes, I think so.

Q: This has been fun. I've enjoyed this.

COLLTON: I have, too.

Q: It's certainly added an insight into our treatment of trouble spots and our conflicted treatment of what we do.

Thank you very much.

COLLTON: Thank you.

End of interview